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FROM THE EDITOR

Bones, Lands, Bodies

This first issue of volume 27 of *SAIL* expands upon a familiar juxtaposition in Native American and Indigenous literary and cultural studies, namely, the persistently evocative triad of “blood,” “land” and “memory” or, put another way, the continually vexing issues of Indigenous identity, belonging, and history, and how these issues and their many variants play out in multiple contexts.

Karen M. Poremski opens the issue by engaging the largely understudied poetry of Heid Erdrich in order to investigate the potential impact of Native voices within the specific contexts of museum anthropology and evolving public and academic discourses on the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Looking in particular at the inclusion of Erdrich’s poetic voice within a 2010 anthropological retrospective of the effects of NAGPRA, Poremski argues that Erdrich’s poems, which give voice to bones, work to effect a change in readers’ attitudes toward the Indigenous sacred objects and human remains (still) held in museums. Next, Mark Rifkin engages John Joseph Mathews’s complex 1934 novel *Sundown*, offering a nuanced reading of the ways Mathews’s aesthetic strategies and subtle evocation of the protagonist’s “queerness” reveal his negotiation with contrasting US and Osage understandings of time and space during the era when the Osage were forced to grapple with the federal government’s imposed system of land allotment and the “modern” sensibility it was supposed to bring to the reservation. Rifkin thus helps us see how Mathews works to expose the ongoing co-presence of Indigenous experiences of time and ways of inhabiting space within the strictures of settler colonialism. Kerry Boland completes the volume’s first set of articles by engaging the multiple temporalities of Sherman Alexie’s 2007 novel *Flight* in order to argue

against early readings of this popular text that have located its power and impact within dominant paradigms of mainstream multiculturalism and within a universalist rhetoric of anti-violence. Focusing on the role of the protagonist's specifically Indigenous body, Boland demonstrates how the novel can be read against the grain of these typical readings—including against the grain of Alexie's own public statements about his "intentions" for the novel—to expose the potential of *Flight* to critique mainstream multiculturalism's participation in the ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples.

—Chadwick Allen

Voicing the Bones

Heid Erdrich's Poetry and the Discourse of NAGPRA

KAREN M. POREMSKI

In fall 2010 the journal *Museum Anthropology* published a special issue focused on the legacy of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary. This issue, edited by Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Stephen Nash, represents a kind of stocktaking in the field of anthropology and archaeology, and specifically museum anthropology—a field that many proclaimed would be decimated or destroyed by NAGPRA's enactment. The journal issue shows a range of the discourse around NAGPRA, including essays that argue for the value of anthropology and those that celebrate the repatriation of items long held by museums. Several authors express the idea that objects held by museums may be thought of and treated as living beings—a sea change from twenty years ago, when such beliefs were dismissed as superstitious and unscientific. Vine Deloria described this thinking in an article on religious freedom: “the attitude of federal employees and social scientists was that there is no evidence that we have any relationship to the departed, once bodily functions cease. Consequently, in their view, any belief *or experience* relating to the dead or to spirits of the dead is wholly superstitious” (176, original emphasis). In the twenty years since NAGPRA's passing, the field of museum anthropology has shifted, and in some museums, as the Fall 2010 articles show, sacred objects and human remains are treated in ways that are culturally appropriate.

But the question persists: ought these objects to be kept in museums? This question resonates in the last piece in the 2010 journal issue, a selection of five poems and a brief introductory statement from the 2008 collection *National Monuments*, by Heid E. Erdrich. These last words of the journal do the work of facilitating change in the readers' ways of think-

ing. Traditionally, fields such as anthropology, archaeology, science, and history have treated Native people as objects to be studied, manipulated, and narrated. But this structure—created by museums and other Western institutions of knowledge—is disrupted by Erdrich’s poetry. Through engaging in language play, through invoking the emotions around repatriation, and through a literary strategy I call “voicing the bones,” Erdrich’s poetry instead posits that sacred objects, human remains, and Native people are speaking subjects, alive and feeling and worthy of empathy and respect. In a journal whose readers engage frequently with the issue of repatriation, Erdrich’s poetry goes beyond the conflict between museums and Native people; it helps readers hear the voices of the bones themselves. This voicing also calls attention to the ways in which the practices of science still exploit Native people, and to the questions that remain in the NAGPRA age, among them: can non-Native people live up to their humanity by recognizing the humanity of Native people?

While it is standard practice for such a journal to print articles that represent a wide range of thinking, it is unusual to include poetry in an anthropology journal.¹ The poems become another voice in the discourse of repatriation and offer ideas about the place of literary art in discussions of national policy involving Native people. In addition to bringing a new kind of language to the NAGPRA arena, through “voicing the bones,” Erdrich’s poetry makes an important intervention that invites the reader to grant humanity and personhood to what might otherwise be considered “things.” These poems and their speaking subjects intervene in NAGPRA discourse by balancing the colonialist rhetorics of science and artifact collection. The poems do the work—unfinished by the legislation—of turning objects into beings; they thereby reverse the work of colonialist rhetoric in science and academia that has turned humans—and, specifically, Native people—into objects to be collected, sold, studied, and narrated. Through this voice, Erdrich makes change happen, makes change begin.

A THEORY OF SPEAKING: WRITING AS TRANSFORMATION

In her essay “The Story of America: A Tribalography,” LeAnne Howe draws on the Choctaw concept that giving breath to something can make it happen, that speaking about something can give life to it by speaking it

into being. She describes the Choctaw prefix “*nuk* or *nok*,” which “has to do with the power of speech, breath, and mind. Things with *nok* or *nuk* attached to them are so powerful they create” (30). She goes on to say, “The story I am telling you now is *nukfokechi*. It brings forth knowledge and inspires us to make the eventful leap that one thing leads to another” (32). In other words, if we tell a story about something, we make it possible for our listeners to imagine that that something is possible; if, in turn, they make this leap of imagination, that thing can indeed come to be, it can happen. Simply put, storytelling makes things happen.²

Through her poetry that gives life to objects, or rather recognizes the life inherent in them, Heid Erdrich engages in a mode of storytelling that makes it possible for her readers to understand that things—bones and sacred objects—can be imbued with life. By doing so she makes the first step in a process that can change museum policy, public policy, and, more widely, human attitudes about American Indian remains and artifacts. The poems allow the reader to imagine that these “things” have spirit and a quality of “beingness” that would no longer enable us to violate them in ways that Native people (and others) find distressing and unacceptable.

Of course, Erdrich is not the first American Indian author to engage the topic of museums’ use of human remains and sacred items. Lee Schweninger’s article “‘Lost and Lonesome’: Literary Reflections on Museums and the Roles of Relics” lists authors engaging this issue such as Gerald Vizenor, D’Arcy McNickle, Susan Power, Thomas King, Gordon Henry, Anna Lee Walters, Greg Sarris, and Jim Northrup. Schweninger argues that each author shows the ramifications of spiritual and social harm resulting from separating sacred objects from their contexts—their histories, their stories, their people. This separation leaves Native people “lost and lonesome,” in Vizenor’s words, as they are defined and displayed by anthropologists (169). The harm caused by collecting, displaying, and trading sacred objects and human remains has also been engaged by the work of Wendy Rose, Carol Lee Sanchez, Linda Hogan, and Simon Ortiz as well as music and visual art. Native artists have been speaking out against the objectifying practices of museums and academia for many years, working to reveal the colonialist assumptions of such practices.

In her 2006 work *Blood Run*, poet Allison Adelle Hedge Coke engages the issue of remains and sacred objects being dehumanized, looted, sold, and destroyed through the process of excavating mounds

in the Blood Run region, on the South Dakota–Iowa border. The poems in *Blood Run* present the speaking voices of many entities that non-Native readers might not recognize as having a voice: animals, trees, places, and river(s) as well as the voices of ancient people and skeletons. Penelope Kelsey and Cari M. Carpenter, in “In the End, Our Message Weighs’: *Blood Run*, NAGPRA, and American Indian Identity,” argue that Hedge Coke’s poetry demonstrates the very multitribal, urban, nuanced Native identity that NAGPRA fails to account for in its reliance on federal recognition as a marker of Native identity. Kelsey and Carpenter show that Hedge Coke’s poetry serves as a corrective, and as evidence that the federal legislation must be revised. They argue that *Blood Run* reveals complexities that must be recognized, and shows that “NAGPRA’s current definition of American Indian identity falls short of sovereign tribal conceptions of identity and tribal responsibility for caretaking [of] ancestral remains” (56). In this case, Hedge Coke’s collection draws attention to the ways in which NAGPRA fails to understand what constitutes Native identity, a crucial question when it comes to returning remains and objects held in museums, but also the land itself—places like burial mounds that need stronger protection from looters and developers. The poetry points to a failing of the legislation as currently written, Kelsey and Carpenter argue; poetry becomes a way of expressing Native identity beyond the confines of federal legislation. Kelsey and Carpenter also argue, building on Chadwick Allen’s work in *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*, that the reader of *Blood Run*, in being led through its architectural structure and through listening to the voices of objects, remains, and mounds, becomes “reoriented and coaxed into appropriate cultural behavior. . . . Thus, ceremony brings potential violators of the mounds into the tribal web of relationship” (62–63). Through Hedge Coke’s work, poetry shows readers another, more appropriate, relationship to place and remains.

Like Hedge Coke’s *Blood Run*, the poems from Erdrich’s *National Monuments in Museum Anthropology* give voice to remains and objects and speak out against the colonialist practices of collection and study. Both works draw attention to the ways in which NAGPRA falls short (a fact openly admitted by several authors in the *Museum Anthropology* issue). However, where Hedge Coke uses a ceremonial structure and tone, Erdrich brings forth these issues with playfulness and humor

interwoven with a more serious tone that urges its readers to empathize with the bones and objects and therefore become more human. The five poems in *Museum Anthropology* use literary strategies that disarm a potentially hostile reader and move him or her through states of empathy with the objects and remains themselves, even considering them as potential relatives rather than as objects to possess and study. Like *Blood Run*, Erdrich's poems in *Museum Anthropology* bring the reader into relationship with the bones and sacred objects.

NAGPRA DISCOURSE: A BRIEF HISTORY

NAGPRA discourse, a discussion around the idea of repatriating items stored in museums, arose as a response to the colonialist practices and narratives engaged by museums. From their beginnings, public museums have had a dual function: to support research through collecting and preserving artifacts and making them available to scholars; and to educate the public through display and description of a portion of their collections. But the question of who is being collected, studied, displayed, and narrated—and by whom—has become a more transparent cause for concern in recent history.³ In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* Linda Tuhiwai Smith examines the history of Western research about Indigenous peoples and argues that such research has been both an expression of the worldview of imperialism and a means of carrying out its priorities. Smith writes that “the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (1). Moreover, Smith and others have noted that imperialism takes place within the context of the Enlightenment; within this “wider Enlightenment context, imperialism becomes an integral part of the development of the modern state, of science, of ideas and of the ‘modern’ human person” (Smith 22). In other words, ideas about who the Native is—and where he or she belongs in the hierarchy of things—arise in an already value-laden system in which certain traits and behaviors are seen as civilized while others are characterized as primitive. The ability to make and use metal tools, for example, or a written language, became coded as signs of civilization that the Natives of North America did not exhibit, as far as Europeans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were willing to admit. And evidence to the contrary was ignored or destroyed. For Native people, museums have served not as a way to preserve culture, which is how they are gen-

erally seen by the non-Native public, but rather as a means by which cultures have been decimated.

American Indian voices have been speaking out against the assumptions of Enlightenment philosophy and against practices that have long characterized Natives as the objects of scientific study and the objects of history. In the late twentieth century, American Indian resistance gave rise to efforts to engage Native people and museum directors and anthropologists in a discussion that would lead to NAGPRA, a new national policy on the disposition of human remains and artifacts in museum collections. NAGPRA discourse started well before enactment of the federal law. Several states enacted repatriation legislation before NAGPRA, and the language of the law itself was created after many months of discussion in working groups and congressional testimony (Trope and Echo-Hawk 135–38). Moreover, Native activists and artists began calling for change decades before the legislation was enacted, beginning in the 1960s (Riding In 110). The issue of repatriation has been characterized as a human rights issue (see Trope and Echo-Hawk) as well as one of religious freedom (see Deloria; Riding In). There are several places to gauge the discussion around NAGPRA in print. I focus in this essay on two publications in particular—the *Repatriation Reader* (Mihesuah), published in 2000, and the Fall 2010 issue of *Museum Anthropology*—as useful places to survey the range of responses to the law at important anniversary markers from its enactment.

In her introduction to the *Repatriation Reader*, editor Devon Mihesuah lists twelve positions in the repatriation debate, ranging from “nonacademic grave-robbers” who sell objects, to “museum directors who attempt to cooperate with tribes and who will return items” (Introduction 4). The complexities of the positions, Mihesuah points out, mean not only that there is a difference of opinion between Native people and anthropologists, but also that opinions vary within these categories. For example, her list includes “American Indians who believe remains should be studied for educational purposes and not repatriated” (4). Although Mihesuah represents the range of the debate in her editing of the volume, she herself expresses powerful pro-repatriation arguments in her essay. One especially notable passage, on the justification by scientists and researchers that their work benefits people, calls into question the value of such research: “But to date, the garnered scientific information has not been used to decrease alcoholism or suicide

rates, nor has it influenced legislative bodies to return tribal lands or to recognize the sad fact that Indians are still stereotyped, ridiculed, and looked upon as novelties" ("American" 97). Despite the range of opinions about repatriation, Mihesuah argues strongly that colonialism and racism persist in the practices of museums and academia.

In their essay in *Repatriation Reader*, "The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act: Background and Legislative History," Jack F. Trope and Walter R. Echo-Hawk write about the ways in which Indian bodies have been treated differently than others. The United States had to create new legislation, they argue, because extant laws protecting the dead and objects from graves "have failed to protect the graves and the dead of Native people" (125). They add: "American social policy has historically treated Indian dead differently from the dead of other races. Unfortunately, it has been commonplace for public agencies to treat Native American dead as *archaeological resources, property, pathological material, data, specimens, or library books*, but not as *human beings*" (127, original emphasis). Trope and Echo-Hawk predicted in 2000 that "Because of the massive scope of the repatriation problem [. . .] a lengthy implementation period can be expected for this human rights legislation" (123). The enactment of NAGPRA, these authors show ten years later, did not quickly fix the problem.

Some anthropologists and archaeologists have expressed pro-repatriation arguments, too. The *Repatriation Reader* includes a pro-repatriation essay by Anthony L. Klesert and Shirley Powell, "A Perspective on Ethics and the Reburial Controversy"; both authors are archaeologists who advocate for working with tribes to determine whether archaeological work should be done at all.⁴ Larry J. Zimmerman's essay, "A New and Different Archaeology? With a Postscript on the impact of the Kennewick Man Dispute," which ends the *Repatriation Reader*, sums up the history of the debate and looks toward the future. He notes that new practices are not the only important phenomenon to come out of NAGPRA and its discussion: "More important than shifts of power have been the recent adjustments of attitudes by both American Indians and archaeologists" (294). He notes that the two sides in the disagreement "have begun reconciling their beliefs, each incorporating some views of the other" (295). He also notes that changing public sentiment—for example, Euro-American nonscientists arguing in favor of returning remains—is evidenced by media reports (295). Zim-

merman calls for modeling research policy after Arnold Krupat's idea of Ethnocriticism, which "seeks to replace oppositional models with dialogical models where cultural differences are explored and where interpretations are negotiated rather than declared" (303). In this dialogical model, the two sides work together to arrive at meaning, and power is shared. He advocates for combining this idea with the new idea of covenantal archaeology, where Natives and archaeologists work together: "research questions and methods are negotiated and support a mutually agreed upon agenda" (303). Zimmerman's call for the future of the field, in 2000, sounds much like what Smith calls for in *Decolonizing Methodologies*: research projects that serve Native people, that are created with Native collaboration, and that reflect Native values and concerns. In this new era, rather than studying an object, putting it on display, and narrating its significance for a non-Native audience, for example, museums would work with Native people who might then determine that the object be taken off display if it is only to be viewed by those initiated into a certain clan; or a tribe might arrange for it to be "borrowed" by their people for use in ceremonies at home. An object might even be used to affect legislation, as in the case of ancient fishing nets serving as a means of arguing for fishing rights for the Makah people.⁵ The ways museums would work with artifacts in such a new anthropology would be very different from their colonialist projects of the past.⁶

The journal includes fourteen articles—some by museum anthropologists, some by Native people working on repatriation projects for their tribes, and some by federal government officials. In addition to soliciting essays from different institutional representatives, the editors specifically asked for stories of implementation of the legislation—stories of repatriation, of its challenges and pitfalls as well as triumphs. In their introductory essay to the journal, they survey the field and note a dearth of articles in professional anthropology and archaeology journals about the effects of NAGPRA (despite the dire warnings about its destructive effects on museums).

While the volume defends the field of archaeology through the voice of its practitioners, Native voices appear here as well—some of whom are tribal representatives working with museums on repatriation projects. By including the writing and viewpoints of these representatives, the journal brings a new voice to the discourse: experts in the field who

derive their authority from knowledge of and experience in their Native nations. These experts within the tribes show how a piece of legislation and its implementation has affected them and their people, giving voice to the immensely positive and intensely personal side of repatriation efforts. The editors' introduction specifically states that their call for articles sought the human side of the experiences resulting from NAGPRA's enactment with an eye to discovering whether the legislation "has led to the kind of spiritual healing it was intended to facilitate" (Nash and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 101). The introduction also explains their unusual decision to include poetry in an anthropology journal. By doing so, the editors seek to show "repatriation's emotional aspects" through poems that reveal repatriation as "a process that engages pulsing questions of identity, culture, and spirituality" (102). The poems give evidence to the life (with pulsing heartbeat) at stake in the repatriation issue and push the journal's readers to engage their emotions.

POETRY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Erdrich's work appears as the last article in the Fall 2010 issue of *Museum Anthropology*. It features a brief artist's statement excerpted from *National Monuments* plus five poems: "Guidelines for the Treatment of Sacred Objects," "Kennewick Man Tells All," "Kennewick Man Attempts Cyber-Date," "Vial," and "eBay Bones." These five poems perform the following functions in sequence: grant agency to remains and sacred objects while evoking a range of emotions; provide the voice of Kennewick Man and argue for his humanity; and cast light on the ways in which Native people become objects to be bought and sold, even in a post-NAGPRA era. The poems invite readers to think of the objects and remains in museums as people, even relatives, rather than possessions, and in the end tie questions of humanity to our ability to do so.

The first poem in the journal's mini-anthology, "Guidelines for the Treatment of Sacred Objects," could be called the "NAGPRA poem"; it speaks directly to museum staff, presenting careful directions about Native conventions of what is proper and appropriate behavior toward the items in their collections. It puts into action two important ideas: first, it posits objects in museum collections as living beings with a spirit; and second, it creates emotional pathways to connect with a pro-repatriation stance. It accomplishes these two moves through doing

what poetry does best: presenting language in unusual ways and evoking emotions.

In this poem, things are more than just things; they have preferences and opinions and are capable of independent action: emitting music, complaining, preferring certain compliments, calling for family members, vibrating, hissing. Erdrich has imbued them with qualities that we must think of as human. The English language limits the poet by allowing her a vocabulary in which human remains and sacred items are things, objects not understood to be animate or to have a spirit. In some Native languages, such “things” would be understood as alive. Writings about repatriation and NAGPRA often search for a way around the linguistic problems of using English. In her contribution to a panel discussion on “Protecting Native American Human Remains, Burial Grounds, and Sacred Places” published in the Fall 2004 issue of *Wicazo-Sa Review*, Suzan Shown Harjo notes the importance of terminology: in the early days of NAGPRA’s formulation, anthropologists and archaeologists objected to replacing their preferred terms, such as “bones” and “skeletons” and “grave goods,” with the people-connected “human remains” and “funerary objects” (Riding In et al. 181). Harjo’s description demonstrates that naming matters; it creates ways of thinking (and feeling). In Howe’s terms, naming gives breath to an idea and thereby makes possible a new way of thinking about it. Several of the *Museum Anthropology* articles convey the idea of objects as being both connected to humans and given the status of living things. In the article “Repatriation and Collaboration,” Bruce Bernstein notes one of the new principles of collection management: “each object is a living being. This might necessitate a certain level of care as far as handling or shelf placement. . . . But, just as important, this suggests that staff must be in the proper state of mind when working on collections” (197). In an article by Martha Graham and Nell Murphy, “NAGPRA at 20,” Daniel Johnson (Kootsnoowoo) describes how people of his nation interact with a prow piece of a canoe that has been repatriated: “When it is out, our fathers, grandfathers, children, and/or grandchildren acknowledge its presence and speak directly to it—granting it the status of being one of our leaders of the tribe—or more importantly—viewing it as being one of their father’s people, or their child, or grandchild” (Graham and Murphy 117). In these examples, Native philosophies express objects and remains not as possessions but rather as fellow beings, even relatives.

These essays tell us that the English notions of “object” or “thing” or even “remains” are not adequate to express how we should think about them. And yet they are all that we have. Erdrich's poem disrupts the reader's usual understanding of the word *objects* in “Guidelines for the Treatment of Sacred Objects” by presenting us with objects that act, that insist on their human characteristics. She creates new possibilities by using the English language to express something unexpected and does this through poetry, which necessarily presents language in new, unexpected, unfamiliar ways of making meaning.

The poem's instructions, its guidelines that use the language of museum anthropology, start out easy enough to follow, but they quickly become specific enough to intimidate a worker who does not know the traditions of the people who made these non-object objects. For example, the first few lines recommend bathing some items “in mud at rainy season” (3), but in line 5 the reader must use a *red* cloth to brush clean the object that's been bathed in mud; in lines 11–13 we learn that

Brass bells should be called *shiny*
rather than *pretty*. Shell ear spools
should be remarked upon as *handsome* . . . (original emphasis)

Given this level of detail, the museum worker will likely make a mistake. In stanza 4, the reader is directed to

Use only volunteer rocks,
or stones left by matri-descendant patri-tribalists. (29–30)

The level of specificity and obligation becomes overwhelming. How does a museum worker figure out such minute but important information, especially given the lack of information available about many artifacts—as many articles in the journal point out—due to haphazard record making and record keeping in former times? These lines also echo the technical language of NAGPRA, which specifies that one class of items to be considered for repatriation includes “objects of cultural patrimony,” a term mysterious to many. Furthermore, it seems that the instructions in this poem could never be complete enough to avoid all possible instances of doing wrong. In this way, the poem suggests that even if they learn from Native people, museum workers cannot hope to be correct all the time, and that perhaps many objects should be with the people who know the right ways to handle them.

Erdrich's "Guidelines" echoes a 2006 press release provided by the Association of Art Museum Directors about their "Report of the AAMD Subcommittee on the Acquisition and Stewardship of Sacred Objects." The press release describes some unorthodox things that museum workers might be called on to do:

Some sacred objects of the [N]ative peoples of the western United States should be stored with sage to ensure their spiritual well-being. . . . In some indigenous cultures, special ceremonies should be conducted or offerings made for sacred objects. . . . Other solutions include storing objects such as sacred stone lamps of the Alutiiq people upside down, to keep their spirits from departing, or not housing certain sacred objects in proximity to other works. (Association of Art Museum Directors)

Like the poem, the press release includes instructions that are at once very specific and incomplete. The museum worker must do things that are unexpected, important, and for which she or he may have little to no training.

Mihesuah's introduction to the *Repatriation Reader* also provides evidence that non-Native museum workers are sometimes ill-equipped, in the post-NAGPRA age, to treat objects appropriately. She notes that she has been asked, "Isn't storing the remains on a royal purple towel and packed with sage adequate?" (10). The question shows a lack of understanding that objects are as individual as people and the nations from which they come. It echoes the idea that the category *Indian* is a valid cultural term rather than a misnomer for more than five hundred nations of people with different languages, practices, and beliefs. These instances show that non-Native museum workers are often unprepared by their training to be good stewards of their collections. Erdrich's poem suggests that they can be given "guidelines," but ultimately, this preparation or information is inadequate. This is a very uncomfortable place to leave the reader—especially the reader of *Museum Anthropology*.

In addition to tapping into the language of an academic field, the poem works on emotions, prompting a wide range of responses. The poem quickly takes the reader through humor, mystery, potential confusion, sadness, seriousness, horror, and loneliness, coming back to humor at frequent intervals and repeating somewhat dry, official instructions.

In its portrayal of a variety of emotions, the poem echoes the mixed emotions Erdrich expresses in the excerpt from the "Artist's Note" that appears in *National Monuments*: anger upon learning of an ancestor's bones being "crushed for testing" (249), but also surprise and fascination with the kinds of things we can know about people who lived thousands of years ago, such as what they "ate for their last meals" (249). The debate over repatriation has been carried out in places of intellectual engagement—the courtroom, the legislative office, the academic press. Erdrich's poetry reminds the reader that it is an emotional issue at heart, one that must engage our feelings as well as our intellect.

"Guidelines" interrupts the language of anthropology and museum policy with colloquialisms and jokes. We learn that you can tell all kinds of beads "that they are *lookin' good*" (15, original emphasis); elsewhere we are told that you must "Avoid stereotypical tom-tom beat" (7) when playing the drums for these objects, and that you should *never* sing "Dem Bones" (50) (the leg bone's connected to the hip bone, etc.) in the presence of human remains. The speaker instructs the audience to make offerings of smoke or cornmeal, but also of

chewing gum, tarpaper
and tax incentives. (20–21)

For objects that act mysteriously, disappearing and reappearing, the advice includes

calling in spiritual leaders such as librarians,
wellness-circuit speakers and financial aide officers. (34–35)

With references to tax incentives and financial aid officers, the poem brings the objects—and the NAGPRA debate—into the contemporary world and juxtaposes traditional symbols of the sacred (cornmeal, spiritual leaders) with prosaic features of our "mundane" world. And the combination of intricately detailed instruction plus humor seems to show that the speaker acknowledges the delicacy of determining the right thing to do.

As the poem progresses, humor gives way to more serious matters, to fear and anger and protest against injustice. "Guidelines" includes the questionable circumstances under which some objects have been obtained and ways in which they have been violated. Stanza 9 advises the reader to

Avoid using bones as drumsticks
 or paperweights, no matter
 the actions of previous Directors or Vice
 Directors of your institution. (41–44)

In these four lines near the end of the poem, Erdrich touches on the history of the ways in which sacred objects and human remains have been disrespected and abused in the past, sometimes by people at the very institutions that have claimed ownership of them because they would preserve and protect them.⁷ With the enjambment of line 3, leaving the word “Vice” hanging out at the end of the line, the speaker calls out this kind of behavior for what it is—the word suggests “an evil, degrading, or immoral practice . . . a serious moral failing . . . depravity; corruption” (“Vice”). There is a small glimmer of hope here that these kinds of actions belong to the past. But the implications are serious.

The poem ends on a dark note, the last stanza instructing the reader to send home any bones that

complain for weeks at a time,
 roll about moaning, or leave chalky outlines (55–56)

These remains, clearly in misery and pain, and possibly having been murdered (as the chalk outlines would suggest), need to go home. Just as Schweninger argues that Native people’s separation from sacred objects causes the people to become “lost and lonesome,” in this case the objects themselves seem to be lost and lonesome as a result of their separation from their homes and families. Again, this rhetorical move emphasizes the agency of what might otherwise be considered *things*, instead presenting them as relatives who need help. At the end of the poem, it seems that some of the objects will be sent home; but there’s a catch, at least for the Native people receiving them: the advice is to send them “C.O.D.” (58). In other words, the recipients have to pay “cash on delivery.” This reference echoes essays in the same *Museum Anthropology* issue in which tribal members who work on repatriation efforts note the significant expenses for tribes engaging in this work, including traveling for consultation, constructing places where returned things can be housed (even if only temporarily), and hiring and training staff who can review and file all of the necessary—extensive, complicated—federal paperwork. Even as it has had the positive outcome of getting remains and sacred objects

back to where they belong, NAGPRA has put a financial burden on communities that were far from well off to begin with.

This first poem in the mini-anthology speaks directly to non-Native museum workers, the primary audience of the journal, and creates connections between the speaker and the reader, inviting the reader to hear the voices of the objects of which they are stewards. These rhetorical positionings prepare the ground for the next two poems in the mini-anthology, extremely short pieces that engage the topic of Kennewick Man, also known as the Ancient One (Kelsey and Carpenter 68), an ancestor whose remains were discovered on the banks of the Columbia River in 1996—six years *after* the enactment of NAGPRA—and whose discovery prompted a conflict between, on the one hand, anthropologists and scientists who wanted to study his remains and, on the other, Native people and others who wanted to rebury him. This case is seen as an ongoing test of NAGPRA, as Walter Echo-Hawk noted in 2004 (Riding In et al. 182). Though a group of five tribes were originally given permission to rebury him, anthropologists and scientists sued and gained control over Kennewick Man. In her article “Complex Legal Legacies,” Susan B. Bruning argues that even if Kennewick Man had been proven a direct descendant of a present-day Native tribe, scientists would still have had the right to use his remains. She explains that NAGPRA includes a section allowing for institutions to keep and study remains if such study is deemed as scientifically significant: “study can proceed, with or without the consent of the culturally affiliated claimant, if the remains are of sufficient scientific importance” (515). Bruning notes that this section of NAGPRA was designed to help “balance” the interests of Native Americans and scientists, and that “The potential for new knowledge deriving from future discoveries would seem to be a significant justification for such a balance of interests” (515). Of course, as Smith and Mihesuah have shown (quoted above), the benefits of such study to Native people have not been forthcoming. Because he could not be identified as a member of a present-day tribe, two judges in the case concluded that Kennewick Man could not be identified as Native American (Bruning 507–08). The controversy over Kennewick Man and the legal wrangling as well as media attention to his case spawned numerous articles and books in both the scholarly and popular press. He is currently being held by the Burke Museum at the University of Washington (Burke Museum).

In Erdrich's Kennewick Man poems, an epigraph and spare lines create their meaning, each poem a powerfully condensed, brief contrast to the volumes of printed material produced by his appearance. The epigraphs are quotes from James Chatters, an anthropologist who advocated for preserving and using the remains for scientific inquiry; the spare lines in each poem are spoken by Kennewick Man himself (hereafter referred to by his initials, KM). This sets up each poem as a kind of dialogue, a juxtaposition of discourses in the debate about what to do about the human remains after they were unearthed. But rather than pit Chatters against the tribal members who claimed KM, the poem gives voice to the "other side" by having KM himself speak. Through voicing the bones, Erdrich brings him forward as a human being, a subject participating in the debate rather than a specimen.

The title of the first poem, "Kennewick Man Tells All," evokes a sense of having secrets, of being able to tell or divulge or reveal something to us. Its first line, "Ladies and Gentlemen of the press" (line 1), evokes a press-conference-like setting and nods to the fact that the case was covered extensively in the press; it further leans on the idea that perhaps KM is about to say something shocking, reveal something unexpected and newsworthy. But instead, the information KM tells us is spare and stark, just three things in two verse lines:

I am 9,200 years old.
I am bone. I am alone. (3-4)

Despite the title's promise that he "Tells All," and despite Chatters's admonishment that we should not rebury KM because he has a story to tell, KM's few words reveal little; he does not seem to be solving any mysteries to which his audience would like the answers. The poem's last sentence, the one in which KM offers his most personal information, "I am alone," evokes not only the uniqueness or singularity of him as a "specimen," but also his potential loneliness. Like the figures in the works Schweninger describes, KM too seems to be "lost and lonesome," separated from his people and his land and therefore suffering harm. His alienation is layered: he is no longer with his people in his own time, but he is not with people in our time either, instead serving as an object of study, disconnected not only from Native people but from humanity, from human status. KM is no longer one of us, and he is lonely. No need to call a press conference for that announcement.

The unsurprising nature of KM's supposedly newsworthy revelation compares to a statement made in the *Museum Anthropology* article "My Adventures in Zuni," by anthropologist Stephen H. Lekson, who writes of the ways in which NAGPRA has changed his profession. He calls for archaeology to have meaning: "If what we do is in fact trivial, then we should hang up our trowels and find something else to do" (192). For example, he recounts an incident that he finds hard to defend: a "huge Mesa Verde village" was excavated only to have the book about it conclude, "The Anasazi must have felt very at home here" (192). Lekson quotes Rina Swentzell, who asks, "Why [. . .] did the land, the place, the spirit of the people have to be subjected to digging and disturbance to arrive at such a meaningless conclusion?" (192). In this context, Erdrich's poem suggests that we do not need to do scientific testing on KM's remains to find out that he is lonely; we need only think of him as a person rather than a specimen. In the end, KM's loneliness serves to forge a connection with the reader. His expression of human feeling, revealing his pain and vulnerability, creates the potential for others to see him as similar to them—not an object to be studied, but a fellow person to be comforted. Erdrich's poem voices the bones and calls a contemporary audience into relationship with the Ancient One.

The next poem, "Kennewick Man Attempts Cyber-Date," continues the process of humanizing KM's remains, developing him further as someone expressing very human needs and desires, and being willing to use tools of the twenty-first century to help him fulfill them. Where we heard in the previous poem that Kennewick Man was alone, now we hear that he is looking for companionship, maybe even love. And very early in the poem we encounter KM grappling with the classic cyber-dating problem: how do you represent yourself in a way that is both likely to attract a date and honest, so that your date isn't disappointed? KM opts for honesty, not expecting to "match a hottie," but rather excited about the prospect of "smell[ing] a woman's neck again!" (3, 5). But the issue of appearance carries other implications as well, as we see from the epigraph, again from James Chatters, who is quoted as saying that KM looks like Captain Picard (from the television show *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, played by Patrick Stewart). Perhaps the most famous image associated with KM is the bust that was constructed by a forensic artist using his skull measurements; it would even appear on the cover of *Time* magazine.⁸ The results were quite controversial in this case—many people thought the bust of KM looked European rather than Native.

KM's appearance is suspected to have contributed to one of the most pointed and puzzling conclusions arising from the court case: that KM is in fact not Native American because he cannot be traced as a direct ancestor of a specific present-day tribe. In her article in the *Repatriation Reader*, "(Re)Constructing Bodies: Semiotic Sovereignty and the Debate over Kennewick Man," Suzanne J. Crawford argues that KM's appearance plays a key role in the power dynamics not only of repatriation but of much larger debates in US-Indian relations. According to Crawford, if KM is "Caucasoid," a word used by Chatters after the bust was constructed, then scientists can "speculate [. . .] that the first Americans were, in fact, white guys" (218). Not just claims to bones and sacred items become problematic in this schema, but also claims to land. A *New Yorker* article poses the question: "If the original inhabitants of the New World were Europeans who were pushed out by Indians would it change the Indians' position in the great moral landscape?" (qtd. in Crawford 219). If KM appears to be a Caucasian, and if tests are done on his remains to determine that he is not Native American, then Euro-Americans have little reason to regret the brutal practices of colonialism they used on North America's Indigenous people in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, much less the ways in which such practices and their aftermath persist. Instead, Euro-Americans can claim a moral upper hand in the discussion of to whom the land belongs, in the end.

Crawford also points out that KM's appearance engages the debate about what is "authentic" Indianness: KM is not recognizable as an Indian in part because he doesn't fit our stereotypes or expectations derived from Hollywood images. She argues, "To not look like the stereotype is to not be really 'Indian'" (222). He can be something else, maybe even European, which also lends strength to the claim that Euro-Americans are the original "owners" of the land (223). The stakes in KM's appearance are extremely high; the poem's foregrounding of this issue casts appearance in a personal way, one that reveals his vulnerability in his search for companionship, but also serves as an index to the other issues that are decided based on one's "looks."

In the last stanza of the poem KM is filling out "required fields" in the cyber-dating application, reflecting on the requirement that he

simply state:

My age

My race

My God. (7–10)

The fields to be filled out echo data collected by dating services so that clients can be matched with similar clients. But the idea of filling out fields as a way of understanding a human person also seems ridiculous here: How can KM fill in information that will lead him to a partner? Would his answers about his age, race, and religion even be understood by a potential date? Furthermore, the categories themselves—and the fact that they are being used at all—bear examination. They suggest that humans can be understood by figuring out what categories they belong to. Can his philosophy and his way of relating to the world around him be contained within a couple of categories? The fact that “My race” (9) is one of these categories further brings to bear the idea that KM will be judged on what racial category he is put into, which further invokes the questions of identification that have been forced by NAGPRA regulations. Like Hedge Coke’s work in *Blood Run*, this poem reveals the ways in which NAGPRA is woefully ill-equipped to be the arbiter of Native identity. The last line, “My God” (10), can be read as another aspect of the application—specifying his religion, as he does his age and race, so that he finds an appropriate partner. But it might also be a quiet exclamation of sorts, a moment of being stunned as he is asked these personal questions, and as he contemplates the possibility of human contact again. We are left with a sense that KM is lonely and looking for a way to end that loneliness; he is hungry for love, vulnerable, seeking, even as he is shocked at the process of finding a companion in the twenty-first century.

Erdrich’s KM poems amplify the sense of his humanness through giving him a voice that calls for empathy and human connection on the part of those who would treat him as a thing. KM is profoundly different from the reader, yet these two poems also show that he is profoundly human, so much like us in our desires and predilections. The KM poems invite readers to connect with this man whose remains have become a specimen to study, and who would probably rather go out on a date. The last two poems in the mini-anthology move from voicing the bones of remains in museums to bringing light to contemporary cases of profit making through trafficking in human body parts. In “Vial,” language

play highlights the ways in which a particular Native people's blood has become a commodity that others sell for profit on the internet.⁹ Rather than voicing or speaking for the Karitiana, the poem's speaker engages in using rhyme and near-rhyme, alliteration, invented words, and synonyms to tell a story of desperation and ongoing injustice.

The poem's first two stanzas describe the object for sale: a vial of blood. The lines throughout the poem are short, none longer than four words, giving a sense of urgency and abruptness. This sense is further communicated by alliteration in the first stanza, the languid *l* sounds in the second line giving way to staccato *p* sounds in the rest of the stanza, appearing seven times in the words "lipstick," "passion's paint," "paid," "unpaid," and "compact pinched" (2–4, 5, 7). These *p* sounds make the lines feel chopped, percussive; they give the sense of an accusation being spit out, which echoes the homonym for the poem's title, *vile*.

Poetic strategies of using sounds and unusual language highlight a theft that is ongoing. The first stanza repeats the sound *or*, forming a kind of rhyme in the words "for" (repeated) and "drugstore"; but further, the appearance of the rhyming sounds in "paid for," "unpaid for," and "drugstore" emphasize these three moments, drawing the reader's attention to the essence of the poem's subject: the fact that the Karitiana gave their blood (they paid) in a medical marketplace and yet are not given the medicine they were promised (their blood is "unpaid for"). The first stanza tells us that, like a stolen tube of lipstick or a compact in a drugstore, the Karitiana blood is "unpaid for" and "filched" and "pinched," the latter two words making a kind of slant rhyme. All three terms are synonyms for "stolen," but ones that draw attention to themselves, as they are rarely used. The second stanza continues to emphasize how the agreement between the Karitiana and their non-Native contacts has been violated. Following the use of the common term to describe the places purchasing the blood, "non-profit," the speaker uses two words that are not idiomatic:

non-bought
non-paid for. (12–13)

These both echo the sense of the object being stolen, as in the first two stanzas, but also slow the cadence of the poem by including two invented words. These terms emphasize an ongoing theft as the blood is currently offered "For Sale" (10). The poem's expression of a theft that

happens in the proliferation of terms used to describe it—some we recognize, some inventions—emphasize a theft that happens again and again, in numerous ways.

The third stanza lays out the deal plainly:

Promised medicine,
Karitiana, Amazonian
 indigenous, offered
 blood and got
 nothing (14–18, original emphasis)

This stanza includes both the poem's longest line in terms of syllables—"Karitiana, Amazonian" (15)—and shortest, in terms of words—"nothing" (18). The uncharacteristic proliferation of syllables in the fifteenth line slows the poem again, then is followed by the word "indigenous," one of the few multisyllabic words in the poem. These lines emphasize the people who have been wronged and point out their status as Indigenous people being colonized by outsiders. The stanza's end comes abruptly in the word "nothing," which stands alone on the line. It is a moment of starkness, of stunned silence that communicates a sense of shock as well as the emptiness of the deal.

The fourth stanza describes the dire cost of the exchange: it is more than monetary, and much more serious than the petty shoplifting of a lipstick. For the *Karitiana*, the relinquishing of blood will have consequences for them after death; they

bled in fear of
 the next world wanting
 the body whole,
 each drop accounted for. . . . (21–24, original ellipses)

In other words, the beings or deities they meet after death may be angry with them for trading away their blood. The ellipses in the last line of the stanza convey a sense of an unspecified, unknown future, the future in which the people who have given their blood to scientists will suffer in the afterlife—they will have to *pay* for having come to the next world with something missing. Here again, the idea of paying is raised, this time a mysterious and unstated but perhaps heavy cost that will inevitably fall on the *Karitiana*. Words communicating passion and intense feelings convey the importance of the sacrifice; these include "hunger" (20) and "fear" (21), but are also evoked in the image of

Rich and red
blood [. . .] (19–20)

The stakes are high, much higher than the initial metaphor of stolen cosmetics would suggest. And this expresses a cultural dissonance between the Karitiana and the reader of *Museum Anthropology*: where a reader, particularly a non-Native one, might think of a vial of blood as something that is routinely given at a doctor's office or blood drive, the Karitianas' decision to give up their blood has come with fear and is only made out of hunger, both terms conveying a sense of near desperation.

Finally, in the last stanza, we hear what sounds like a different voice declaring,

When they sell it all,
they'll come back
for more. (25–27)

The voice of this last stanza sounds less overtly poetic, less concerned with metaphor and image and instead more plain and prosaic, more concerned with predicting an ugly future. It sounds like the voice of experience, perhaps a Native North American telling the Karitiana what comes next in the process of contact with the non-Indigenous world. These last lines, the poem's shortest stanza, speak of an insatiable greed, one that will come back and want more despite the fact that the terms of the exchange have already been violated. This force is shameless, unfeeling, and insatiable, and it will return.¹⁰ "Vial" emphasizes continued acts of injustice, holdovers from an era of science that went hand-in-hand with the collection of Native bodies, and is now happening through the medium of the Internet. Just after reading about bones in museums, ancient people as artifacts, the reader of *Museum Anthropology* encounters a *contemporary* people who are also being treated as specimens. The poem illustrates how easy it might be for non-Native people to conflate the specimens in museums—nonhuman things and objects for study and display—and specimens in test tubes, nonhuman objects for sale, stolen from Indigenous people. It forces a confrontation with the fact that Natives are alive, are still being cheated (with grave personal consequences), and that they are not objects to study, but subjects who have been wronged and continue to be wronged by being characterized as such. The poem also highlights the ways in which the "scientific benefit" argument seems to ignore the needs and values of Native people.

This justification for keeping (or taking) things from Native people falls apart, in light of "Vial."

The last poem in the mini-anthology, "eBay Bones," continues the discussion of bodies and profit making on the Internet. Based on a 2005 incident in which a man who had taken a skull from a dig site in Hawai'i tried to sell it on the Internet auction site eBay (Yang), the poem's first line sets out starkly the terms of exchange: "Her skull goes to the highest bidder" (1). The next two lines continue the consideration of worth, asking,

How much would you give for a warrior head?
Hawaii's history for an ashtray? (2-3)

The evocation of "Hawaii's history" brings to the forefront one of the reasons traditionally given for collecting human remains: that the item should be studied, examined for its significance to academic fields of knowledge. Here, however, that possibility is thrown aside, and the only important thing to know is that the skull now belongs to the highest bidder, who can do whatever he wants with it. The fourth line interrupts this train of thought, moving away from considerations of exchange and commerce with a simple and profound point of connection with the skull: "She was not much older than me" (4). Despite the differences across time and space, between the living and the dead, the speaker connects herself with the woman whose remains have become commodity and therefore invites the reader to do the same. This will introduce an emotional move that is repeated at the end of the poem.

But first, the poem lingers on the idea of commerce, and on the exchange of knowledge as another kind of commodification. In the next three lines, the speaker notes the "creepy needs" of science and of the endless curiosity embodied in the Internet, "the web" that will "hold our dead in its sacred sites" (10-11). Here, the poem plays on the sense of inquiry that is prurient, unsavory, as well as the technology that enables the exchange of items that should be kept sacred and secret. These words are emphasized in the repeated *long e* sounds in "creepy needs" and in punning on the word "sites"—both literal places (like burial sites) and nodes in the World Wide Web. Here, language play draws attention to the disruption of the woman's rest by the agendas of science and Internet commerce. The poem then turns to another aspect of knowledge, noting that "History"—which is repeated and capitalized both times—claims people as its objects:

Others are History. And History
must be brought to light—(14–15)

These lines tell of the objectification of people and refer to the dehumanizing process by which history and science have been pursued. Because they have not been seen as equally human as non-Natives, Native remains have been taken as objects of study and curiosity. This inquiry is continued in the second stanza, in which the speaker laments

Her ivory grin worth
less than human curiosity,
less than the rest of all humanity [. . .] (19–21)

In these lines, science and history are demoted to being “human curiosity”; they are not noble fields of study that wish to advance humankind, but mere curiosity, a desire to see and poke and pry. And the point is made here that this woman, because she is Native, is seen as less worthy of respect and protection; ironically, because she is worth less as a human—playing on the enjambment of “worth” and “less” in lines 19 and 20—she is worth money as an object of sale or an object of study. The music of the lines’ repetition of words and ideas brings new attention to a point made in the NAGPRA debates: that a federal law is necessary because some see Native remains as commodities and specimens rather than fellow human beings. In “eBay Bones,” the speaker asserts that “advancing knowledge” sounds like a flimsy excuse for studying certain kinds of human remains, certain Others who have become objects, History, artifacts.

Continuing the empathetic move established in the fourth line of the first stanza (“She was not much older than me”), the second stanza, though not a hopeful one, invites all readers to connect with the subject of the poem. This stanza moves away from ideas of worth that have been prominent in the poem—the monetary value of the skull as eBay item, the “volcanic earth so rich” (5) that is the woman’s burial site, and the exchange of knowledge—to consider a larger question of values, rather than value. After noting that this woman’s remains seem to be worth “less than the rest of all humanity,” the next lines make a different move, producing a powerful sense of empathy:

all humanity at rest
beneath us all. (22–23)

The word “rest” evokes the rest of death and of being protected in the grave, a peaceful and calm state. The repetition of “all humanity” transforms the phrase from a grammatical object to a subject, the subjects of burial. The shifting of the phrase and the additional repetition of the word “all” draw the readers—and indeed, all humans—into relationship with the speaker, and with the buried woman. We all face the same fate of one day being dead; will our remains, like this woman's, be violated? Or will we be protected? We must rely on the decency and respect of our fellow humans. By making the move of invoking the “all” in the last lines of the poem, the speaker asserts that this is not only a Native Hawai’ian or Native American issue, but one in which the humanity of all people is at stake. The question of how non-Natives treat human remains tests humanity: can people see remains, bodies, as beings like them rather than as objects? Can human connection be worth more than exchanges of knowledge and material wealth? The poem's invocation of an empathy that is both elegant in its simplicity, in the fourth line, and profound in its implications, in the last two lines, suggests the emotional intelligence required to make such a move from colonizer to fully empathetic human who recognizes similarities across lines of difference and values these similarities over material gain. The poem shows empathy on both a personal level—she is like me—and a universal one—we are all alike.

While the last poem in this mini-anthology at the end of the journal does not end hopefully, it nevertheless walks the reader through change that must happen. In Howe's terms, writing poetry becomes an act of putting breath into something, which then becomes so powerful that it creates new ideas. By making change more imaginable, the poems make that change possible. The language that voices the bones and objects and makes them recognizable as beings, that draws the reader into a relationship of common humanity and even family with Native remains and sacred objects, gives breath to a new way of understanding “artifacts.” This breath gives life to a Native way of thinking about museum collections and specimens as relatives.

VOICING KENNEWICK MAN

In an October 2012 reading at Ohio Wesleyan University, Erdrich performed her Kennewick Man poems, deepening her voice and getting close to the microphone for the lines that come from KM himself. The

poems brought both laughter and thoughtfulness in the audience. My faculty colleagues remarked on those poems in particular, and even students (not my own) who had not previously read Erdrich's work were talking and writing about Kennewick Man weeks later. He made quite an impression—perhaps, in part, because the poems present him as a speaker with a striking voice, a character whom the audience remembered.

Crawford's article from the *Repatriation Reader*, which Erdrich reports was influential as she wrote the KM poems (e-mail communication, 27 April 2012), highlights the importance of hearing all voices in the repatriation debate and of characterizing all parties as equally valid. This is the only way, Crawford argues, to avoid repeating the colonialism of US policies and to instead grant respect to all people. All speakers in the debate need to acknowledge their position in it through their embodiment, which is specific and value laden (Crawford 231). Citing Donna Haraway, Crawford argues for "objectivity that is embodied, objectivity that recognizes it is seen through the eyes of a body that is situated, that sees only partially, and that is positioned within a certain time and space" (231). She further argues that "He [Kennewick Man] cannot speak for himself but must be spoken for" (220). In Erdrich's poetry KM can and does speak, as do other objects in museums, becoming participants in the post-NAGPRA debate. Crawford notes that if we adopt Haraway's concept of situated knowledge, this

means treating Kennewick Man not merely as a bundle of bone to be radiocarbon dated and DNA to be deconstructed. It means facing the remains with the respect granted to a living human being, and it means granting Native peoples the semiotic sovereignty to speak for themselves, as subjects and not objects; to provide their own equally valued notion of history, time, space, and ancestry. (232–33)

Erdrich sets this idea into poetry, writing bones and artifacts that speak, exercising their own semiotic sovereignty. And in speaking, the bones and objects claim agency, inviting readers to imagine them in a new way.

Erdrich's poems—especially as they appear in the context of an anthropology journal taking stock on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of NAGPRA's enactment—propose a different way readers might think about bones, bodies, objects, artifacts. These things become agents, speakers who voice their humanity and who draw con-

nections to the reader, becoming fellow beings who stand in relationship with the reader. They become relatives rather than possessions. This shift in thinking carries significant implications, amazing possibilities for change, in public policy and larger public attitudes, especially if museums are one institution by which the ideas of the general public are shaped. Erdrich's work shows us that when we discuss NAGPRA—and other issues touching Native American communities—we need the voice of poetry, the voice of the artist, because these can do things that history and law and science cannot. Through voicing the bones, Erdrich helps readers hear and imagine a new way of thinking and being—as relatives of museum artifacts rather than possessors of them. Through writing this new story in her poetry, Erdrich gives breath and life to relationships based on familial and human ties rather than material value. She gives us and makes us new relatives; she brings about change.

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NOTES

1. In a telephone interview in April 2012, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh reported that *Museum Anthropology* does not usually include poetry in its pages; this is the first time, as far as he knows, that it ever has. The journal's editorial manager, Christine Weeber, brought Erdrich's work to the attention of Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Nash, and they agreed that the journal needed this voice in the issue about NAGPRA and its legacy. He also reported that the journal would consider the possibility of including more poetry in its pages in the future, if it seems to fit the topic of the issue.

2. My theoretical approach in this essay is also informed by Henry Louis Gates's

concept of deriving the critical apparatus for literary scholarship from the literature itself, expressed in his introduction to *"Race," Writing, and the Difference It Makes*.

3. For more information on museum practices in the context of colonization and its aftermath, see Riegel, Simpson, and Sleeper-Smith.

Several articles in the 1990 volume *Repatriation Reader* trace the history of science and classification that affected the development of anthropology and museum practice. In his essay "The Representation of Indian Bodies in Nineteenth-Century American Anthropology," Robert E. Bieder argues that at the end of the eighteenth century the classification system created by Linnaeus was used by "social philosophers" to create an understanding of social order (19). He asserts that "This ordering was a political act" (19) that kept European people at the top and others below them. With the rise of science in eighteenth-century Europe, attitudes toward the human body and its meaning changed: "the body became data. It was redefined symbolically, politically, and scientifically and was seen more as a specimen for observation than as the temple of the soul" (20). Bodies—particularly Native bodies—became artifacts to acquire and study.

In one of the most infamous events of classifying Native people as objects to be studied, human skulls were collected and measured in order to argue for the biological ways in which race could be measured and classified. In the congressional testimony leading up to NAGPRA, Senator Daniel Inouye noted, "When the Army Surgeon General ordered the collection of Indian osteological remains during the second half of the [nineteenth] Century, his demands were enthusiastically met not only by Army medical personnel, but by collectors who made money from selling Indian skulls to the Army Medical Museum" (Trope and Echo-Hawk 139). Sometimes these remains were collected from victims of military attacks. As Devon A. Mihesuah notes:

In the mid-1800s [. . .] after battles between tribes and the US army (such as the Massacre at Sand Creek, Colorado, where in 1864 Cheyennes were slaughtered [. . .]) dead Indians were decapitated by order of the surgeon general of the army, for "Indian Crania Study." In 1900 at least forty-five hundred skulls and bones were transferred from the Army Medical Museum to the Smithsonian. (Introduction 2)

In the nineteenth century, then, the interweaving of science, racism, and government action flourished, affecting more than just museum policy. Bieder points out, "Although the classification of crania and ranking of intelligence were political and representational decisions and not biological ones, they passed beyond the realm of speculation to become for many statements of fact" (25). Bieder further argues, "Stories told by polygenists underwrote the expansive ideology of Manifest Destiny" (25). In the period after the Civil War, Bieder and others show, the discourse of science—of classification, measuring, studying, placing in hierarchies—informed the discourse of national policy about Native people.

In her essay "There Are Indians in the Museum of Natural History," published the same year as the *Repatriation Reader*, Danielle LaVaque-Manty explains how the

rhetoric of the "Vanishing Indian" became important during the period in which anthropology was developed as a field of study. Non-Natives in the late nineteenth century continued the practice of recording, measuring, and defining Native people but also added an interest in preserving Native cultures that they thought were disappearing from the United States. LaVaque-Manty writes,

Toward the end of the [nineteenth] century, the consensus was that Indians were on their way to extinction, and anthropologists rushed to gain as much information from and about them as they could before they were gone. Museums were the places in which this information was to be stored—where scientists would do their research and where visitors would come to learn about America's past. (73)

So, this time for reasons they claimed were noble or admirable, non-Natives continued collecting, studying, and narrating Native bodies and sacred objects.

4. Klesert and Powell's conclusion paragraph takes a surprising stand:

We have no inherent right to dig or study human remains. Furthermore, our obligations, once we might be *permitted* to conduct such work, go well beyond the human tissue lying in our hands, to the entire living system it represents. Until we learn to accept this individually and as a profession, we are on indefensible ground. "Giving back the bones" is *not* the easiest way out of this dilemma. If it is requested of us—and it most certainly will be in many instances—it will shake the foundations of our profession and some of its most cherished assumptions. But it is the only ethical response professional archaeologists can make. (207–08, original emphasis)

In the range of NAGPRA discourse, even archaeologists call for drastic change in both attitude and practice despite the perceived damage it might do to their field of study.

5. This occurred after the "Ozette dig" found fishing nets as one of the artifacts retrieved from the site. See Brewer for a contemporaneous report on the find.

6. Policies might also look something like what Emily Moore calls "repatriation" in her article in the *Museum Anthropology* issue, "Repatriation: Possibilities for Art after NAGPRA." In it, Moore describes the process of repatriating a totem pole held by the Field Museum (in Chicago) and acquired under questionable circumstances. In this instance, when the pole was returned, the village donated cedar logs. The Field Museum then commissioned a new totem pole for its collection, carved by contemporary father-and-son artists Nathan and Stephen Jackson. As Moore points out, this process created a space for Native voices to determine what is held and displayed by the museum. In a personal interview in May 2013, the Field Museum's repatriation director noted that this was a very expensive process, and that boards of trustees at most museums are often not willing to undertake such a process (Robbins).

7. Lest we believe Erdrich is taking poetic license here, we should note that there is plenty of evidence in the scholarly record to suggest that such actions were not rare. In a panel discussion recorded in "Protecting Native American Human Remains, Burial Grounds, and Sacred Places," James Riding In relates a story of an anthropologist "using some of our ancestors for a puppet show for the amusement of his [university]"

class" (Riding In et al. 171), and says, "Sometimes professors and museum curators used the crania, or skulls, as paperweights" (173); Suzan Shown Harjo recounts that "the Modoks went to the Smithsonian Institution once, looking for the skull of Captain Jack, one of their revered leaders who had been beheaded. They found it on the desk of a Smithsonian scientist, where it was being used as an ashtray" (179).

8. The *Time* magazine cover appeared on its March 13, 2006 issue.

9. Several essays in *Repatriation Reader* turn to the issue of how Native remains and sacred objects have become commodities. Two notable examples are Robert J. Mallouf's "An Unravelling Rope," which argues that looters are a much worse problem than anthropologists and museums. He notes that "Caddo Indian cemeteries, many dating as early as the ninth and tenth centuries AD, are among the hardest hit [by looters], particularly by commercial looters who sell the burial artifacts (primarily pottery vessels, pipes, arrow points, and skulls) through outlets in Arkansas and other states" (62–63). Mallouf makes a strong distinction between those who obtain artifacts to do research and those who do so to make a profit, while scholars such as Mihesuah and Smith argue that even academic or scholarly researchers profit in some way without necessarily benefiting Native communities and therefore engage in similar colonialist practices. Deloria's essay in *Repatriation Reader* also comments on remains as commodity, arguing, "The attitude of the federal agencies toward Indian remains, an attitude supported and applauded by museum directors and archaeologists, has been that they are resources, comparable in most respects to timber, oil, and water, belonging to the federal agency on whose land they were found" (76).

10. One of the anonymous readers of this essay noted that this poem could be read as a "windigo" poem, where a nonhuman entity hungers for blood and is never satisfied. The windigo spirit, a figure from Anishinaabe stories, is often allied with the white people whose appetite for land and resources was insatiable to the point of being crazy.

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The Duration of the Land

The Queerness of Spacetime in *Sundown*

MARK RIFKIN

In 1906 Congress passed the Osage Allotment Act, extending to the Osage Nation the principles of the allotment program generally.¹ This policy imaginary draws on figurations of temporality in order to remap and reorder spatial relations. Presented by officials and supporters as a means by which Indians could progress from a stunted and backward savagery toward civilization, allotment offered a vision of necessary development over time that bracketed the struggle between Indigenous and settler geopolitical formations.² Emplotting Native governance and sovereignty as merely a moment within an evolutionary process of becoming casts Indians as moving toward the achievement of liberal modernity, rather than as struggling to retain control over their territories and to maintain their self-determination as peoples. In this way the projection of (settler) futurity legitimizes the effort to transform Native sociospatial dynamics at all levels, so as to make Indigenous lands more available for non-native expropriation, occupation, and investment. However, the use of narratives of time by the state as part of realizing and validating the restructuring of Native geographies does not encompass Indigenous temporalities. If the question of “simultaneity” and the need to produce a global sense of it due to European and US military, political, and commercial aims was a central concern in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this impulse also generated considerable scientific and philosophical debate over the nature or possibility of an absolute, shared “now,” a process of intellectual ferment that provided the context of emergence for theories of relativity and the notion of “spacetime.”³ We might understand allotment as a kind of spacetime, in the sense that its developmental vision helps catalyze the reconfiguration of the sociopolitical landscape, but such an analysis opens up the question of the exis-

tence of other kinds of spatiotemporal experience that remain available for Indigenous people(s) in that “same” space.

I choose the term “spacetime” advisedly, drawing on its role within the theory of general relativity. In a Newtonian notion of absolute time it exists and moves relentlessly forward at the same pace irrespective of its contents or any relations external to it, but in a postrelativistic vision of time its movements and unfolding are shaped by extant fields of force, functioning as part of a four-dimensional manifold with space. Within Einsteinian relativity, gravitational fields create curvatures in spacetime, and those curvatures result from the interpenetrating, mutually (although not equally) influencing operation of a potentially infinite number of gravitational fields whose relation with and impact on each other, as well as on matter and energy, depend on objects’ mass, proximity, and velocity. Drawing on this notion, and the challenge it poses to any absolute conception of “simultaneity,” I am suggesting the existence of divergent lived experiences of temporality that are coconstituted with spatial formations.⁴ Chris Andersen has argued that a scholarly insistence on Indigenous “difference” from non-natives creates a situation in which “Indigenous complexity [is] reductively fixed in time and space through apparently objective, logical markers used to bear the discursive weight of our authenticity and legitimacy” (92), and he proposes, instead, “beginning with the assumption that Indigenous communities are epistemologically *dense* (rather than just *different*)” (97). The concept of density functions as a way of indexing how Native social matrices in their rhythms of persistence, adaptation, and alteration (including in responding to colonial impositions, regulations, elisions, and violence) cannot be understood simply as localized divergence from Euramerican social and political modalities, which are treated as the paradigmatic basis for understanding what space and time “really” are. My use of the concept of spacetime functions as a way of indicating the density of Indigenous phenomenologies given the ways that US efforts to reorganize Native life (such as through allotment) are layered over extant spatiotemporal formations that are affected by those efforts but are not, in that process, made coincident with settler frameworks. Everyday Indigenous experiences of space and time can be understood as dynamic, expressing forms of stability while shifting in relation to new developments, without reading such continuity-in-change (or change-in-continuity) as deviation from an “authentic”/“traditional”

standard or treating settler patterns of life as the baseline against which to assess Indigenous being and becoming (Native “difference”). Rather, Indigenous and settler temporalities (and associated ways of imagining and occupying place) can be treated as co-occurring, but in ways that do not make them part of an inherently singular present.

This approach, though, runs the risk of, in Johannes Fabian’s oft-quoted formulation, denying the “coevalness” of Native peoples. However, the attempt to posit a fully shared “now” depends on taking a given spatiotemporal framework as the standard for conceptualizing that synchrony, and with respect to Native peoples, adopting such an implicit standard tends to entail normalizing the historical and juridical presence of the settler state. This difficulty can be seen at work in Philip J. Deloria’s *Indians in Unexpected Places*. In it, Deloria sets out “to consider the kinds of frames that have been placed around a shared past” (7), and later, noting the similarity of patterns of life and material culture among Indians and rural whites in the early twentieth century, he observes, “otherwise critical Indian agents . . . , when pressed, sometimes confessed that Indians and non-Indians were experiencing the world together” (180). The mutuality of Native and non-native co-existence and influence on each other appears here as common participation in “modernity,” but that term indicates something that exists separately from the temporal experience of Natives prior to that point. Deloria argues that “some Indian people . . . leapt quickly into modernity . . . because it became painfully clear that they were not distinct from the history that was even then being made. Whether they liked it or not, other people were building a world around, on top of, and through Native American people. That world took as its material base the accumulation of capital ripped from indigenous lands, resources, and labor over the course of centuries” (231). More than simply providing a period marker (*modern* serving as a name for what comes in the wake of allotment, for example), the character of the modern as a means of describing and understanding forms of presentness in which both Natives and non-natives were enmeshed (a “world” inhabited “together”) seems to be shaped by forms of settler extension and extraction that are taken as fundamentally altering the conditions of being-in-time for Native peoples. Mutual participation in “history” for Native people means being subjected to the force of settler expropriation, and perhaps more importantly, immersion in the “modern” as an epoch is defined by such

imposition/dispossession.⁵ However, what happens to prior Native ways of experiencing space and time, to the spatiotemporal formations that reciprocally shaped and were shaped by Indigenous modes of inhabitation, association, and governance? Do they simply vanish? What are they on the other side of the ostensible *leap* into “modernity”? How might the density of Indigenous experiences in the wake of allotment—more broadly, the operation of ongoing processes of Native becoming in the midst of colonial violence—be understood if not pinned to a shared, singular present implicitly delineated against the background of settler policies, imperatives, and frames of reference?⁶

John Joseph Mathews’s *Sundown* (1934) highlights the disjunction between an imposed US legal geography (animated by a developmental trajectory) and alternative Osage forms of sociospatiality, with their own complex temporal dynamics. Critics often have characterized the novel’s portrayal of the ongoing legacy of allotment in terms of a struggle between tradition and assimilation, mediated by the figure of the mixed-blood.⁷ However, not only does this approach overlook the ways Mathews links Osage placemaking to a pervasive sensation of time that occurs alongside that of allotment, but this interpretive frame takes the progress narrative that drives the remappings of US policy as the prism through which to narrate Osage experience. “Tradition” and “assimilation” implicitly bear a temporal relation to each other: holding onto Osage beliefs or *values* (themselves cast in somewhat ahistorical terms) versus capitulating to the forces of settler-imposed *modernity*. Instead, the novel highlights how the implementation of federal Indian law materially alters the phenomenological experience of the present (and its felt relation to the past and future) in ways that are at odds with, but do not fully supplant, Osage modes of temporality organized around the duration of inhabitation in that place. As Russell West-Pavlov suggests, “alternative temporalities remain latent and active under the threshold of linear time and its all but ubiquitous stranglehold” (6), or in Dipesh Chakrabarty’s terms, challenging the Enlightenment vision of time as singular and linear involves recognizing “a plurality of times existing together” (109), such that we may acknowledge that there are varied “ways of being through which we make the present manifold” that interact with each other and cannot be resolved into a universal, singular time (112).⁸ Mathews raises questions about the notion of a neutral, shared, singular “now” that Natives and non-natives can be said to inhabit.

Instead, the novel suggests how a varied experience of time might signal, and be enmeshed with, a discrepant way of inhabiting space.

While engaging with the ongoing force of allotment, the novel suggests that amid these pressures to conform to a futurity defined by the state's extension of jurisdiction over Native peoples another sense of time and space is also operative. In this way, Mathews explores the quotidian affects engendered by living through and navigating the spacetime of allotment as well as offering means for addressing how Osage spacetime exerts continuing influence on ordinary perception in ways that cannot be reduced to the terms/dynamics of US Indian law and policy.⁹ In this vein, *Sundown* draws on modernist techniques for representing the co-presence of multiple temporalities. The novel juxtaposes three temporal frames: the implementation of allotment-era Indian law and policy; the felt sensations of an Osage man coming of age during this period; and the duration of Osage occupancy in their homeland and the attendant emergence and persistence of ways of being connected to that place. Moving among these discrepant views of time illustrates how settler legal and administrative interventions come to serve as the background for everyday feelings of backwardness on the part of Native people (the discrepancy between the text's periodic indication of massive changes in Osage sociopolitical formations and the novel's relative lack of plot along with the main character's—Chal's—impression of his own failure to “do something”).

Moreover, the text often marks the lived incommensurability of these different experiences of spacetime through figures of “queer”-ness.¹⁰ The term signals a sense of being out-of-sync with Euramerican narratives of development, but it also marks the role of heteronormative conceptions of nuclear family property holding and racial identity/inheritance in the legal dynamics of Osage allotment (and Indian policy more broadly). Mathews's repeated invocation of queerness alludes to the linkage within sexological and popular discourses of people of color with perversity due to their supposedly less advanced forms of family formation and polymorphous desire. *Sundown* plays on this set of associations to suggest how Chal's inability to “fit in,” including his supposed failure to be properly heterofamilially directed, might open onto a larger set of questions about how the imposition of US jurisdiction becomes naturalized by presenting its reordering of ordinary life as merely expressive of the normal temporality of procreation. Conversely,

such associations illustrate how Indigenous modes of history and place-making are dismissed by coding them as an enduring, racially transmitted incapacity for civilization. In narrating Chal's sensation of disorientation with respect to events unfolding around him, the novel suggests that his feeling of queerness within the social formations created by allotment indicates less an Indian inability to adapt (one attributable to a degree or mixture of "blood") than continuing Osage connections to the land they inhabit.

Mathews draws on aspects of modernist style to explore how allotment's discourse of civilizational advancement comes to inhabit everyday perception.¹¹ The text manipulates the reader's sense of pace by juxtaposing different representations of time in order to register the disjunction between the alterations in everyday Osage experience resulting from policy developments in the allotment era and the feeling of suspension (not yet *doing something*) expressed by (some) Osage people. The novel explores how allotment's profound transformation of the landscape and Osage sociospatiality involves inculcating and instantiating a sense of time/history that does not itself register the state-orchestrated force of allotment through which land tenure, economic relations, and Osage modes of governance are reorganized. While acknowledging the effects of extant policy (including the multiplication of oil derricks, the vast expansion in the non-native population, the increase in direct federal regulation, the exertion of control over Osage governance, and imposition of statehood), the novel foregrounds Chal's and others' sense of stasis, of an apparent inability to gather momentum toward any productive endeavor or goal. It juxtaposes that feeling of incipency/immobility with what it terms "the great frenzy" (266),¹² which refers to the profound effects on Osage people in the early twentieth century of their wealth (coming initially from the interest on the sale of their lands in Kansas in 1870 and grazing revenues and then escalating increases in oil production in the late-1910s and 1920s).

Osage allotment differs from that of other reservations in that it preserves a collective interest in the land. Unlike the Dawes Act (1887) or Curtis Act (1898), which institute allotment for Native peoples generally outside Indian Territory and then for those in Indian Territory, the 1906 law allotting the Osage reservation recognizes continuing communal claims to their territory.¹³ Beyond placing allotments in trust for twenty-five years (254–55),¹⁴ a common procedure that was supposed to protect

Native people from the effects of a market economy they supposedly did not understand, the law specifies that “oil, gas, coal, or other minerals” are “reserved to the use of the tribe for a period of twenty-five years” with “the royalty” from those resources “to be paid to said tribe” on a per capita, quarterly basis (255), creating what has since come to be known as “the mineral estate.” In addition, Osages had collective claims to the interest from the funds generated by the sale of their prior reservation in Kansas as well as “all moneys received from grazing lands” (257). These provisions require an entity that will handle the affairs of the collectivity maintained by them, and the act creates a “tribal council,” consisting of a principal chief, an assistant principal chief, and eight other members (258).¹⁵ Moreover, the law allocates 160 acres each to three reservation communities (at the towns of Pawhuska, Hominy, and Gray Horse) that are “set aside for the use and benefit of the Osage Indians, exclusively for dwelling purposes”—also for “a period of twenty-five years” (255). Together, these provisions—a communal claim to subsurface rights, construction of a governing body, and acknowledgment of communities whose land remains unallottable—indicate the impress of forms of Osage peoplehood on the law, even as they are translated into forms more amenable to settler governance.¹⁶

From the outset, Mathews roots Chal’s life in the history of US intervention into Osage affairs. The text begins with Chal’s birth in his parents’ home near the agency buildings in the emerging town of Kihekah.¹⁷ Over the bed Chal’s father John asserts of his newborn son, “He shall be a challenge to the disinheritors of his people. We’ll call him Challenge” (4), situating Chal in an agonistic relation with those who would seek to “disinherit” Osage people from their lands. However, neither John nor the narrator makes clear the terms or history of that process of expropriation, and not until later does the question of allotment emerge, with John actually endorsing it. The narrator observes, “He talked about allotment more and more and said that in a few years there would be thousands of people in the new town of Kihekah which had grown out of the old Agency,” and John often contrasts his enthusiasm with the resistance of other Osages: “If it hadn’t been for the progressives on the council, they never would have been any allotment, if it was left up to the fullblood party” (44–45). Presenting himself as oriented toward the future, John casts the “fullbloods” as holding onto the past from sheer “stubbornness” (46).¹⁸ As against John’s sense “that something momentous was about to

happen” that “would change the whole existence of people who lived at the Agency,” the narrator notes that “something” “never quite happened”: “In reality the allotment was forced upon the tribe by people outside the reservation who had no particular interest in the welfare of the tribe” (49). Here the text locates non-native desire for access to the reservation as the principal drive behind allotment, providing a more concrete sense of the character of the disinheritance to which John initially alludes while suggesting John’s own misapprehension of the stakes and motivations of the policy for which he advocates. This disjunction echoes John’s own earlier confusion about the meaning of “challenge.” Prior to naming his son, he declares, “I live as a challenge,” but the narrator remarks, “he didn’t know what he challenged,” “it had never been definite” (3). Like his father, Chal occupies a collective relation of disinheritance but lacks the ability adequately to name that process, to articulate the nature of the challenge that faces “his people.”¹⁹

More than casting this misrecognition of the animating impulses behind allotment as a matter of individual myopia, though, Mathews periodically reminds readers that the political economy in which the characters are enmeshed, which helps give rise to particular structures of feeling, depends on US governmental action to catalyze and sustain it. After John and other members of the Osage council created by the 1906 act have been removed by the secretary of the interior due to their role in seeking to negotiate oil leases,²⁰ the text notes, “Chal had never thought much about the Government except that it seemed always present, like an atmosphere. But its presence had been beneficent and protective he felt. However, if it could dismiss the Council . . . , it must be very sinister and more powerful than they thought,” adding, “He had visualized it as a great force which had overcome everything; but a force that was just and kindly . . . A great bearded patriarch somewhere among the clouds, with outspread arms” (60).²¹ More than simply affecting the lives of Osage people, US legal and administrative interventions create “an atmosphere,” a presence that may appear “beneficent,” but whose very ubiquity seems to crowd out alternatives. In addition, while Chal narrates the role of US policy in Osage affairs as “just and kindly,” the government also exerts what he experiences as a potentially omnipresent “force,” godlike in both its scope and in its dictation on high from elsewhere. Later, while on a break from attending a fictionalized version of the University of Oklahoma, Chal observes of his continuing

habit of using the term “guv’mint” “in the old way of the reservation,” “He guessed it was because that word had always been associated with authority outside of the reservation; that potent thing which controlled the destinies of Indian agents, of school children, and controlled the payments. He knew he ought to say ‘our government’ or ‘the United States’” (165). These moments highlight the pervasiveness of Indian policy in shaping ordinary routine on Osage lands (including prior to allotment, although not as extensively), even as Chal also registers the alienness of that regime and the ways it seeks to solicit consent through positing a future that encompasses Native people as US national subjects.²²

The suffusion of Osage space by settler administrative mappings and directives—including the allotments themselves, leases for grazing, leases for oil production, regulation of town sites, and regulation of inheritance—creates an ambient environment in which merging into a US “our” comes to seem the self-evident basis for understanding movement forward in time. In this vein, during the process of choosing either town sites or land plots just prior to the formal passage of allotment, John says to Chal “something about his ‘seein’ history being made” (47–48), suggesting that for John, and implicitly for Chal, “history” itself becomes associated with the privatization of land as part of the broader implementation of US-sanctioned progress. Rather than indicating a particular Osage or mixed-blood conflict with respect to modern life, something like a clash of “values” or “cultures,”²³ Chal’s emotional orientations register the impact of such settler temporal narratives. The novel suggests how dominant discourses of time translate Indianness as a form of nondevelopment. Throughout the novel Chal compares himself to other Osages his age, particularly his childhood playmates Sun-on-His-Wings and Running Elk, with whom he initially attends college but who leave soon thereafter (refusing to take part in a fraternity ritual that involved paddling the pledges). Chal thinks that they “lacked the spirit of the times—lacked ‘get-up,’ as John expressed it. They seemed contented just to sit in the village and talk, like many of the other young men” (68). To choose not to engage in pursuits associated with business and to continue to dwell in places explicitly marked as belonging to the Osage collectively (“the village”) means having a somewhat recumbent relation to time—lacking “spirit” or “get-up”—such that one’s activities do not in fact count as activity, but as immobility, inertia, sloth.²⁴ Further, when Chal returns to the reservation from college, he “was

disappointed in his friends [including Sun-on-His-Wings] because it seemed that they didn't have any ambition": "He was the only person not doing something except the mixedbloods and the fullbloods, but he believed that there wasn't much interest in them—he certainly didn't want to be like them. He knew that he ought to be doing something. Of course he had never in all his life done anything" (162). Turning away from Indianness provides the precondition for advancing in a version of time defined by settler interests and imperatives, which explains the otherwise logically incoherent description of twenty-plus years of life as devoid of activity ("never . . . done anything"). To be any degree of Indian "blood" seems, by definition, to indicate a pervasive and intractable inactivity due to a lack of "ambition," but this supposed turning away from opportunity and possibility appears as such only within the context of Chal's experience of "ought," the impulsion toward progress—toward citizenship—animated by the "force" of settler policy.

One of the central ways that "ought" is materialized in Osage life is through the legalities of *competency*. The 1906 allotment act specifies that "at the request and upon the petition of any adult member of the tribe," the secretary of the interior "may issue to such member a certificate of competency, authorizing him to sell and convey any of the lands deeded him by reason of this act, except his homestead" (the first 160-acre plot allotted) (254–55). To be *competent* one must offer evidence of the capacity to engage in commercial relations (such as sale, money management, credit, and debt), and successfully doing so illustrates that one has crossed a civilizational threshold, has reached a state of advancement such that one can fully participate in the present of the nation. Being competent, though, further means losing federal trust status for most of the land one holds (the non-"homestead" part of one's allotment). Withdrawal of such recognition, cast as the wished-for achievement of fee simple ownership, makes that land fully fungible as well as taxable as private property by the state and federal governments. By the mid-1930s, between a quarter and a third of the Osage reservation had passed into non-Osage hands as a result of the voluntary sale of land (often either to avoid taxes on it or to pay existing debts), inheritance by non-native spouses, and the auctioning of allotted plots to satisfy taxes.²⁵ Conversely, those Osages not deemed competent come under the authority of non-native "guardians" as determined and regulated under Oklahoma state law,²⁶ and under an act of Congress in 1912,

all of the moneys due to such “restricted” Osages would be paid to the guardians on their behalf, a policy reaffirmed in a 1921 law that specified that those without certificates of competency or guardians could receive only \$1000 quarterly (regardless of what they actually were due based on extant Osage Nation funds) (Kappler 3:519, 4:317). The often stifling oversight by guardians, the extraordinary banality and extremity of guardians’ fleeing of their clients, and the statutory curtailment of access to the wealth increasingly generated by oil production incentivized the pursuit of competency, further driving the loss of land in ways already noted.²⁷

Sundown registers the multiple kinds of violence made possible by implementing this policy framework ordered around institutionalized narratives of Osage maturation into a capacity for private property holding. John’s murder by bandits in the attempt to steal his new car occasions the novel’s commentary on the emergence of the guardian system and the implications of dissolving Osage territory into a series of individual claims, as opposed to being under Osage national governance. While the novel does not indicate directly whether John and Chal have certificates of competency, it implies that they do given their ability to access their own wealth for various purposes as well as the fact that Chal’s inheritance from his father is not mediated by non-natives. However, when Chal’s mother narrates how his father died, since all Chal knew was the fact of John’s death from a telegram he received while still in the air force, she intersperses the events of the homicide with discussion of the appointment of guardians for “restricted” Osages. After noting “they found his pistol in his hand,” she recounts, “The agent said that white people in town could be guardians for young Osages and they will not have their money long, I believe,” and after a brief pause, she continues, “Your father said that the gov’mint would not let these white people cheat Indians, but they have done it all the time” (235), although later suggesting, “I believe your father did not believe this. I believe his tongue said this so that his heart could hear it” (236). The superintendence of whites over non-*competent* Osages takes part in broader patterns of *cheating*, with the government enabling this individualized but cumulatively quite sizable project of resource extraction. Chal’s mother does not clearly distinguish this program of theft from the murderous assault on John and the taking of his car. John’s protest against his wife’s warning about the prominence of white bandits is that “it is a civilized

country now” (237). In this way, the text ironically indicates that the putative *civilizedness* of Osage territory in the wake of allotment—with its subdivision of the land into privately held (and often saleable) units and the dismantling of a collective Osage capacity to protect themselves through their own exertion of jurisdiction—is what unleashes the potential for attacks on Osage people. Though they may take different forms depending on one’s status in relation to the legalized scheme of *competence*, such violations are incited by the detribalizing geography realized through US Indian policy and the developmental framework it posits.

Beyond noting the pervasiveness of allotment’s effects and the implications of its temporal narratives for Osage well-being, the novel further suggests that the significant alterations in the landscape and sociality of the reservation help generate forms of temporal affect. While in college, Chal “decided he would be a business man and amount to something in Kihekah,” further observing when he goes back to the reservation, “Everybody seemed to be doing something,” “Everyone talked about oil” (161). The felt need to do or be “something,” to orient oneself toward the future so as to be continuous with the proliferation of “business,” gains momentum from the commercial networks constituted and propelled by oil production. The novel suggests that this material reordering of life in and around the reservation generates an emotional trajectory toward a particular kind of sociality endorsed by US policy.²⁸ The narrator indicates that Chal “wanted to be identified with that vague something which everybody else seemed to have, and which he believed to be civilization” (281), earlier noting that “he was proud of the new paved streets and the tall buildings that had been built in his absence [while in the air force during World War I]” (237). Correlating this alteration of the built environment with “civilization” presents the changes in Osage space as progress in time, as advancement from a benighted past toward the (sometimes elliptical) potentials of an enlightened tomorrow. From this allotment-induced vantage point, the alterations in Osage life brought by oil production and its economies seem less a historical shift within Osage sociality, to which individual Osages are more or less attracted (as with any form of change), than as a break with Osage ways that appear, from this perspective, as *uncivilized* and of the past. The novel suggests how the allotment-era reconfiguration of the geopolitics of Osage sovereignty and the topography of everyday life provides momentum for particular forms of identification

that are experienced as necessarily a renunciation of a sense of Osage identity, which itself is cast as inherently superseded in the move toward the “modern.” The spatial and temporal effects of federal Indian policy’s field of force as it operates in and over Osage territory produce Indians and Indianness as a mode of anachronism from which Osage people are supposed to distance themselves.

In response, Mathews draws attention to the counterforce exerted by an ongoing Osage relation to the physical place of their collective history, which exceeds the contours and velocities materialized through Indian policy. If Chal “has never in all his life done anything,” that fact can be traced to the wealth generated by Osage lands. The text notes, “The payments in royalties to the members of the tribe on the roll became larger and larger as the oil production increased” (62), adding, “There was nothing to do except talk. Their incomes were so large now that they didn’t think of working at anything; in fact, they had never worked except by spurts when some enthusiasm came over them” (75). As a result of their quarterly income, especially generated by royalties from oil, holders of Osage headrights do not need to engage in wage labor in order to have revenue to meet their expenses and to fulfill their desires. However, as noted earlier, the Osage Nation successfully fought to retain collective rights to the mineral estate, and in the novel’s representation, the funds generated by the oil economy facilitate forms of everyday action (the “talk[ing]” and forms of “enthusiasm” that do not count as “anything”) that are not consistent with the kinds of interactions and modes of inhabitation envisioned and incited by allotment’s privatizing imaginary.²⁹

Osage oil wealth testifies to a collective Osage territoriality preserved in the provision of the 1906 act that “reserved to the use of the tribe” all “oil, gas, coal, or other minerals” found on the reservation (Kappler 3:255). The mineral estate indexes the continuing existence of a shared Osage relation to place, suggesting a timescale and affective connections that are irreducible to the temporality of allotment-era initiatives. Chal “remembered that his father had said that an Indian is not a wanderer—that people said they were nomads, but that no one loved his native soil more than Indians” (234), and during Chal’s time in the sweat lodge, Chief Watching Eagle (Sun-On-His-Wing’s father) amplifies this expression of an enduring connection to the “soil”: “We must have time to keep our place on earth . . . Our children must keep our place on

earth. If we think all time of these troublous things, we will not have time to think of other things. We will not have time to keep our place on earth” (275). Like the indefinite “something” for which Chal often longs, the project of “keep[ing] our place” also involves activity within “time,” not simply the absence of productive endeavor. While from the perspective of US policy the mineral estate seems to suggest a residual geography of peoplehood, one anachronistically retained so as to facilitate certain kinds of resource extraction, it instead appears here as a translation of a persistent process through which an Osage “we” is (re)constituted as a landed entity—as an entity whose regeneration in time depends on an active connection to the “earth” they inhabit.³⁰

As discussed earlier, Mathews plays on the disjunction between the significant, forced reorganization of Osage political economy in a fairly short period and the felt sense by (some) Osages of being unable to move toward the “something” of allotment-projected progress, and the text further contrasts these temporal framings with a third temporality: the duration of Osage inhabitation on the land. The narrator notes of the spread of the oil derricks: “At the tip of the westward movement, half a dozen little towns grew up; not out of the earth like mushrooms, as they were not of this part of the earth; they had no harmony with the Osage. Later they were like driftwood carried in from strange lands on a high tide and left stranded when the tide went out” (303). The non-native infrastructure that emerges out of petro-capitalism ill-fits “this part of the earth,” appearing as something borne from somewhere else and left abandoned in an alien land. The narrator suggests that these towns do not belong because they arise suddenly and have no enduring connection to this territory, their *strangeness* bespeaking the absence of a history that would accommodate them to and integrate them within this place. Such discordance contrasts with the ongoing set of relationships generated by Osage inhabitation over, at least, hundreds of years.³¹

In using the term *harmony*, though, Mathews is suggesting less a state of sustained equilibrium, or something like an ability to commune with the land, than an extended process by which the multiplicity of elements of the territory (themselves changing) collectively exert influence on Osage lifeways.³² In trying to console White Deer, whose son Running Elk (Chal’s childhood friend) had been murdered by whites, Watching Eagle says to him:

Here are graves of your grandfathers. You came out of this earth here. The life of this earth here comes out of ground into your feet and flows all over your body. You are part of this earth here like trees, like rabbit, like birds. Our people built their lodges here. That which came out of the ground into their feet and over their bodies into their hands, they put into making of their lodges. They made songs of that which came out of ground into their bodies. Those lodges were good and beautiful. Those songs were good and beautiful. Thoughts which they had were good because they came out of ground here. That ground is their mother. (274)

The text's portrayal of an embodied relation to place functions less as a claim about the persistence of a static "tradition" than the powerful effects of locational continuity—the shaping stimulation of place on human action.³³ The reference to the "graves of your grandfathers" gestures toward the temporal scope of inhabitation, further enhanced by a version of the past progressive tense ("Our people built") that suggests continued activity over a multigenerational timespan. Being "part of" this place involves less the retrieval of something from the past—a lost or endangered "origin" or "tradition"—than a way of occupying the present that bears within it the momentum of a much longer time frame than that posited in and materialized through federal Indian policy. Although delivered in a somewhat elegiac tone, this moment speaks to the generativity of "this earth" and the patterns of inhabitation and relation that have arisen out of Osage living in this place. The text highlights a sensation of continuity that has less to do with the maintenance of a particular lifestyle (as signaled by specific forms of housing or the absence of certain kinds of infrastructure or technology) than with occupying time in ways at odds with the developmental narrative animating "the great frenzy" of allotment and oil production. The novel envisions ways of moving toward the future that are not coincident with the privatizing geography of Indian policy, the model of civilizational maturation (and competence) it instantiates, or the ambition for "business" it seeks to incite.³⁴

The text explores the experience of living within the sensation and spacetime of enduring Osage occupancy in a geography also transected by US government initiatives and imperatives that seek to engender identification with a privatizing and detribalizing vision of progress. In detail-

ing these discrepant forces acting on Osage people (in varied ways, but ones that are not reducible to a vaguely defined *mixedness* or *betweenness*), Mathews offers no mediating, neutral third term against which they could be reconciled and evaluated. He refuses to provide something like an objective or absolute sense of “now” through which either set of sensations or inclinations could be cast as merely *ideas* or *beliefs*, as contrasted with the actual *facts* of modernity. Rather, these formations have overlapping spheres of influence that create disjunctive effects for Native people who live their intersection. *Queerness* emerges in the text as a way of naming the difficulties, or in Andersen’s terms the density, of inhabiting these discordant spatial and temporal configurations within the context of escalating settler colonial pressure and imposition.³⁵

“Queer” appears in the text most often to mark Chal’s feeling that he has failed to embody non-natives’ notions of normality. The earliest use appears after his father’s white cousin Ellen calls Chal a “Little savage!” for cutting the soldiers out of a picture of Christ’s crucifixion that she had given him; the narrator indicates, “His heart was broken. A queer world” (20). Later, when Chal notes the “ugliness” of the white buildings on the landscape and the “unpatriotic” character of this sensation, the text observes, “He kept this feeling subdued; kept it from bubbling up into the placid waters of his consciousness, so that nothing would disturb those waters to keep them from reflecting the impressions that ought to be mirrored, if one were to remain in step. He certainly didn’t want anyone to know that he was queer” (90). In addition, when considering Chal’s connection to one of his fraternity brothers, the narrator remarks, “Chal had always been inscrutable to Nelson, and he was ever careful in his relation with him. He thought himself queer, just as everyone else thought” (92); and before going to meet members of one of the sororities on campus, the narrator observes, “At the last impression of his face in the mirror that evening, he had seen a bronze face in black-and-white . . . He had often wished that he weren’t so bronze. It set him off from other people, and he felt that he was queer anyway, without calling attention to the fact” (117). These moments all suggest that feelings of *queerness* emerge in relation to Chal’s and others’ sense of his Indianness, indicating that he cannot fit in with settler expectations due to attributes—actions, thoughts, physical appearance—taken as indexing his identity as a Native person. To be “queer” here means failing to “mirror” non-native assumptions and modes of engagement (with other

non-natives and their surroundings), creating forms of “inscrutable” oddity that point back to an elliptical kind of *Indian* difference. In this way, the term captures Chal’s affective experience of being askew—out of “step”—with respect to the rhythms of settler sociality.

Queerness in the novel marks the presence of a boundary, a threshold of translation between social fields, and its association with sexual deviance gestures toward a broader process whereby nonnuclear modes of family and household formation and nonreproductively directed forms of desire and pleasure are understood as expressive of ingrained, racialized tendencies toward backwardness. As Michael Snyder has argued, by the time *Sundown* was written the term *queer* already connoted sexual abnormality, and he further explores the various forms of homoeroticism that permeate the text, indicating that “the absence of discourse on Chal’s sexuality [in analyses of the novel] indicates a problematic silence” (28).³⁶ Yet, while bearing a sense of errant eroticism, the intimations of perversity surrounding Chal exceed the question of same-sex desire, drawing on extant associations of deviance with nonwhite populations as a sign of their lack of development toward civilization. Addressing the role of race in terminologies and genealogies of sexual abnormality, Marlon B. Ross argues, “While the perceived racial difference of an African or Asian male could be used to explain any putatively observed sexual deviance, racial sameness became ground zero for the observed split between heterosexual and homosexual Anglo-Saxon men,” “such that racial difference necessarily overdetermines the capacity for sexual deviance as a bodily affair” (168). Similarly, Valerie Rohy suggests that the emergence of “straight time” as a “regular, linear, and unidirectional pattern” requires the production of “atavism”: “the fantasy of a straight time assailed by racial or sexual atavism actually produces the linear temporality that it takes as primary, the order that *has been disrupted* . . . by a perverse backwardness” (xiv–xv).³⁷ Within late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sexology and ethnology, the absence of nuclear family structures and lifelong, monogamous heteroconjugal desire marked people of color as less advanced. Within emergent anthropological conceptual frames, which were increasingly mobilized within US federal Indian administrative and policy discourses, reprosexual marital union was conjoined with the acceptance of private property and construction of non-kinship-related governance as markers of progress toward the achievement of civilization.³⁸ From this perspective, Chal’s queerness signals his supposed

Indian atavism with respect to allotment-instituted norms while pointing to the transposition of longstanding aspects of Osage sociality into the language of perversity.³⁹

If the novel's refusal to marry Chal off by the end may indicate his homoerotic inclinations, it also may suggest a refusal to recapitulate the developmental trajectory of individual maturation by which the spatial and temporal dynamics of federal Indian policy are normalized as simply the self-evident background for the unfolding of ordinary life. From within the logic of allotment, tribal property is to be divided up and transmitted along nuclear family lines,⁴⁰ and centering conjugal couplehood as the atom of social life also provides the basis for defining the terms of racial genealogy—reproductive transmission from both parents of determinate quanta of “Indian blood.” These modes of inheritance served as cornerstones of the politics of Osage allotment, and in emphasizing the noncoincidence of Chal's experience with these ways of envisioning time, his out-of-step feelings of queerness, Mathews gestures toward both the continuing presence of an alternative spatiotemporal formation and the affective implications of inhabiting it amid the “atmosphere” created by ongoing (and intensifying) settler interventions. Over the course of the text, Chal has sexual feelings and relationships with various women, but the plot does not single out one woman with whom he will find connubial bliss. The absence of such a romance plot contributes to the sensation of a lack of narrative development, functioning as part of Mathews's use of modernist techniques to complicate the reader's understanding of time (such as juxtaposing significant change on the reservation with characters' sense of a deferred “something” that is always yet-to-happen, as discussed earlier). More specifically, this apparent lack of personal maturation—such as his mother's viewing him at the end of the novel as “a little boy in breech clout and moccasins” (310)—suggests a suspension of the normative process of individual development, a dynamic highlighted by the novel's structure as a *bildungsroman*.⁴¹ From the perspective of the state-sponsored story of proper entry to adulthood, Chal's continued identification with the land and Osage peoplehood—often expressed in eroticized forms of dancing (to which I will return shortly)—appears as a set of juvenile attachments to be abandoned, as queer deviations from the trajectory of “straight time” toward privatizing (and conjugally directed) individuation.⁴²

More than pointing toward the survival of Osage “culture” as a resid-

ual formation that persists into a present otherwise defined in settler terms, Chal's queerness suggests a set of affective relations that offer the potential for other ways of reckoning the time of Osage peoplehood. In particular, his queer failure to "mirror" non-native norms (especially of progress toward marital union) suggests a different orientation to what Jean O'Brien has termed the "temporalities of race" (105), in this case the ways Osage identity comes to be defined legally as the reproductive transmission of Indianness. As discussed earlier, from 1906 onward *competence* served as a crucial category in categorizing Osage persons and in making Osage land potentially available to non-natives through sale (even while retaining a collective interest in the subsoil rights), and as of 1921, relative *bloodedness* became an additional, although not equivalent, way of determining the character of (the) Osage people. A law passed in that year removes all restrictions on allotted lands held by "adult Osage Indians of less than one-half Indian blood," and a congressional statute passed in 1929 mandated that the secretary of the interior give to all Osages "of less than one-half Osage Indian blood" a certificate of competency within the next decade, as well as "all of the balance appearing to his credit of accumulated funds."⁴³ These laws do not indicate a quantum of "blood" below which a person would no longer be considered Osage, restrict occupancy at the three communally held villages on the reservation based on blood, or gauge a person's ability to be a headright holder in the mineral estate based on blood. They do link the capacity for civilization (as represented by full participation in the market) to a calculation of biological Indianness and conceptualize an enduring relation to the land as an Osage person as being a function of relative bloodedness.⁴⁴ Thus, while not entirely pegging access to Osage lands and benefits to amounts of reproductively transmitted Indianness, federal Indian law and policy projects a generational process of deindianization whereby (the) Osage people will increasingly have fewer, and more atomized, claims to the land of the Osage reservation, with the exception of the existence of the mineral estate itself.

As noted earlier, though, many scholars have read *Sundown* as chronicling the particular plight of the "mixed-blood" struggling to negotiate the relation between "tradition" and "modernity." This argument recirculates the logic of allotment-era policy with respect to the Osages by positing bloodedness as the central criterion through which to assess relative change, itself plotted against a timeline in which for-

ward movement in time means leaving behind attachments to Osage collectivity. Moreover, such interpretations inaccurately characterize Chal's status. In light of the consolidation after 1921 of a significant legal distinction between Osages of one-half or more Indian blood and those of less than one-half, the terms "full-blood" and "mixed-blood" came to refer to those categories, respectively (Wilson, *Underground* 180). Given that the novel leads readers to believe that Chal's mother's "blood" is all Osage and informs us that his father is three-quarters Osage by "blood" (53), Chal's blood quanta is seven-eighths, putting him within the "full-blood" category. Chal would likely have a certificate of competency that would enable him to evade the restrictions on his control over property and funds to which he otherwise would be subject. Critical accounts of the novel, though, use his supposed identity as a "mixed-blood" as the way of naming his ostensibly intermediary position between an authentic Osage past and a settler-defined present, offering no discussion of the particular legal matrix in which these terms gain meaning and the spatiotemporal formations imposed through them.

If one refuses to treat such racial distinctions as self-evident, or as fully determinative of Osage self-conception, the fact that Chal's story does not tend toward procreative union suggests how his *queerness* opens onto other ways of registering the presence of Osage spacetime amid the force of settler interventions and remappings. Specifically, Chal's dancing points to embodied experiences of a relation to place that do not fit the racially and reproductively inflected trajectory of personal development given force by allotment-era Indian policy. After Chal returns to the reservation in the wake of his military service, he begins to abuse alcohol, and during this time he brings a group of white women to one of the dances at "the village." "He knew how the dancers felt about people coming out to stare at them, yet they did nothing to stop or discourage it. They danced because they felt it impossible to give up that last expression of themselves" (252), and in bringing these non-natives, Chal "felt vaguely that he was betraying his people" (253). The dances, most likely the I'n-Lon-Schka, represent an "expression" of Osage peoplehood, a materialization of it for and by Osage people rather than a cultural practice that illustrates Indian difference.⁴⁵ For Chal, the dancing is tied to his felt need to connect to something that defies articulation: "as usual, he had a desire to join them. He had always felt that by joining them he could express that thing which came over him at

times; that something which had to be expressed, but which he couldn't possibly put into words or actions" (257). To join them would entail him physically *expressing* a sense of Osage belonging, a "something" which is not equivalent to the future "something" for which various people in the novel are waiting. This other "something" appears already present, but stifled or rendered mute.⁴⁶

Earlier in the text, before he leaves for college, Chal experiences a similar sense of constrained desire given form through his connection to the landscape of the prairie. After noting that Sun-on-His-Wings and Running Elk rode their ponies back to the village after school and that "they danced at the Roundhouse in the village every June and September" (68), the text observes that Chal "felt that there was something in him which must come out, and unable to find any other expression, he took action as a means, and raced his pony wildly as before." In addition, in order to try to address "this thing within which he couldn't satisfy," "sometimes he surprised himself by breaking into an old war song" or swimming "until he could feel his legs growing weaker and weaker," and "one day he stripped off his clothes and danced in a storm and sang a war song. Sang and danced until he was almost exhausted and his body was wet with rain and sweat" (70). In these moments, the narrator observes, "A mild fire seemed to be coursing through his veins and he felt that he wanted to sing and dance . . . He felt that some kind of glory had descended upon him . . . He wanted to struggle with something . . . There seemed to be intense urges which made him deliciously unhappy" (73); "this mysterious unhappiness came to him only at times, and never except when he was alone on the prairie" (72). The sociality of the village, and the dances that are part of it, become a vehicle through which Chal perceives "urges" that are unsatisfied in other areas of his life and that emerge, without a language through which he can express them, when he is alone on the land—outside of both Kihekah and the village. When experiencing a similar feeling in college, a yearning to swim naked in a nearby river, he demurs because "if someone did see him, they'd think he was crazy" (103). Here, his queerness manifests as a set of sensations that ties him both to particular Osage practices (singing and dancing)—understood as at odds with the orientations inculcated through allotment-era policy and education—and to the place of Osage peoplehood. The urge to dance and to engage with the landscape in ways not scripted by economic development and prog-

ress become intertwined in Chal's affective life, part of a single sensory and sensual matrix. When he seeks to dance on the prairie again close to the end of the novel, he fails to achieve a sense of relief or release from what he cannot express, and the "sense of completeness" for which he struggles is described as "an orgasm of the spirit" (297). The novel cross-references Chal's erotic relation to his own body and his surroundings with his (unsuccessful) attempt to engage with the land and his people in a way that will resolve his sense of dislocation—an impression of aberrance generated by the pressure of settler expectations, institutions, and mappings.

This sense of unrealized possibility indexes the affective consequences of living within colonial conditions in which participation in forms of Osage collectivity not officially sanctioned by the US government can lead to assessments of incompetence, including insanity, with direct material consequences (such as the restriction of one's access to funds and control over one's allotments). Yet, in suggesting how the process of "keep[ing] our place on earth" and of achieving "harmony" with "this part of the earth" becomes part of Chal's ordinary experience of his body, the text suggests that he registers the legacy of collective Osage duration, which provides an orienting sensory background—"something which had to be expressed" even when it cannot readily be "put into words or actions." Of Chal's life "on the prairie" as a child, the text notes, "Behind these impressions would be the silence, the tranquility of his home. Always he remembered the silence, and though he grew more loquacious as he learned to say meaningless things, he had a reverence for it as long as he lived; even when he had assumed that veneer which he believed to be civilization" (12–13). Here "silence" points to less an absence than an unspeakable presence, or rather, a set of connections, experiences, sensations that are too quotidian to be put into words, that provide the unarticulated background for Chal's conscious awareness.⁴⁷ The "veneer" of "civilization" sits uneasily atop this phenomenology of "home," the former comprising a set of activities and orientations which he has "learned" in the context of a post-allotment Osage life and education but which do not provide the primary contextual frame for his sensation of the world.

Moreover, silence marks the disjunction between Chal's sense of himself and non-native behavioral norms. The text observes of him while he is in college, "he had a feeling that the others found little interest in

the things which he had to say, and naturally he became silent,” adding, “he was completely at a loss to understand their attitudes and their philosophies” (139). Mathews here emphasizes a white fascination with sex as a point of distinction: “He had never been able to see anything strange or unusual about mating. He had seen it all of his life among the hills, and to him it was a part of nature” (139). In this way, Chal’s queerness emerges less as a particular sexual orientation than an orientation toward Osage sensations of emplacement (the “silence” “behind [his] impressions”) drawn from accreting experiences on the reservation. The text suggests that his engagements with nonhuman entities (including animals and the topographic and climatic dynamics of this “part of this earth”) and recognition of the ways human beings are enmeshed in processes involving or shared by those entities provides the milieu out of which his “attitudes” and “philosophies” arise. When Chal attends the Peyote ceremony led by Watching Eagle, he “sat there for several hours, and it seemed odd to Chal that he could sit thus, silently and without moving. He was fascinated and calmed. There was a complete absence of urges” (269). The “silence” of the ceremony resonates with the “tranquility” generated by his earliest, and not consciously remembered, sensations of “home.” At this moment, the “urges” produced by the tension between this affective complex and the allotment-activated imperatives of “civilization” become stilled, such that Chal feels a sense of what the text elsewhere describes as “harmony” rather than the need to express an undefined “something.”

This impression of a presence that both is and is not realized points toward a (set of) sensation(s) that would appear as perversity, passivity, anomaly, and anachronism from the perspective of a futurity ordered around privatization. Conversely, such sensation(s) can be interpreted as indicating the influence of a spatiotemporal formation at odds with that instituted by US policy, yet not replaced by it. During the Peyote ceremony Chal attends close to the end of the novel, Watching Eagle recalls,

Long time ago there was one road and People could follow that road. They said, “There is only one road. We can see this road. There are no other roads.” Now it seems that road is gone, and white man has brought many roads. But that road is still there. That road is still there, but there are many other roads too . . .

The road of our People is dim now like buffalo trail across

prairie. We cannot follow this road with our feet now, but we can see this road with our eyes, and our hearts will go along this road forever. (271)

Drawing on the idiom of the “road” that was central to Peyotism (see Mathews, *Osages* 740–58; Stewart 60, 90), the passage suggests a specific connection to place that has become habituated over time but that also indicates a relation to the future, a way of moving toward tomorrow that has its own momentum. While that road “seems” as if it were “gone,” replaced by a disorienting settler geography that makes the landscape incoherent with respect to what it had been before, the previous road remains “still there.” More than a memory, it continues as a sensory presence, “dim” yet perceivable by the “eyes” and “hearts” of those attuned to recognize it. From the perspective of this account of Osage territoriality, Chal’s feelings, including his yearning to dance, suggests the affective imprint of that collective “road” on him as a guide in moving toward the future. The text notes of this moment, “The silence that came over the lodge rang in Chal’s ears. He wasn’t aware of how long the silence lasted, but he was happy and contented, sitting there” (271). As with the “silence” that indicates a shared set of place-based orientations without necessarily becoming the foregrounded object of awareness, the “road” suggests an enduring relationship to the territory that helps animate Osage (self-)understandings even as settler populations, institutions, and mappings exert forms of force that alter dynamics of space and time on the reservation.

Aside from the question of sexual identity, queerness in the novel highlights the kinds of atavism attributed to Chal as an Indian, his non-performance of racially inflected reproductive couplehood, and the variety of affective inclinations that he shares with a number of other Osages in the novel—often self-interpreted as blocks to their “doing something.” Together, these dynamics point to an experience of time at odds with the rhythms, inclinations, and momentum of allotment-era policy. Chal’s queer feelings suggest an ongoing negotiation shaped by the co-presence of multiple modes of temporality that constitute what is putatively the “same” space, the Osage reservation, in discrepant ways. The novel juxtaposes the *force* of allotment-driven transformations—and the attendant fixation on production and commerce as gauges of meaningful movement toward the future—with the process of achiev-

ing “harmony” with the landscape. Mathews does not cast that tension, though, as between the emergent and the residual, with Chal caught in this particularly Indian time bind. Rather than posing the tension as between past and present, *Sundown* suggests that there are actually multiple spatiotemporal formations at play on the Osage reservation in ways that create complex, lived disjunctions that Osage people need to navigate—an institutionally overdetermined and ongoing process of translation captured by Chal’s sensation of queerness.

In this way, the text displaces the notion of persistent Indian backwardness as well as the notion that Native people need to act in the shared “now” of *modernity*. Instead, it points toward the difficulty of finding a rhetorical, political, or geographic position from which to negotiate among incommensurate framings or forces: one predicated on the progress of privatization defined by allotment; the other shaped by the more expansive time frame of Osage occupancy on these lands. As the novel suggests, oil production takes part in, and helps drive, both formations, encouraging increased non-native presence, federal intervention, and forms of settler expropriation while also enabling the Osage to defer wage- work, spend more time in the three reserved villages, and maintain connections with other Osage people (such as the daily “talk” that Chal often views as an absence of action).⁴⁸ In *Sundown*, Mathews casts such efforts to maintain social relations among Osages as part of “keep[ing] our place on earth.” That process offers an active orientation toward the future situated within an understanding and material experience of time emerging out of the duration of Osage inhabitation. Thus, even as the novel illustrates increasing settler pressures on (the) Osage people, it suggests the affective and environmental influence of the land on Osage personal inclinations and social dynamics—a phenomenology of space that is not equivalent to that materialized through allotment policy. Through the elaboration of Chal’s conflicted experience of time, impressions and urges, and queer anomalousness with respect to non-native norms, the narrative explores the complexity of everyday Native life under settler colonialism, particularly in the allotment period, without using settler policy as the reference point for defining the meaning of time and space.

Thinking about the co-presence of divergent spacetimes emphasizes the nonequivalence among ways of conceiving, perceiving, and living in the “same” place and period,⁴⁹ and doing so engages the density of

Indigenous experience without either treating Indigenous formations as surviving remnants from the past or presenting the present as singular in ways that tend (explicitly or implicitly) to privilege settler frameworks, materialities, and imperatives as the reference point for assessing contemporaneity. While deferring consideration of the relation between what I have termed Osage spacetime and the institutional exercise of political sovereignty,⁵⁰ the novel does address US interference in Osage governance, offering the influence of duration as an alternative conceptual and sensory frame through which to address the character of Osage peoplehood. The novel suggests how the allotment regime influences Native sensations of selfhood and experiences of time and history. However, it also explores the affective momentum arising out of an experience of space and time not predicated on the terms and instantiations of allotment-era policy. In this way, Mathews sketches an Osage phenomenology (itself responsive to change) that provides a frame for conceptualizing and living peoplehood while also refuting the idea that settler colonialism produces a decisive rupture in Indigenous lifeways such that its force necessarily determines the shape of the present and future. The text does not offer a privileged vision for Osage governance, nor does it indicate a litmus test for evaluating Osage authenticity. Instead, it highlights the uneven and unchosen process of translation among disparate frames—the density of experience—that is the effect and legacy of settler policy. The sensation of queerness that attends such translation indexes possibilities for another kind of future than that projected for Native peoples within the temporality institutionalized in the allotment era.

NOTES

1. For the text of the Osage Allotment Act, see Kappler (3: 252–58). Quotations are cited parenthetically. For overviews of the allotment program, see Genetin-Pilawa; Hoxie; Piatote; Rifkin (*When* 181–232).

2. On this process in US Indian policy more generally, see Bruyneel; Konkle. I also draw here on Jason Cooke's dissertation-in-progress on discourses of Indianness in the removal era.

3. On the effort to coordinate a single system of time in this period, and attendant challenges to the notion of "simultaneity," see Galison; Kern (*Culture* 10–15); West-Pavlov (20–28).

4. While in physics "spacetime" is a single unit, I am pluralizing it in order to indicate disparate formations all exerting forms of force. For accounts of Einsteinian relativity in contemporary physics, see Dainton (343–86); Greene (39–76); Smolin

(54–75). On its place in the context of intellectual life in the early to mid-twentieth century, see Galison; Kern (*Culture* 10–35, 131–80); Kwinter; Schleifer (149–83).

5. For discussion of the complex (and largely unacknowledged) entwinements of chronology (time as succession), periodization (division of time into units), and specific kinds of cultural content (a unit of time as itself illustrating a certain way of experiencing time) that swirl around the notion of the “modern,” see Osborne.

6. See also Lyons. For a discussion of the ways non-native accounts of history have defined the modern in contrast to Indianness, see O’Brien.

7. See Gillan; Hunter (“Protagonist”); Keresztesi (152–61); Owens (49–60); Schedler (41–54, 73–84).

8. These formulations of time as multiple are not equivalent to the idea of there being multiple modernities rather than a singular modernity, since the former remains pegged to the timeline/framework of European Enlightenment and expansionism. For an illustration of this problem, see Gaonkar.

9. In discussing the notion of something like Osage spacetime, I am not suggesting a relation to the past as opposed to the future. For discussion of the historically adaptive and future-oriented character of Osage social formations and practices, see Bailey (3–9); Harmon (171–208); Warrior (*People* 49–94). The concept of spacetime also offers a way of thinking about how transformations in scientific and philosophical discourses over the previous several decades, of which Mathews likely would have been quite aware, might have influenced his thinking about Osage history and politics. On Mathews’s education, travels, and cosmopolitanism, see Foster (149–247); Kalter; Lutenski; Ruoff; Warrior (*Tribal* 14–26); Wilson (“Osages”).

10. For readings of queerness in the novel focused more on its gendered dimensions and relation to homoeroticism, see Parker (19–50); Snyder.

11. On stylistic developments with respect to temporality within literary modernism, see Kern (*Modernist* 101–25). On modernist engagements with history and time, see also Esty; Kwinter; Schleifer; Stasi. Here, I disagree with Rita Keresztesi’s claim that Native authors of the period did not “employ the formal experimentation of Anglo high modernism” (113). For an alternative perspective on Native modernism(s) and the manipulation of genre and form, see Foster; Kent (71–112); Piatote; Schedler (41–54).

12. Mathews uses the phrase initially in his first novel *Wah’Kon-Tah*, a fictionalized version of the papers of former Osage Agent Labian J. Miles (299–308).

13. While the Osage Nation had been considered part of Indian Territory prior to 1890, Congress incorporated Osage territory into Oklahoma Territory when it was created in that year, so that by the time the Curtis Act extended allotment to peoples in “Indian Territory,” that term no longer encompassed the Osage. See Burns (“*Lu tsa ka*” 202).

14. Under the 1906 act, Osages held two different kinds of allotted lands: a 160-acre plot known as the “homestead,” two more 160-acre plots, and another piece of land that resulted from apportioning among all those eligible the remaining land of the reservation after everyone had received their first three plots. Everything other than the “homestead” was referred to as “surplus land.” See Burns (“*Lu tsa ka*”). Both

kinds of Osage allotted lands remained “inalienable” under trust, but the surplus land could be taxed after three years. Moreover, if a member applied for and received a “certificate of competency,” he or she could sell the surplus land, but not the homestead. While blood quantum may have played an unofficial role in determinations of “competency,” the latter was not defined statutorily with reference to race, although distinctions in blood quantum would play a large role in later laws with respect to the status of allotted lands and distribution of funds in ways I will discuss. For an overview of federal law governing Osage land tenure after allotment, see United States (165–92).

15. The Office of Indian Affairs had ceased to recognize the prior Osage constitutional government as of 1900. See Burns (*History* 392–94); United States (11–12); Mathews (*Osages* 771); Warrior (*People* 49–94); Wilson (*Underground* 42–43). On the effort in the early twenty-first century to replace this council with a new constitutional Osage government, see Dennison.

16. While many Osages themselves fought against allotment, the preservation of an undivided, collective interest in subsurface rights also can be understood as a function of oil companies’ advocacy, since oil production would be made easier if negotiated with a single entity (the Osage Tribal Council) rather than a multiplicity of different private owners. Oil was discovered on the Osage reservation in 1897. On the negotiation of the initial oil leases and their role in allotment, see Burns (*History* 400–419); Dennison (102–08); Mathews (*Osages* 771–78); Wilson (*Underground* 74–120).

17. Kihekah serves as stand-in for the town of Pawhuska on the Osage reservation, where the Indian agency was located and where Mathews himself was born.

18. I address the “full-blood”/“mixed-blood” distinction in greater detail later.

19. Sometimes scholars have suggested that Chal fails to live up to his name. However, John’s incoherent sense of “challenge” suggests that his formulation of Osage peoplehood here neither engages with the specific dynamics and effects of Indian policy as sketched by the novel (especially its ubiquity) nor addresses modes of emplacement not based on *conquest*—John’s way of framing the meaning of challenge (3).

20. This episode in the novel parallels the events of 1912 in which the secretary used the authority granted him under the 1906 allotment act to dismiss the entire council, including Mathews’s father. See United States (15–16); Wilson (*Underground* 115–19). In his depiction of these events in *Sundown*, Mathews leaves aside the questions of corruption—specifically the issue of kickbacks and the violation of the council’s own regulations about getting competitive bids for oil production leases—that may have motivated the secretary’s actions.

21. In his reader report for the essay, Robert Dale Parker cautioned me about overemphasizing governmental policy at the expense of a consideration of culture and ideology as forces shaping non-native action (including that of the government). However, when talking about such policy, I also am addressing the ideologies and presumptions that animate it, and my emphasis here lies less on the complexities of how policy gets institutionalized or the mediatedness of its implementation than on the force of its imposition in everyday Osage life.

22. Osages were made citizens by congressional act in 1921 (Kappler 4: 317).

23. For a particularly stark version of this kind of reading, see Hunter ("Protagonist").

24. On these dynamics, see Parker (19–50). However, he is less interested in Osage temporality and its relation to US policy than notions of work and Native masculinity.

25. Dennison (18); United States (ix, 19–20, 25, 64–66); Wilson (*Underground* 151, 158). Moreover, as part of an appropriations act for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1918, Congress authorizes the secretary of the interior, "where the same would be for the best interest of Osage allottees, to permit the sale of surplus and homestead allotments, wholly or in part, of Osage allottees under such rules and regulations as he may prescribe and upon such terms as he shall approve" (Kappler 4: 165), and in 1921 restrictions on sales were removed for all lands held by people of "less than one-half Indian blood" (4: 317).

26. The 1912 act regulating Osage inheritance indicates that those Osages deemed "incompetent" under Oklahoma state law "shall in probate matters" "be subject to the jurisdiction of the county courts of the State of Oklahoma," which includes the power to assign guardians to "incompetent" persons (Kappler 3: 518). On the operation of the Oklahoma guardian system, particularly its effects on Creeks, see Thorne.

27. See Kappler (4: 480–481); United States (50–77). The text also addresses what came to be known as the "Osage Reign of Terror" (258, 305–07), in which a white man named William K. Hale moved to Oklahoma, encouraged male family members to marry Osage women, and began orchestrating the killing of them and their family members so that his family could inherit the headright interests in Osage funds and mineral estate. For discussion of this part of the novel, see Gillan; Musiol. On the murders connected to Hale, see McAuliffe; Wilson (*Underground* 145–46). The 1906 act made "surplus" lands nontaxable for three years, and there was a spike in applications for competency just prior to the deadline so that people would then be able to sell their lands to avoid the taxes or to pay the taxes for retained lands. In addition, in the wake of the passage of the 1921 act limiting the quarterly payments to restricted Osages, many sought competency in order to avoid that curtailment of their income (United States ix). Mathews himself received his certificate of competency in 1921, suggesting that he may have been part of this wave (Kalter ii).

28. The novel does not engage with the differential gender effects of such temporal narratives, or the gendered terms or criteria of competency, presenting the sense of the need to be doing "something" in "business" as if it applied equally to all Osages rather than operated through a post-allotment gendered division of labor in which women would not normatively be imagined as wage workers or entrepreneurs. Moreover, Chal's mother—who does not speak through much of the narrative, to whom Mathews never gives a name, and who stands as the only significant female Osage character in the novel—serves as a placeholder for the persistence of an alternative Osage sensibility, extending the tendency to cast women as the bearers of "tradition" even as Mathews raises questions about the temporality of that particular concept. On Mathews's participation in a masculinist cosmopolitanism, see Lutenski.

29. On the possibility for capitalist forms of fungibility to support modes of Indigenous continuance and revitalization, see Cattelino (95–124). The work of Osage wealth in enabling modes of occupancy and association at odds with bourgeois ideologies and practices runs against the grain of accounts that understand capitalism as necessarily subsuming other modes of life and generating its own specific experience of time (even if it can be pluralized from within). See Chakrabarty; Gaonkar; Schleifer.

30. While critics often describe the novel as a tale of someone caught between two cultures, this framing misapprehends the contours and stakes of Mathews's staging of the tensions generated by the disjunctions between Osage and state-implemented spacetimes. On the problems of such a framing of Native "culture" in the Osage case, see Dennison. More broadly, see also Barker; Den Ouden; Engle; Niezen; Povinelli. Emerging in the early twentieth century out of a range of ethnological and realist discourses, the notion of culture suggests a kind of wholeness, such that each culture remains coherent and bounded while the person shuttling between or among them occupies some intermediate space leading either to alienation or hybridization. On the emergence of what would be characterized as the "culture concept," see Baker; Carr (197–206, 229–37); Darnell; Elliott; Evans; and Hegeman. On its mobilization in Indian policy starting in the 1930s under John Collier, see Marden; Patterson (71–102); Pfister (185–228); Rifkin (*When*, 181–232).

31. The land contained within the Osage reservation had been part of Osage hunting grounds from at least as far back as first contact with Europeans in the late seventeenth century, and from the late eighteenth century onward, if not before, it also served as a residential site for Osage villages. While it was ceded in the treaty of 1825 through which the Osages acquired their reservation in Kansas, several Osage bands either never left or moved back after 1825, and the other Osage bands moved there in the wake of the sale of the Kansas reservation in 1870. See Burns (*History*); Mathews (*Osages*).

32. Mathews does not conceptualize the physical conditions of the nonhuman environment as themselves unchanging or in some sort of eternal balance. For example, in *Talking to the Moon*, his memoir of a decade of living by himself on a ranch in Osage territory, he observes that the house he built for himself among the black-jacks "was not disturbing a state that had been constant throughout the years, since there had been no absolute constancy to disturb. No two seasons and no two days had been alike through the years in the flow of earth's life toward some mysterious fulfillment" (2). On the complexities of his account of the environment in that text, see Schweninger (75–95).

33. On modernist forms of primitivism, particularly as they draw on representations of American Indians, see Carr (197–256); Kent (71–112); Pfister; Schedler (41–84). Mathews himself, though, is not immune from the primitivizing portrayal of the Osages. For example, in *The Osages* he repeatedly refers to the Osage people as "Neolithic," which while possibly ironic seems to be used in a fairly descriptive fashion. Mathews's depiction of this process resonates with the "blood/land/memory" complex analyzed by Chadwick Allen in later Native writing. Moreover, the notion

of “blood memory” that Allen discusses in the work of N. Scott Momaday appears in Mathews’s oeuvre as a concept of “racial memory.” See Allen (160–93).

34. The most “traditional” elements in *Sundown*—the Peyote ceremony and the I’n-Lon-Schka—are themselves a product of shifts in Osage life and belief occurring within the decade or so before Chal’s (and Mathews’s) birth. These practices seem to provide the most explicit alternatives to allotment-animated forms of sociality and affect, but they themselves are of relatively recent creation while being continuous with, and building on, existing elements and patterns within Osage life. On the history of the Peyote religion and the I’n-Lon-Schka, see Bailey (3–26); Callahan; Foster (227–47); Stewart. At a number of points in his writings, Mathews dismisses Peyotism as something of a Christianized bastardization of prior Osage practices while also presenting it as an extension of prior practices through which to engage with Wah’Kon-Tah, the primal spirit. See Mathews (*Wah’Kon-Tah* 301–02, 315; *Talking*, 83–84). On the historical relation between Christian missionization, the boarding school system, and the spread of Peyotism, see Stewart (45–96).

35. One of the essay’s anonymous readers asked about the extent to which queerness and the notion of the “subaltern” might be complementary within my reading. One could characterize Osage spacetime as I am describing it as subaltern, in the sense that it remains outside the terms of US hegemony as established during and through allotment. The feeling of “queer”-ness as it appears in the novel, and I am discussing it here, marks that incommensurability, affectively indexing ways Osage social formations remain alien to the everyday contours of settler-induced social life. I choose not to employ the notion of subalternity more prominently, since its critical elaborations tend not to address forms of embodied feeling and would add another kind of critical vocabulary to an already dense thicket.

36. See also Parker (36–38). Susan Kalter has critiqued Snyder for not engaging with Mathews’s various expressions of homophobia (xxiv, xxxvii–xxxviii, 262).

37. For further discussion of the relation between discourses of race and sexuality in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Bederman; Carter; Ferguson; Piatote; Rifkin (*When* 143–80); Somerville; Stokes. For discussion of the relation between mobility and sexual deviance in modernist writing, see Trask. However, he does not address the relation between racialization and notions of perversity, which also entailed notions of stuckness—in both time and place.

38. I borrow the term “reprosexual” from Dana Luciano.

39. The novel makes reference at several points to the continuing existence of the clan system as well as polygamy (for examples, see 43, 238–39, 260). On changes in Osage clan relations from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, see Nett.

40. The 1906 act specifies that heirs shall be determined “according to the laws of the Territory of Oklahoma” (Kappler 3: 258). On this pattern more broadly, see Rifkin (*When* 143–232).

41. On the politics of the form of the bildungsroman, including its relation to (post)colonial articulations, see Esty; Slaughter. On its role in the novel, see Musiol; Parker (19–50). On the ending of the novel (including his mother’s view of him) as indicating Chal’s continued lack of direction and failure to achieve a sense of reso-

lution with respect to his struggle to define himself, see Hunter ("Historical" 64); Musiol (368); Schedler (54, 73). For alternative readings of the ending as more hopeful, see Keresztesi (159–60); Owens (59); Warrior (*Tribal* 53, 83). On the narrative of queerness as a failure properly to achieve adulthood, see Halberstam.

42. On the ways Chal's experience of himself challenges the masculine gender codes of allotment, see Gillan; Parker (19–50).

43. See Kappler 4: 317; 5: 88–89). Laws passed from 1921 to 1938 include various other provisions that specify relations of debt and heirship based on blood quantum. See Kappler (4: 482; 5: 89, 607–08). On the complex uses of "blood" to define contemporary Osage identity by Osage people, see Dennison (48–74).

44. In addition, while competency per se was not defined in strictly racial terms, certificates of competence from 1906 to 1929 overwhelmingly were issued to persons classified as having less than one-half Indian blood (United States 23, 35).

45. Mathews was well aware of the I'n-Lon-Schka, as suggested by the fact that Alice Callahan thanks him for providing great help while writing her book on the topic (Callahan xii).

46. For a reading of Chal's dancing as indicating his inability "to reconcile the modernist and Osage aspects of his identity," see Schedler (46). See also Owens (58). For discussion of his dancing as expressive of repressed homoeroticism, see Snyder (39–40). Given the stereotypical associations of dancing with Native peoples, one might want to deemphasize this aspect of the novel. However, the text also might be read as inhabiting that stereotypical figuration in order to reorient it away from primitivity and to convey a sensuous relation to place to non-native readers. On the reconfiguration of stereotype in order to signify indigeneity, see Deloria (*Playing*); Mithlo; Rifkin (*Erotics* 215–66). Thanks to Jean Dennison for helping me elaborate this point.

47. In *Manifest Manners*, Gerald Vizenor argues that "shadows are that silence and sense of motion in memories," adding that "the shadows are the silence in heard stories, the silence that bears a referent of tribal memories and experience" (70–72). See also Rifkin ("Shadows").

48. In fact, wealth due to oil production enables the Osages to defend the Peyote religion against federal efforts to criminalize it.

49. On the differences and relations among space as "conceived," "perceived," and "lived," see Lefebvre.

50. Mathews, though, was elected to the Osage council in 1934 after having finished writing *Sundown*, and he served on the council for two four-year terms. See Wilson ("Osage" 277–79).

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“We’re All the Same People”?

The (A)Politics of the Body in Sherman Alexie’s *Flight*

KERRY BOLAND

In the opening line of Sherman Alexie’s *Flight*, the adolescent male narrator instructs readers: “Call me Zits” (1). Insisting that his “real name isn’t important,” Zits characterizes his precarious identity in terms of a bodily affliction. Alexie’s choice of acne as the main character’s most prominent skin feature serves a double purpose: it points to a seemingly universal, apolitical, and ahistorical teenage annoyance; on the other hand, it also tells readers that Zits’s face is red, signaling the derogatory name for Indigenous Americans.¹ Acne marks the narrator’s Indian ancestry at the same time as the name *Zits* obscures his connection to any particular history. Shortly thereafter, Zits wonders if his acne problem is linked perhaps with being biologically half-Indian (4). Born to an Indian father who has since abandoned him and a white mother who died when he was six, Zits is a foster child and delinquent—spending his time shuffling between varying homes and jail. The upheaval has left Zits unsure how to be a “real Indian” (12). So while the opening of the novel may seem to indicate merely a passing concern of an adolescent boy, by connecting Zits’s acne to worries over Indian authenticity, *Flight* quickly begins to conjure more sophisticated questions of Indigenous political marginalization.

Lonely, frustrated, and vulnerable, Zits is drawn to a fellow young delinquent—a white boy called Justice who is highly critical of the American state. Their bond leads Zits to attempt a shooting massacre in a bank—a setting that serves as a microcosm of American multiculturalism with “many different colors,” “four or five different languages,” and “many different religions” represented among the patrons and potential victims (35). In a disturbing twist on the supposed justice of a multicultural state that respects cultural differences, Zits sees the

massacre as an act of revenge against American injustice. It is a violent political strategy that directly challenges the settler state's contemporary discourse of cultural tolerance and state recognition of minority rights. Zits's ensuing bodily "flight" through history, however, develops into a struggle to reconcile his familial alienation and violent actions with a growing sense that continued violence will not create justice for anyone, no matter their heritage or racial ties. This easily digestible, humanizing, anti-violence moral is the novel's most overt message and would appear to drain it of any concern for specifically Indigenous political rights.

Zits's bodily time travel not only pays heed to the physical pain of violence but allows him to see history up close from a variety of perspectives—a process that presumably, in the vein of multiculturalism, leads Zits to develop empathy across racial lines and eventually renounce violence when he comes back into his own body at the end of the novel. Both the anti-violence message and the time travel recall Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, in which the central character, Billy Pilgrim, becomes "unstuck in time" (22), shuttling between episodes from World War II and other moments in his life. Taking his epigraph—"Po-tee-weet?"—from Vonnegut's novel, Alexie makes evident that he is adapting *Slaughterhouse Five*'s narrative techniques and its global anti-war message in order to speak against the perpetration of violence *within* the United States. In the words of critic Joseph Coulombe: "By exposing the parallels between different types of violence . . . *Flight* broadens the way that readers think about global violence and fosters understanding between ostensibly different peoples" (131). Implying that beneath the surface all people share a connection despite "ostensible" differences, Coulombe's reading supports an uncritical multiculturalism harmful to any struggle for Indigenous sovereignty. While multiculturalism operates under a veneer of tolerance and equal representation for minority groups, countless critics have shown how multicultural discourse actively inhibits justice by ignoring material inequities. For example, philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek describes multiculturalism as "a disavowed, inverted, self-referential form of racism, a racism with a distance" that leaves the colonizing nation-state as the "privileged *empty point of universality* from which one is able to appreciate (and depreciate) properly other particular cultures" (44, emphasis in original). The move toward acknowledgment and respect for minorities thus confirms, rather than undoes, the "superiority" of multiculturalist view-

points. Otherwise unaffiliated with minority groups, the multiculturalist is left in a supposedly objective and external position of judgment rather than on an equal plane (44).

At the beginning of the novel, Zits's concept of indigeneity stems directly from multicultural discourse. He openly admits, "Everything I know about Indians, I've learned from television" (12). Led by the dubious narratives of popular culture, ones that mark Indigenous populations as merely historical, Zits's sense of indigeneity seems rather laughable. Despite the humor, readers should take seriously Zits's sheer frustration over his lack of access to the diversity of Indigenous experience. Although she writes about Australian indigeneity, anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli's insistence that a myth of authenticity keeps Indigenous populations under the privy of the settler state is relevant here: "multicultural domination," she explains, works "by inspiring subaltern and minority subjects to identify with the impossible object of an authentic self-identity" so that "the good feelings of the nation and the reparative legislation of the state"—political rights—are dependent on successfully performing that authenticity (6). Such a viewpoint weighs Zits's seemingly universal teenage angst not only with a history of violence against Indigenous populations but also with the contemporary multiculturalist task of assimilating to the expectations of the settler state while maintaining superficial Indigenous ties.

Throughout his travels, Zits's experiences in "the bodies of peripheral figures" (Ibarrola-Armendariz and Vivanco), both Indigenous and settler, complicate a neat reading of the novel as merely a search for human connection. Zits's body altering signals a contradiction reminiscent of the double meaning of his acne: it causes him to create a conception of universal humanity based on a shared experience of pain across racial differences, while simultaneously—and more importantly—signaling the historical and contemporary control that the American settler state holds over Indigenous populations. In this sense, the narrative itself embodies the contradictions of a multicultural state, which Zits and other "minority" groups are forced to navigate—contradictions that demand the performance of authentic minority identities while erasing the underlying systemic inequities that have produced those identities over time. Rather than leading to a stalemate, however, the critical juncture between these disparate interpretations of *Flight* reveal a need to rethink the oft-assumed universal condemnation of violence at the

center of the narrative's message. Instead, my reading of *Flight* demands that as readers we not only note *who* enacts violence but also begin to pay attention to the specific *types* of violence that the multicultural state enacts on Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) bodies. I offer a close reading of *Flight* in order to argue, in essence, that violence operates throughout this text in ways readers are not apt to see upon first reading and in ways that perhaps Alexie did not intend, but that nevertheless deserve serious consideration if we are ever to challenge the coercive power dynamics of the modern multicultural state.

The relatively limited scholarship available on *Flight* has not yet produced a reading that finds a critique of American multiculturalism within the text. This hole is surely related to Alexie's professed intentions for the novel. For Alexie, *Flight* marks a shift away from his previous "fundamental" politics, which he began to rethink in the wake of 9/11 and the war in Iraq (Nygren; Alexie, "Author").² Alexie structures *Flight* around a series of what he deems "personal betrayal[s]" in order to explore "the notion that violence is perpetrated on both sides . . . of any conflict" ("Author"). This shift has produced a rift in the critical response to Alexie. Popular reviews and interviews with Alexie praise the accessibility of the novel as well as its easily digestible anti-violence message (Nygren; Alexie, "Author"). Critics, however, range from the opinion that Alexie adheres to American multicultural discourse at the expense of non-Western cultures (Salaita) to the praise of Alexie's message as a means to create cross-cultural harmony (Johnson). Of the several critics who find subversive potential in the novel—either by suggesting that its use of time travel provides a counter to settler exploration or that Alexie's disruption of Indigenous stereotypes forces readers to engage with the messiness of history (Nelson; Bernardin)—there is little, if any, discussion of multiculturalism.

Alexie's desire to tell "what story hadn't been told" actually risks obscuring the larger history of settler violence and removal enacted against Indigenous populations. Only critic Jennifer Ladino expresses the worrisome possibilities of this obfuscation, while noting how Alexie also moves away from it in various post-9/11 works: "While the stories' gestures toward a transcendent humanism might threaten to replicate the discourse of multiculturalism and its ahistorical avowals of authenticity and purity, Alexie does recognize the complicated ways that cultural and racial distinctions continue to perform influential work in

American society" (54). Thus, despite the fact that Alexie himself admits that he is "very pro-American" ("Author"), his work still engages the structures of oppression against Indigenous peoples that are ingrained in the very founding of the country. These radically differing perspectives indicate the larger cultural and political struggles over how to define contemporary Indigenous populations in relation to the American settler state. Rather than siding with any particular one of these positions, this article endeavors to show how *Flight* itself invites these contradictory readings and—despite its author's avowed intentions—reveals the tenuous position of Indigenous bodies in relation to the American body politic.

Zits's friendship with Justice is an early example of the complex intertwining of individual narratives and state racial politics. When Zits meets Justice in jail he clearly articulates his investment in following the boy's vengeful lead by indicating that he believes "this white kid could save me from being lonely" (24).³ Despite his generalized anger, Zits is unsure at this point in the novel who precisely is to blame for his situation, and he turns—before his flight even begins—to a white settler for help. While Zits figures his initial reasoning for friendship in terms of personal connection, the implication is that Zits believes the influence of a white settler who speaks easily about the injustices done by the American state to Indigenous populations could "save" him from this cultural alienation. Upon learning that Zits is an Indian, Justice quickly apologizes to him for the settlers' treatment of Indigenous peoples: "I'm sorry that my people nearly destroyed your people. This country, the so-called United States, is evil. And you Indians were the only people who fought against that white evil. Everybody else thinks we live in a democracy. Everybody else thinks we're free." To which Zits quickly replies, "Indians have never been free" (25). The exchange between Zits and Justice, while couched in the moral language of good and evil, does begin to comment upon the unjust political climate of settler America. Justice's distinction between "my people" and "your people" puts a separation between him and Zits that recognizes inequity, while the switch to "we" in the latter half of his statement implicitly illustrates that "everyone" has a stake in the reverberations of this history. When he meets Justice, Zits marvels: "I just met this guy, and I feel like he cares about my skin and me" (21). That early comment reads as a statement on Zits's acne, but this personal interpretation begins to take on more political

valences related to his skin as his friendship with Justice progresses.⁴ Under Justice's guidance, Zits begins to believe that by enacting revenge for settler violence, he may heal his individual psychological wounds. Alexie's project, of course, is to upset this link between individual issues and larger historical narratives—a link that would “fix people into categories of heroes and demons, of ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Bernardin 53).

Alexie begins his task of upsetting dichotomous historical narratives after Zits is seemingly shot in the head by a guard at the bank but then wakes up in a motel room with an FBI agent whose name, he discerns, is Art. After much initial disorientation and confusion, Zits realizes that he is in the body of a settler FBI agent named Hank, whose job is to assist in stamping out the Indian population on an Idaho reservation. Although Zits inhabits Hank's body, he is able to retain his own mind and takes offense at Hank's partner's racist view of Indians. After Art expresses to Zits [Hank] that he believes “there's something bad inside these Indians,” Zits wonders “what this racist FBI man would do if he knew his partner was really a half-breed Indian. I want to tell him but I don't want to get punched . . . So I keep quiet” (44).⁵ Unlike Zits's earlier insistence that his own vengeful fantasies were not motivated by racism but rather by the fact that he “find[s] all [men] are assholes” (27), Zits now wishes to expose Art's racism—racism institutionalized in American settler authority. Zits, however, remains silent because he is afraid of the—likely violent—consequences if the FBI agent were to discover his actual identity.

Although Art, a representative of the American settler state, clearly poses a threat to Indians, Zits's formulation that violence is associated with anti-Indian racism is upset shortly thereafter when he learns of several traitorous IRON (Indigenous Rights Now) activists working in tandem with the FBI.⁶ Zits is initially excited by the groundbreaking news, as Indian activists were thought to be counteracting the FBI. His enthusiasm fades quickly though when he realizes that there is an Indian hostage, Junior, who will be shot if he does not offer information that the FBI agents and activists demand. Zits's sense that “these guys just like to hurt people” relocates the FBI agents' and Indian activists' violent motivations from specifically racist prejudices to merely an aspect of their individual personalities (50). “These guys” lumps both groups of men together without differentiating along racial lines. Similarly, Zits's indication that they “like to hurt people” suggests that anyone could be a

victim of their internal violent persuasions—not just Indigenous populations. This reformulation is Alexie's first attempt to suggest to readers the universal injustice of violence.

Yet, the following passages undermine this universal message, instead linking the brutality of violence against Indigenous people specifically to the settler American characters. Because of Hank's strange and seemingly unexplainable actions, after Art kills Junior he insists that his partner shoot Junior's corpse in order to show his commitment to the group. Zits, however, registers this request as an Indian rather than as the white settler whom he embodies. Whether or not Zits is reluctant to shoot the man specifically because he is Indian or because he is already beginning to see all violence as unethical, he figures his resistance in terms of specifically Indian cultural values. After the murder, one of the traitorous Indians, Elk, suggests the need to perform a proper Indian burial. When Art commands Zits to shoot the man unnecessarily, Zits turns to Elk for support and asks, "But that's not respectful, is it? That's not the Indian thing to do, is it?" To which Elk replies, "You're not Indian," and Zits must shoot the man in order to avoid exposing his identity (53). There is a disconnection between expectations for how the white settler body that Zits inhabits is to perform and how Zits, in his own mind, wants to act in this situation. Zits's appeal to Indian tradition in order to avoid the shooting displaces the act of violence back onto the settler American body while simultaneously revealing that Zits adheres to Indian cultural knowledge and beliefs. Although Elk's justification for Zits to shoot the man may at first seem to indicate that Indians are just as violent as the settler FBI agents, it actually suggests that Zits [Hank] can only act in this manner precisely because he is "not Indian." A distinction is still being made between the violent acts of settler Americans and those of Indians, despite Zits's earlier insistence that these men "just like to hurt people" (50). This intimidation appears to other characters as an act demanding solidarity among only white settler men. It reveals to readers, however, an act of settler violence that not only directly repudiates Indian tradition but also coerces an unknown Indian boy into committing an act of violence against another Indian—forcing Zits into the position of traitor as well. Alexie's portrayal of IRON activists as traitors reads as an attempt to expose the dangers and hypocrisy of the fundamental politics the author renounces, but Zits's resistance (and presumably readers'

as well) to the excessive violence stems directly from a perceived solidarity between Indian people as well as a respect for Indian tradition.

Nevertheless, this obvious act of bodily coercion complicates readings of the novel that characterize the Indigenous traditions that structure the text—time travel, for instance—as subversive acts against the violence of American settler exploration and expansion. In his article, “Fight as Flight: The Traditional Reclamation of Exploration,” Joshua Nelson reads across a number of Alexie’s works in order to suggest that “throughout his poetry and prose, metaphorical invocation of travel through time, space, and all sorts of in-between, ephemeral moments like flight and dancing reclaim the idea of exploration as resistance against boundaries physical and imaginative” (Nelson 44). While the traveling structure of the novel does evoke exploration in a manner that allows Zits to gain firsthand experience of Indigenous/settler historical events, Zits does not exercise control over whose body he inhabits, and he rarely has any control over how that body acts—even if those actions depart from his own viewpoints. Zits’s lack of control over his own body and the various bodies he inhabits then seems more indicative of the history of “coerced control over [American Indians’] movement” than it does a subversion of that control (Nelson 44). The very structure of Alexie’s novel represents the violence and control that settler Americans enacted against Indigenous populations. As Alexie himself acknowledges that most of his readers are white (Johnson 237), *Flight* covertly illustrates to settler Americans the bodily control historically sanctioned by the American state against Indigenous populations, even as it may destabilize settler understandings of linear time and spiritual embodiment.⁷

Flight does contain one story in which Zits is able to exert influential control over the body he inhabits, but this seeming agency quickly puts Zits’s mind at risk for the first time in the novel. He wakes up in the body of an elderly US Cavalry soldier named Gus, a notorious Indian tracker about to lead settler troops on a massacre in an Indian village. Zits decides to make an attempt to divert the arthritic, weak body away from the camp and explicitly states, “I’m in control of Gus now” (85). Nevertheless, Zits’s plan to alter the course of Gus’s body, and therefore history as well, is complicated when he realizes that “some part of old Gus remains inside of me” (86). His path begins to zigzag as he and Gus each war for complete control. When Zits begins to lose command of

Gus's body, his mind becomes muddled. He seems unclear on which thoughts belong to Gus and which ones belong to him: "His memories become my memories, too. This is new. I couldn't see into the past of the other bodies I've inhabited. I'm scared Gus might reclaim his body and drown me in his blood" (86). Although Gus's elderly body lacks physical strength, his mind is strong, and Zits worries that it is this mental strength that will finally overtake him. If Gus "reclaim[s] his body," then it may lead to a violent end for Zits. The suggestion that Gus could "drown [Zits] in his blood" reveals the intimate joining of the two. For the first time in the novel, Zits does not mentally inhabit an otherwise docile body; rather, his mind and Gus's mind become intertwined and expose a close and potentially dangerous connection between settler Americans and Indigenous populations—one that combines embodiment with mental control.

The combination of bodily and mental control complicates Zits's narration, as he struggles to separate his own thoughts and actions from Gus's influence. Delving into Gus's thoughts, Zits looks over the ridge he had been moving toward and takes account of various "[d]ead white bodies stripped naked and mutilated and ruined" by the hands of Indians (86). While at first it seems that Zits is mourning this tragic violence, condemning these acts of brutality, and learning to see violence enacted by Indians as equally unjustifiable as settler violence, the final moments of the chapter greatly complicate this reading. Immediately following the passages expressing sadness over the violence, Zits narrates, "These are not my thoughts. This is not my sadness. This all belongs to Gus, and his grief and rage are huge, so my grief and rage are huge, too, and I scream as I lead one hundred soldiers down the hill into the Indian camp" (87). These passages may read as an indication that Zits is empathizing with Gus's "grief and rage" over the violence despite the fact that "this is not [his] sadness," but the motion into the camp at the end of the passage undermines this interpretation. If Zits were beginning to condemn violence universally, then he would not make the decision to lead "one hundred soldiers" screaming into an Indian camp in order to wage brutal battle against them. It makes more sense, therefore, to read this passage as an indication that Zits's mind and body have been colonized in this moment by the settler American soldier Gus. Zits is not in control as he originally attempted to be. He feels emotions that are not his own, and Gus's body again begins to act in response to these emotions,

so that Zits's inhabitation of Gus threatens to repeat the anti-Indian violence he was forced to enact while in Hank's body.

The link between emotional manipulation and violence in this narrative recalls the personal connection that Zits cited as his reason for befriending Justice—another white settler American who led him to pursue vengeful brutality and the very reason that he is now being shuttled through various bodies and time periods. Thus, while Alexie certainly does illustrate acts of violence committed by both settler Americans and Indians, the structure of Zits's experiences, whereby settler Americans are continually the reason he is party to acts of massacre, undermines readings of the novel that depoliticize this violence by universalizing its immorality. Critic Susan Bernardin argues that in *Flight*, "Alexie . . . relentlessly complicates acts of reappropriation or role reversal by challenging heroic narratives of indigenous resistance, most especially that of the warrior stance" (52). Bernardin's interpretation helps readers critique the stereotypical characterizations of Indians typecast in relation to settler Americans. Nevertheless, readers should not allow this complication to obscure clear moments of Indian resistance to settler violence. Alexie may challenge the notion that violence itself is ever "heroic," but as Zits's encounter with Gus continues, it does in fact illustrate a major act of "indigenous resistance."

When the next chapter opens, Zits "can feel Gus's rage and grief leaving [his] body" as he begins to gain control again, making resistance to settler violence a renewed possibility—even as the ensuing episode redeems particular settler individuals. Shortly thereafter he admits, "I think I want Gus to die. I think I want to lose this fight" (88). Zits resists the violence that Gus's mind and body are pushing him to carry out, and he is willing to put himself in danger so that Gus is unable to carry out his rampage of the Indian camp. Upon spying a white soldier who has abandoned the other troops and is seemingly endangering a young Indian boy, Zits becomes determined to divert Gus's path and save the boy. He is surprised when the soldier moves to aid the boy rather than to kill him. Zits is in awe of the soldier's actions, narrating, "He has chosen the opposite of revenge. Somehow that one white boy, that small saint, has held on to a good and kind heart" (93). This encounter simultaneously advances a nondominant narrative that recognizes the potential goodwill of white settler soldiers and maintains a critique of the violence to which American settler troops subjected Indigenous pop-

ulations. Before aiding the rogue settler soldier, Zits must conquer the body of a settler troop leader attempting to massacre Indians. Indicating “I can defeat Gus” and asserting “I own this body now,” Zits effectively casts off the mind of Gus and follows his own desire to aid in saving the Indian boy (95). While to all other soldiers it would appear that the most notorious settler Indian tracker has now become a traitor to his own cause, readers know that it is actually Zits—an Indian body—who is leading this white body to renounce violence. Zits [Gus] does indeed appear a hero in this moment—not because he is a “warrior” (Bernardin 52) but rather because he works against violence. Moreover, roles do seem to have been reversed as Zits now administers the sort of control over Gus’s body that settler Americans would have typically enforced on Indian bodies.

Zits’s actions in this moment associate renunciation of violence with Indians and a singular white soldier; this individual soldier should not obscure the central focus of this narrative, however, which is Zits’s struggle to defeat another settler soldier’s body in order to prevent the mass murder of Indians. It is only the combined actions of the soldier and Zits that help the young boy—the sheer speed of the advancing army means that the soldier could not have saved the boy without the aid of Gus’s horse. This episode then represents Zits’s successful resistance to settler violence—a victory he was unable to achieve in Hank’s body. Yet readers should be careful not to regard Zits’s actions as a universal indictment of violence. In saving the boy, he does “shoot a bunch of other strangers,” qualifying that this violence was “in self-defense and in defense of the two boys who are riding farther and farther away from me” (105). Although Zits wonders whether there is any difference between his attempted shooting in the bank and killing white soldiers, he transports bodies again without ever having the opportunity to make a definitive statement. Alexie, therefore, invites readers to draw their own conclusions to this question. The unresolved ending to Zits’s inhabitation of Gus suggests the need for cross-racial alliances in efforts to stop acts of systemic violence against Indigenous populations, while simultaneously leaving Zits’s question open, thereby also allowing readers to interpret the episode as an apolitical call, which equates all acts of violence no matter the larger power dynamics involved.

Unlike his encounters with settler bodies like those of Hank and Gus, stories that focused on coercion in relation to Indigenous/settler war

violence, Zits's travels through Indian bodies expose the pain and brutality of Indian familial violence. After his initial encounter with Hank, Zits wakes up at the site of the Battle of Little Bighorn in the body of a nineteenth-century Indian child. He is in awe of these "real old-time Indians" and believes this is "how Indians used to be, how Indians are supposed to be" (60). Although Zits at first believes he has found in these Indians the authenticity and identity that has eluded him throughout his life, his assessment is upset shortly thereafter when he follows the child's Indian father to the aftermath of the battle. As Zits [Indian child] walks through the battle site, he sees "all around me, Indian men, women, and children . . . desecrating the bodies of the dead white soldiers" and has a difficult time understanding this seemingly pointless violence (73). Nevertheless, he does "understand why the soldiers had to be killed" in the first place (73). Coming immediately after Zits [Hank] was coerced into shooting an already dead Indian man, this excessive violence on the part of Indians calls into question the earlier formulation that violence is specifically associated with settler Americans. Nevertheless, it still allows for recognition that Indians had to kill in this battle as a means of "self-defense" (73) against the approaching settler troops.

It is these moments of unnecessary violence that trouble Zits the most—not the instances of violence in which Indigenous populations were forced to fight for their survival. As the chapter continues, readers learn that the child Zits inhabits is unable to speak because a settler soldier slashed his throat. In response, the father, who Zits valorized shortly before, instructs his child to do the same to a young white soldier. Zits then begins to contemplate the efficacy of revenge, even as he feels a strong pull to enact it: "Yes, they are soldiers. They are killers. And they want to live. We all want to live" (76). Zits is torn between excusing revenge in response to major injustices done to Indian people by the hands of settler soldiers and recognizing that the white soldiers are also people who just "want to live" like everyone else. Much like the narrative with Gus, this particular decision on whether to engage violence is left unresolved. Zits is simultaneously able to empathize with the Indian father's desire for revenge and to question a larger "circle" of revenge in favor of recognizing shared humanity. In her article "Healing the Soul Wound," Jan Johnson relates *Flight* to Indigenous trauma theory to argue that the "time travel paradigm creates a bodily epistemology that makes traumas of the past present for Zits and readers"; the

technique allows Alexie to expose the history of specifically Indigenous suffering (230). In other words, she suggests that readers, alongside Zits, come to know bodily pain that is not their own through his travels. While this analysis certainly applies for Zits, it misses the complications of how pain is racialized throughout the novel—complications that cause Zits to be torn over how to interpret acts of violence such as that between the Indians and deceased settler soldiers after the battle.

Although Alexie's explicitly avowed project for the novel is to renounce violence and revenge, he repeatedly depicts acts of gruesome violence—even as Zits remains conflicted, graphic descriptions of violence serve to disgust readers to the point of condemning all acts of violence. One of the starkest examples of this phenomenon is when Zits [Indian Child] walks through the field after the battle and describes in detail an Indian woman stripping down a dead white soldier: "And now she cuts off his penis and stuffs it into his mouth. . . . All around me, grandmothers are cutting off penises and ears and hands and fingers and feet" (73). This act of disturbing castration creates a shocking picture of horrific violence and defilement for the reader.⁸ The implication is that readers need to see evidence of excessive violence perpetrated by Indians in order to understand the universal immorality of violence. In relation to the bodily trauma of Zits's own father, Johnson argues that "one of the most important effects of Alexie's latest works—particularly since he admits the majority of his readers are white—is making Indigenous American historical trauma and the occluded truth of American Indian history visible" (237). But this moment of white bodily desecration by Indians calls Johnson's analysis into question because it is not merely "Indigenous American historical trauma" that Alexie depicts. The choice to show extreme acts of violence done by Indian people to white soldiers actually threatens to further obstruct "the occluded truth of American Indian history" by leaving it open for white readers to conclude that both Indian and settler Americans were equally in the wrong, rather than holding the settler state accountable for systemic injustice.

Arguments such as Johnson's, while tempting for good-hearted settler readers, actually reinforce—rather than ameliorate—the power dynamics of the multicultural settler state. Her theory of "bodily epistemology" allows the textual body of the novel to subsume the suffering of material Indigenous bodies for the uncritical consumption of settler readers. The analysis suggests that as readers we can come to know

and understand Indigenous suffering merely through the act of reading. This ethical appeal, however, does little to advance Indigenous political sovereignty once readers have finished the novel. While dominant multicultural literary taxonomies make it enticing to read *Flight* as a specifically Indian text—to mark Alexie as an Indian author exposing the truth of Indian experiences—Alexie's own statements about the novel, as well as his inclusion of characters neither Indian nor American settler, should make it clear that his scope of interest extends beyond just Indian identity.

Reading beyond settler/Indigenous politics does make it possible to read Alexie's works as products of multicultural discourse and American nationalism. For example, Steven Salaita cogently argues that a discourse of "liberal orientalism" pervades Alexie's use of explicitly identified Muslim characters in his post 9/11 works (22). He describes the phenomenon as one that supports "America as a fundamentally good multicultural experiment whose conflicting mores are problematic but not ruinous, unlike the external violence that has afflicted the United States" (23). While there may be inequities in the United States, Americans of varying origins are nevertheless bound together through a common enemy that makes the morally superior American state its victim. Indeed, Salaita notes that the multicultural tolerance valued by Alexie's readers (as Johnson suggests) does not extend in all directions, but rather functions as a nationalistic impulse that celebrates the exceptional state of America (38).

Salaita's reading of American exceptionalism is intriguing and important, but it is necessary to highlight other potential readings of Alexie that actually find a critique of those "conflicting mores" within his work, rather than suggesting he uncritically presents them for primarily settler readers. Depending on the investments of the reader, it would be possible to read this novel as an apolitical, universal renunciation of violence based on a shared notion of humanity or as an indictment of the bodily violence and control that the American settler state has historically administered over Indigenous bodies—a violence the state continues to covertly enact today. One reading allows readers to co-opt the history of Indigenous oppression into the workings of a multicultural state that recognizes Indians as a minority cultural group whose subjugation is a past injustice, one that has nothing to do with contemporary America. The other exposes the underlying systemic

power dynamics of this multicultural discourse that continue to impede Indigenous efforts for political rights and sovereignty.

The possibility for these two radically differing readings becomes clearer in the final sections of the novel when Zits inhabits his father's body, bringing familial issues to the fore as they were in the beginning of the novel. Waking up drunk on a city street in the body of a homeless man, Zits does not realize initially that the body belongs to his father. He passively observes as the man interacts with a compassionate white couple who offer to call an ambulance for him. The man is mercilessly rude to the couple, even blaming them for his condition: "White people did this to Indians. You make us like this" (136). Zits is dismayed and confused by this insolence and begins to "wonder if this homeless guy understands the difference between white and whiteness" (136). Unlike his father, Zits draws a distinction between individual contemporary "white" American citizens and the historical oppression of Indians by the American state's privileging of "whiteness." Here, Alexie's choice to explicitly name the race of characters (as he does throughout the novel) becomes an opportunity for Zits to question his father's attitude toward this particular couple, while also suggesting that "whiteness" does deserve critique on a systemic level (see note 3; Salaita 24). The incident perhaps grooms Zits for his upcoming adoption by a white family but illustrates once again his astute awareness of Indigenous marginalization in relation to settler Americans.⁹

Upon realizing that he is in the body of his father, Zits is horrified, believing this transformation to be the ultimate punishment for his violent actions in the bank; but the novel's unrelentingly adverse portrayal of Indian fathers is upset shortly thereafter. Curious about why his father abandoned his mother when he was born, Zits forces his way into his father's memories, figuring the action in terms reminiscent of colonial contact: "I crash through his fortifications and rampage into his memory and tear through his homes, wells, and streets" (152). Although Zits has been disturbed by countless acts of colonial violence at this point in the novel, it is his relationship to his Indian father that continues to pose the greatest challenge to his renunciation of violence. Unlike the story with Gus when Zits believed he needed to alter the actions of a white soldier in order to combat violence, this final narrative with his father suggests that Indian familial relations are more to blame for Zits's current condition than a history of violent settler contact. When he

gains access to his father's memories, Zits discovers the history of emotional abuse that stymied his father's self-security and led to his inability to act as a parent to Zits. He observes a scene in which his grandfather harshly scolds his young father, forcing him to repeatedly declare, "I ain't worth shit" (155). Afterward, Zits draws a connection between psychological and physical violence by describing his present-day father as being "whipped and bloodied by his memory" (156). Immediately before transforming back into his own body, Zits sees his father in the hospital while he is being born, and their actions begin to parallel each other: "And so he runs. And as he runs, he closes his eyes. And as he closes his eyes, I close my eyes" (156). The abandonment and psychological violence Zits undergoes as a result of his father's actions is far from singular; it suggests a generational progression—another type of violent Indian history.

The turn away from historical narratives of violence between American settlers and Indians toward a focus on individual stories of Indian familial abuse would seem to disable a reading of the novel that involves a critique of the settler state. The empathy Zits exhibits toward his father in the final stage of his flight foreshadows his own submission to authority at the end of the novel: "My father wants to resist, to rebel, but he knows the punishment will end only if he submits" (155). Upon transforming back into his own body, Zits finds himself returned to the moment right before the bank massacre, giving him the opportunity to change his narrative—to stop his resistance. The ensuing events, from Zits's decision to admit his violent intentions to Officer Dave, a policeman who has "arrested [Zits] a few dozens times" (17), to his subsequent incorporation into a white family of civil servants read as submission to the authority figures he critiqued early in the novel.

This turn of events easily indicates that Zits has now renounced violence and no longer sees the American state or individual settlers as the ones to blame for his problems; it grooms him for his new settler family. Unlike early in the narrative when he resents that he is not a "legal Indian" and therefore "the government can put [him] wherever they want" (9),¹⁰ Zits appears genuinely happy by the final page of the novel when his new foster mother offers to help him clear his skin. Ending with the statement "Please, call me Michael," Zits's travels appear to have helped him find both a home and an identity that is no longer defined by the problems his skin poses. Clearing the acne exposes Zits's skin

underneath; thus the ending implies that he is able to incorporate his “authentic” Indian identity within a family representative of the state. Critics Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz and Estibaliz Vivanco begin to recognize the problem underlying the novel’s multicultural turn: “Zits seems to be fully aware of some of the ironies and contradictions that govern a society which, albeit theoretically color blind, keeps imposing boundaries for those who belong to minorities” (35). But nevertheless, they make the troubling conclusion that Zits’s experiences “in other people’s skin” finally allow him to be “ready to accept who he is, and he leaves behind the dysfunctional teenager he was in order to become just Michael” (38, 42). All contradictions and uncertainties have apparently been solved by Zits’s inclusion in this settler family. Just as Zits’s skin has become reminiscent of Justice’s “clear” white skin that he so admired at the beginning of the novel (21), he is suddenly “just Michael”—all history seemingly erased or glossed over. Neither indigeneity nor American settlers are sites of struggle for Michael; rather, the two are able to combine harmoniously in one united multicultural institution. Just like the settler readers, Michael now has a grasp on Indian history and relationships that appear to allow him to shed his previous worries.

With readers left on the final page of the novel, though, with a major shift in the main character’s identity, it should be more difficult for them to accept that the emergence of Michael actually solves any of the problems that *Flight* presents us. Rather, the link between the settler family and civil servants allows for a reading of the ending that suggests the coercive power that the contemporary American settler state maintains over Indigenous bodies. Zits’s empathetic shift should not distract readers from the fact that none of the political implications of his adoption have changed from those early moments of the novel when he was so frustrated at being passed between settler families (9). Zits is still—perhaps even more than initially—an unrecognized Indigenous body that the settler state may move as it pleases. Thus, he is at once an embodiment of the violence done to Indigenous populations as well as of the settler narratives that would obscure that violence.

Embodying such a liminal space, according to queer theorist and Asian American scholar David L. Eng, is one of the major characteristics of the liberal multicultural nation-state. In the introduction to his 2010 work, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*, Eng cogently explains how the pervasive American belief in

individual freedom and progress has given rise to a state “politics of colorblindness”—one that disavows the continued legacy and influence of racial disparities in favor of “refus[ing] to see inequality as anything but equality” (2, 5). This phenomenon, however, does not mean that race has disappeared from our lives. One of Eng’s central concerns is how the liberal private sphere of the family has become “the displaced but privileged site for the management of ongoing problems of race, racism, and property in U.S. society” (6). As a sphere that is supposedly out of the state’s reach, the family becomes a place in which otherwise “racialized subjects and objects are reinscribed into a discourse of colorblindness” so that “race is exploited to consolidate idealized notions of family and kinship in the global North” (10). In a multicultural state (or family), the racialized subject is renounced in favor of a post-racial discourse, but the specter of race (and the resulting material inequities) nevertheless remains.

Although Eng is worried about the politics of transnational global adoptions whereby racialized non-US subjects are incorporated into privileged American nuclear families, his insights also signal what will become of Zits at the end of the novel. In between turning himself over to the police and joining the settler family, Zits indicates that he underwent “months of counseling, social work, mental therapy, and absolute boredom” so that “the medical professionals, and social workers and cops” could decide that he was no longer “dangerous” (173). He’s been put through months of psychological treatment akin to brainwashing by representatives of the state.¹¹ In the effort to stem Zits’s potentially violent desires, the state exhibits a less overt type of mental and bodily control over him. But he scoffs at their assessment of him as no longer dangerous. Instead, he worries that he is “a lot more than just dangerous” and admits, “I think I might be unlovable” (173). Despite his worries, just a page later Zits narrates his controlled movement into the family that will supposedly provide the emotional support he craves: “The social workers deliver me to the firefighter’s house in the middle of the night, like some sort of major-league prisoner or something. They don’t have me in handcuffs, but I feel handcuffed, if you know what I mean” (174). Zits’s words indicate that he was not in control, but rather that he had to be “deliver[ed]” like a “prisoner” in “handcuffs” to the family. Zits figures his incorporation into the white family of civil servants as similar to the state incarceration he would have faced had he gone through with

the shooting at the bank. His movement is by no means an act of free will. While his tears in the final moments of the narrative are most easily read as an expression of joy at having found a home, these passages reveal that Zits's movement is still largely dependent on the workings of the American settler state. Moreover, his adoption confirms that in multicultural America, settler violence against Indigenous peoples extends beyond war violence—it penetrates the purportedly private aspects of family life and forces particular identities onto marginalized subjects.

In a critique of the state's role in contemporary movements for justice, political theorist Patchen Markell provides a warning about the tenuous politics of "multicultural recognition" that make "the protection of the state, the distribution of resources, and the institutionalization of rights dependent upon one's recognizability as the bearer of an identity" (175):

Even when, in the moment, multicultural recognition does provide some concrete gains for particular people or groups, it also leaves its beneficiaries subject . . . to the perpetually needy and often suspicious gaze of the state and its normative citizens, dependent on their continued goodwill, and vulnerable to sudden swings in the national mood that can provoke transformations in the organization of social and political privilege. (173)

While the novel seems to promise that Zits has finally found a permanent home, the methods used to get him into this family suggest that Zits is in the same precarious position. He is forced to either erase all Indigenous ties or remain bound to the state's sense of an "authentic" Indigenous identity—one that does not interfere with the conception of an inclusive, largely colorblind United States. If Zits (and by extension, Alexie) explicitly critiqued these actions, however, he would risk looking as rude as his father did to the white couple on the street. The multicultural state's colorblind ethos and masquerade of tolerance responds to such critique by further marginalizing those oppressed populations it is intended to protect. The politics of resistance is cast off as too radical (perhaps too "fundamental" in Alexie's own language) and settler Americans are made to believe it will only disturb the respectful, equitable state we have supposedly cultivated. Multiculturalism not only leaves the state in a dominant position of authority over marginalized "minority" subjects, it also contributes to the dilution of transformative politics and protest.

The novel, therefore, does allow for Zits's happy incorporation into multicultural America, but it does so in a way that—regardless of Alexie's own politics—recognizes the state coercion of Indigenous bodies. Zits is still being forced to inhabit a particular body just as he has been throughout the entirety of his travels; this time, however, it is his own body that is being controlled, and thus the effects are far more permanent. There is no escape from this narrative. He will not move into another body at the perfect moment—his journey of ethical dilemmas is over. Upon turning himself in to the authorities and leading them to the abandoned warehouse where he and his friend used to scheme their violent revenge, Zits quite intuitively states, "I know that I won't see Justice again" (168). It is certainly a statement indicating his renunciation of violence, but it also comes with the resignation of defeat—of lost hope for political upheaval, Indian family, and Indigenous sovereignty from the settler state.

In the wake of the novel's integration of physically violent historical narratives with narratives of family betrayal and alienation, it is a keen moment to reconceptualize the discourse on violence at stake in *Flight*. There is little doubt that in the most overt sense, Alexie's narrative supports an anti-violence message, largely regardless of race, nation, or historical oppression. This discourse allows *Flight* to be read as an endorsement of universal human empathy. Crucially, however, this anti-violence discourse also supports a critique of the continued control that the multicultural settler state exhibits over both historical and contemporary Indigenous bodies. The former reading quite dangerously disguises the history of systemic oppression that Indigenous populations suffered at the hands of the settler government—even as the novel depicts many narratives of gruesome violence. The latter interpretation, however, demands that readers rethink how violence operates in the contemporary multicultural state.

Zits's incorporation into a settler family by the end of the novel is not by any means the end to violence in the narrative. Zits—as an individual body—has chosen not to *enact* physical violence against other bodies, but that does not mean he is not subject to it. The ending of the novel should be read, therefore, as a change in the form of violence rather than its complete renunciation. While violence that directly threatens the well-being of the body is still very much a reality for marginalized populations, multicultural America—with its air of tolerance and equal

representation for all—has adopted a more covert, savvier form of violence. It is an ideological violence of the liberal state under the guise of free choice, colorblind politics, and individual merit.

Readings that support the universalist happy ending—that ignore material differences in access to resources in favor of liberal multicultural feel-good politics—actually participate in the discourses that continue to deny Indigenous rights and sovereignty. The moments of systemic critique are undoubtedly more disguised in the novel than Alexie's explicit statements on the immorality of war, terrorism, and physical violence. But in this sense, these small moments of critique represent in their very form how the multicultural state itself attempts to mask larger power dynamics in favor of endorsing a narrative that suggests that all minority groups can be assimilated and are basically equal, and that structural oppression is a phenomenon of the past.

The multicultural structure pushes individuals, like Zits, to solutions that appear assimilationist and, in turn, seem to promote multicultural harmony. This apparent harmony, however, is the result of multicultural discourse coercing falsely ahistoricized bodies to make particular decisions and move in certain directions, decisions and directions that ultimately sustain the centrality of the settler state. Gone unchallenged, this ideological violence will only continue to justify the settler state's use of physically violent force and control against Indigenous and other marginalized bodies. Thus, it is imperative that readers of *Flight* begin to recognize how varying forms of violence interlock and exacerbate each other both within the novel and in the wider world.

Settler readers, of course, are still free to read the novel as an apolitical proposition that wrongful acts are committed by all sides or as a means to consume supposedly authentic Indigenous experiences. Perhaps the greatest danger of this reading is that it encourages readers to identify closely with the family that adopts Zits at the end of the novel. Such identification allows settler readers to put themselves in the position of fundamentally good and empathetic people—people who are able to forgive past unethical actions and foster the inclusion of minorities into the mainstream. It molds readers into concerned observers who come to the rescue at the very end of the novel; settler readers become only part of the solution, rather than intimately tied to and involved in every problem that the narrative explores. While it might be nice to believe that “We’re all the same people” (130), as Zits suggests right before his

final transformation into his father's body, the final chapter of the novel illustrates that this belief supports taking settler experience as the norm. It leaves the settler state and those who have access to its benefits in a privileged position, while simultaneously perpetuating the false notion that this dynamic justly serves historically marginalized populations. Surely, it is this universalizing moral that makes *Flight* marketable to a widespread settler audience and makes Alexie one of the most successful mainstream Indigenous writers in the United States. Insofar as the body of the novel informs readers' understandings of Indigenous embodiment, however, the easy consumption of *Flight* by settler readers becomes itself an act of violence against Indigenous populations—one that fails to recognize the control that such readings exercise over Indigenous bodies.

At worst, uncritical multiculturalist readings that focus upon the universality of human experience risk aiding in Indigenous oppression, and at best they miss a crucial opportunity to adapt their reading practices in a manner that not only recognizes but also counteracts the savvy operations of the multicultural state. This reading practice complicates the narrow characterization of *Flight* as an Indian text and begins reading it more broadly for the discourses it produces about settler America and global politics. This is not to diminish Alexie's contributions to Indian writing and representation, but rather to contextualize his works within the extremely complicated and multilayered discourses from which they arise.¹² Furthermore, it is necessary to go beyond merely illustrating the many ways in which multicultural discourse pervades *Flight*—a passive representation of the problem will not move us forward. Utilizing non-dominant interpretive practices gives readers a more complex understanding of the novel while challenging settler audiences to do more than simply empathize—it calls on critics to move beyond authorial intent and, in turn, pushes readers to situate themselves politically in relation to the narrative. For those readers dedicated to justice for Indigenous populations (and for all marginalized populations in America), such a reading practice is the first steps toward a politics of resistance that understands—and then can respond to—the varying ways in which multiculturalism continues to perpetuate mass inequities. It is a move toward imagining alternative ways of being together that allow us to struggle against systems of injustice without erasing the many complicated historical axes of oppression that still affect settler and Indigenous

politics. It allows us to base struggles for justice around our material differences and to organize in ways that let us connect because and in spite of those differences, rather than attempting to pretend that we are, or could be, all inherently the same.

NOTES

1. When discussing the novel or issues primarily related to individual and group identity, I utilize the term *Indian* as this is the term that Alexie himself uses. In other analyses not derived directly from the text, I have elected to use *Indigenous* in order to highlight a political and theoretical orientation concerned with the marginalization of larger populations of people. This choice is partially due to the prevailing theoretical language. It is also an insistence against misnaming the origins of Indigenous peoples ("Indians") as well as a means to avoid multiculturalist readings of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settler America ("Native Americans"). The change in language emphasizes my reading's resistance to Alexie's apolitical intentions for the novel.

2. In explanation of his previous "fundamental" politics, Alexie explains in his conversation with Nygren that he was "so focused on Indian identity that [he] didn't look at the details" and goes on to proclaim, "I'm no longer a reservation Indian" (13–14). In moving away from a strict focus on Indian identity, Alexie also moves away from any calls for Indigenous political sovereignty that may incite the type of violence he speaks against in *Flight*. The novel marks a notable shift from his 1996 work *Indian Killer*. It also has repeated narratives of gruesome violence, but the text takes steps to recognize the systemic and historical marginalization of Indian populations in order to show that individual violence will not ameliorate the problem.

3. Alexie emphasizes whiteness throughout the novel, presumably to indicate settler Americans. Steven Salaita notes that "Alexie always provides a named ethnicity for each character, even when the importance of such information is not evident," and suggests that it "highlights minority exoticism as a contrast to white majoritarian normativity" (24). In an effort to put pressure on the political implications of whiteness in relation to Indigenous populations, I use the term *settler* or *white settler* whenever possible.

4. Zits also admires Justice's skin, referring to him as a "pretty white boy" (24) and explaining that "His complexion is so clear that it's translucent. I can see the blue veins running through his skin like rivers. I have to admit, he's a good-looking guy" (21). The comparison clearly juxtaposes Zits's feelings about his red, acne-covered skin with an overvaluing of "clear" white skin. The statement illustrates Zits's personal insecurities while quite clearly taking on political meaning.

5. Related to above: Alexie's focus on whiteness corresponds to the characterization of "Indian" as a racial category. This is evident by Alexie's focus on lineage and Zits's own description of himself as a "half-breed Indian." Although she writes specifically about the Cherokee Nation, anthropologist Circe Sturm has shown in

detail that Indigenous kinship structures have not historically aligned with the racial taxonomies of Euro-American tradition and that the amount of “blood” required to be considered for legal Indigenous status has changed greatly according to the time period and political climate. This is another reason I have chosen to juxtapose Indigenous peoples with settler Americans whenever possible, rather than merely emphasizing differing and ahistoricized racial categories. For more, see Circe Sturm’s *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*.

6. IRON is Alexie’s fictionalized stand-in for AIM (American Indian Movement). The group, founded in the late 1960s, advocates for Indigenous rights and sovereignty. The group perfectly fits the description of the type of fundamental politics that Alexie renounces.

7. While *Flight* engages with Indigenous traditions by altering settler expectations of time and spirituality, Zits also often makes reference to how odd and worrying his abilities are: “My memory is strange that way. I often remember people I’ve never met and events and places I’ve never seen” (2); “I think, I have to be in some kind of dream. This can’t be real” (45); “I’m a fifteen-year-old foster kid with a history of fire setting, time traveling, body shifting, and mass-murder contemplation. I think I’m a lot more than dangerous” (173). By including these remarks, Alexie does write to settler Americans who would find these phenomena strange, so it is possible to read these aspects of the novel more as elements of settler fantasy rather than evidence of Indigenous reality. This supports a multicultural reading of the novel in that it incorporates Indigenous traditions into the mainstream.

8. The episode of castration leads to other references to abusive, and potentially sexual, violence in the novel that relate directly to Zits’s own life. See Alexie (75, 160).

9. The disconnection between Zits’s understanding of whiteness and his father’s understanding is not merely a matter of their level of analysis (individual vs. systemic), but also a historical issue. It calls to mind David Eng’s discussion of legal scholar Cheryl Harris’s concept of “whiteness as property.” She argues that racial oppression evolves to fit the historical landscape without ever disappearing. Zits is able to separate this couple from historical marginalization of Indigenous peoples, but his father cannot. Note the shift in tense: “white people *did* this to Indians. They *make* us like this” (emphasis added). He recognizes that oppression is ongoing, even if he places blame questionably. In Eng’s explanation: “racial attitudes shift, but the right to exclude remains a historical constant, one ultimately rendering liberal notions of continuous social progress illusory” (6).

10. Just before Zits makes the comment about not being a “legal Indian,” he specifically references the Indian Child Welfare Act, noting that it is “supposed to protect half-breed orphans like me” (8). It is the first and only time in the novel Zits takes issue with a specific policy of the settler government. The 1978 law allows Indigenous reservations the right to determine custody for children on the reservation. However, complications over who does and does not qualify as Indian (see especially note 5) mean that this law does not guarantee that all children who would identify as Indigenous themselves or have Indigenous ancestry actually get placed within Indigenous families. Indigenous children have historically been removed from their homes and

tribal affiliations; the practice is certainly a politicized aim at weakening Indigenous presence in America and forcing assimilation to the settler state. For official law and policy, visit www.nicwa.org/indian_child_welfare_act.

11. Zits's treatment prior to his entrance into the settler family recalls a long history of forced institutionalization and assimilation of Indigenous peoples. Techniques of the state ranged from children being sent to special Native American boarding schools to the creation of asylums for supposedly "insane" Indigenous peoples. The purpose of such institutions was to rob Indigenous peoples of connections to their language, culture, or tribe, if not to murder them outright. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn has even noted that Indian reservations were likely created by the government as another potential means of genocide, although now most Indigenous peoples view this land as their home and strive to protect it from the political influence of the settler state. In regard to what she terms "anti-indianism" in North America, she writes: "In general, today's American Indians from First Nation enclaves view the accompanying assimilation techniques of a colonial power on their homelands in government and school structures to be the continuation of genocidal practices, and they therefore seek and assert domestic sovereignty" (192).

12. For more on the generic complications of Indigenous or "American Indian" writing, see Bernardin (54) and especially Salaita (23–24).

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Bowman Books

A Gathering Place for Indigenous New England

SIOBHAN SENIER

Readers of this journal are well acquainted with Joseph Bruchac—indebted to him, really, for his decades of tireless work on behalf of American Indian literatures.¹ It's hard to think of anyone in the field who is quite so prolific (with over 120 novels, children's books, and poetry collections as of this writing) and simultaneously so generous in publishing, promoting, and advocating for others (he has edited over 20 anthologies, among other things). The hub of all this activity is the Greenfield Review Press, which Bruchac started with his wife Carol in 1971. One of the longest-running Indigenous publishing enterprises in the United States, Greenfield was supporting Native American literature at the very moment of its emergence in the academy and in trade and scholarly publishing.² The Bruchacs have supplied steady small-press support for multicultural poetry, fiction, and nonfiction that might otherwise never have seen print.

In a recent and most welcome assessment of Bruchac's career, Christine DeLucia has described it as moving from "rather generalized" (i.e., pan-Indian and indeed more broadly "ethnic," as Greenfield initially published a good deal of literature by African, Caribbean, and incarcerated writers) to a more "assertive defense of keeping cultural heritage materials firmly linked to their tribal-national points of origin" (88). Today, Greenfield has a new imprint, Bowman Books, devoted to Indigenous writing and oral tradition primarily from the Northeast. Raised by an Abenaki grandfather (Jesse Bowman, for whom the imprint is named, and in whose house and store the press still operates), Bruchac has been especially plugged in to the vibrant, enduring Native literary traditions of this region. Everyone in Native studies knows Samson Occom and William Apess; but to ignore the many talented writers who

are still writing here, still carrying on their legacy, is to perpetuate the myth of New England: birthplace of the new colonial nation, purged of Indians early on.

By registering the continuous presence of northeastern Native writers, Bowman Books literalizes the commonly heard refrain, “We’re still here.” The imprint’s first publication was *The Wind Eagle and Other Abenaki Stories* (1985) a collection of Gluskabe narratives told by Joseph Bruchac and illustrated by John Kahionhes Fadden (Mohawk). This partnership was a harbinger of the imprint’s approach to region: sensitive to both the erasure of Indigenous people from “New England,” yet also to the highly constructed nature of that region, Bowman Books has pulled in other Haudenosaunee writers from around its home base of upstate New York, as well as Abenaki authors located in Canada, across the artificial international border that divides them from their southern kin.

Bowman Books is a physical and metaphorical gathering place, enlisting Bruchac family members and friends across the full range of textual production, from writing and editing to printing and distribution. Bruchac’s son Jesse is a key force here. He came on to the project with, on the one hand, a desire to publish more bilingual texts in the service of language revitalization; and, on the other, the technical know-how to harness the power of new print-on-demand platforms. Jesse has arrived at an eminently more affordable, and hopefully more sustainable, means of publishing by formatting authors’ texts in PDF and selling them, one copy at a time, through lulu.com. His first project was the bilingual children’s book *Mosbas and the Magic Flute* (2010), which he wrote and translated (loosely based on a traditional story) and illustrated with his young daughter Carolyn in an advisory role. In just four short years he has published sixteen books using this method.³ You can feel the urgency of this project: at a 2010 conference at the University of New Hampshire (a gathering including many people named in this review), Joseph and Jesse discussed their print-on-demand work with reference to a problem that is all too common for Native authors and for those of us who teach this literature: “No Native writer who wants to be published should be denied the opportunity, and no Native writer who wants to remain in print should ever have to go out of print.”

For the Bruchacs and other Indigenous publishers, Indigenous publishing means more than just employing Native people to do writing, editing, typesetting, and distributing. It means respecting Native pro-

ocols for what should and should not be published, consulting with elders and community members, remaining mindful of traditional values. DeLucia says that Bruchac has brought together “diverse webs of thinkers for reasons inflected by more than personal standing or profit”; she conceptualizes his work as based on “reciprocal relations” (72). This phrase, tellingly, shares a great affinity with the phrase “network of relations” employed by Lisa Brooks (Abenaki) throughout her groundbreaking study *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*. These two scholars—one discussing contemporary writing, the other excavating earlier regional literary histories—provide a useful framework for understanding the work of Bowman Books as a networking project and for reading many of the individual texts it has published.

BILINGUAL TEXTS

Given Jesse Bruchac’s own position as the preeminent scholar and teacher of the Abenaki language in the United States, it is fitting that some of Bowman Books’ first publications have been devoted to language revitalization, documentation, and translation. Abenaki is an Algonquian language and seriously endangered, but as a young man in the 1990s Jesse studied with Cecile Wawanolette (1908–2006), an elder who was teaching at the Odanak reserve in Quebec as well as in the Abenaki community at Mississquoi, Vermont. Since then, he has built a significant repository of language resources at westernabenaki.com, including online lessons, YouTube videos, and recordings of the language with Wawanolette’s son, Joseph Elie Joubert, with whom Bruhac works closely.

Bowman Books has already published half a dozen bilingual texts, including Joubert’s *Nitami Podawazwiskweda: The First Council Fire* (2011). In his preface, Joubert expresses some of the urgency he feels in publishing: “I was fortunate to have lived in a time when the Abenaki language was still paramount. . . . Today, I can count on my fingers those who are fluent Abenaki speakers.” He also expresses the urgency of maintaining the gathering place: far from romanticizing so-called pre-contact times, Joubert’s book describes the early days of Alnôbak (“the people”), fighting over land and resources with “no laws to explain how to live in harmony with the other tribes” (5–6). After Kchi Niwaskw, the Great Spirit, vanquishes Madohodo, an evil spirit, he asks the elders “to

return to that place when the leaves turned red and to bring their families to receive the gifts that will last forever” (19), in an annual ritual of feasting, hunting, fishing, and remembering “the laws that were made [that] eventually unified all the tribes” (30).

In renarrating some of the first gatherings of the people, this slim volume hearkens back to some of the earliest Abenaki language texts. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as now, tribal intellectuals pursued a robust publishing agenda, particularly in Quebec, where they produced a number of language books that remained in use among Abenaki people on both sides of the border throughout the twentieth century. Bowman Books has begun reprinting and retranslating some of these older books, thus rematerializing the network of relations between past and present Abenaki authors. Lisa Brooks argues that these early writers did much more than document grammar: they also conveyed tribal cosmologies, “demonstrating the continuance of names and stories associated with particular places in communal memory, even for those families who lived . . . outside the original home territory” (249). The first such book that Jesse Bruchac retranslated and republished was an 1830 Abenaki-language rendering of the Gospel of Mark by Pîl Pol Wzôkhilain (also known as Reverend Peter Paul Wzokhilain, or Osunkherhine), who attended Dartmouth College and returned to his home in Odanak, Quebec, where he had his own letterpress (Wzôkhilain and Bruchac).⁴ This republication was closely followed by another, Joseph Laurent’s *New Familiar Abenakis and English Dialogues* (1884); with a reissue of Henry Lorne Masta’s *Abenaki Indian Grammar, Legends and Place Names* (1932) also in the works.

Jesse Bruchac is not just reprinting these; he is also retranslating and recontextualizing them.⁵ In his hands, these texts, and the Abenaki language, are living and dynamic. He published what he calls “the first attempt at creating a ‘how-to’ manual within the Abenaki language” (x), *L8dwaw8gan Wji Abaznodakaw8gan: The Language of Basketmaking* (2010). This book is itself a gathering place, as Bruchac wrote it with Elie Joubert and Jeanne Brink, a renowned Abenaki basket maker from Vermont. In turn, Brink has hosted language camps at her home with Jesse and Elie, so that the book helps stimulate new gatherings. Literary scholars have tended to talk about written texts as somehow “preserving” or “freezing” language, but the publication and circulation of the Bowman Books volumes show that communities see much more com-

plex, mutually sustaining interactions between the literary and the oral, the virtual and the face-to-face.

Like his father, Jesse writes and publishes for all ages. In addition to *Mosbas*, he published his brother James Bruchac's monster story, *Be Good* (2010), as well as his own retelling and retranslation of *The Woman and the Kiwakw* (cannibal giant), gorgeously illustrated with computerized renderings of birch bark art by Passamaquoddy artist Tomah Joseph (1837–1914). There are additional bilingual texts for adult readers, too, including *Nisnol Siboal/Two Rivers* (2011), poems in English and Abenaki by Joseph and Jesse together. Like other Bruchac enterprises, this chapbook is deeply rooted in Abenaki but gestures to other cultures: the concept of “two rivers,” the preface tells us, “reflects not only our two generations of father and son, but also the flow of language from two different yet deeply connected cultures.” The poems are centered on each page, “rather than flush left to mirror the balance we continue to seek and the flow of a stream.” “N’Mahom / My Grandfather” is designed to be heard aloud:

N'mahom
 w'gigm8dwa
 lintow8gan wji nia

 lintow8gan
 nd
 elintoji
 Mina ta mina

 Grandfather
 Whispers
 a song to me

 It's a song
 I will sing
 again and again. (18)

These poems seem written to be heard, and happily some of them can be heard on Jesse's Western Abenaki radio show at westernabenaki.com, including “My Grandfather” (Episode 8). The radio show includes fifteen episodes, each about ten minutes or less, entirely in Abenaki. Bruchac assures his listeners that “chaga nda kd'aln8ba8dwaw, chaga nda k'wawtamowen, akwi saagidah8ziw! if you don't speak Indian, if you

can't understand, don't worry! K'kizi askwa ibitta tbestam ta wig8damen. You can still just listen and enjoy it" (translations are from the transcriptions on the website). The goal is nothing less than an Abenaki soundscape. You can hear a traditional Gluscabe story, an announcement for a powwow, a recorded phone call between Joe and Jesse, and an interview with Cecile Wawanolette. You can also hear Jesse read a story about Turtle written by Wzokhilain in 1839, never before translated into English (or, as Jesse says, "kwin8gwi / 8da kizi n'namitowen, / At least / I haven't seen it, / askwatta / yet" (Episode 10).⁶ There are also greeting songs by the Bruchac family group, the Dawnland Singers, because "Aln8banaki waj8nemak kwinatta wd'alamitoal lintow8ganal. The Abenaki have many greeting songs. Kw8gweni gez8wado wji maahl8mek. Because of the importance of gathering together" (Episode 3).

Bernard C. Perley, a Maliseet anthropologist who generally takes a pessimistic view of contemporary language revitalization efforts, argues that despite the commonly heard criticisms of new media—that the Internet and TV are to blame for the cessation of the language, because they disembodied communication—"we are faced with the irony that [these media forms] may actually provide the community with viable options for promoting language revitalization and cultural identity" (191), precisely because they are disembodied and available to anyone who wants to access them. The Bruchacs, and the vast network of relations involved in Bowman Books, seem to take the longer view. They have the benefit of history—a long history of a language in trouble, which has nevertheless been maintained in a variety of forms, including YouTube and books. As another Bowman Books author, Mohegan linguist Stephanie Fielding, puts it, "For many of us who are already adults, fluency is not likely. But we can learn some phrases, we can become literate in the language, and we will be able to carry on simple conversations in Mohegan. It will be up to the next generation to take on the mission of fluency."⁷

THE NATIVE NEW ENGLAND AUTHORS SERIES

While working steadily to sustain northeastern Indigenous language and community, Bowman Books is also making a major contribution to Native American literature with its new Native New England Authors series. Contemporary Native New England authors continue to be mar-

ginalized within both big house and small press publishing, a situation that contributes to something Greg Young-Ing described regarding Aboriginal publishing in Canada: “it has had the effect of silencing the Aboriginal Voice paving the way for a rash of non-Aboriginal writers to profit from the creation of a body of literature focusing on Aboriginal peoples that is based on ethnocentric, racist and largely incorrect presumptions” (165). Indeed, while talented authors like Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel (Mohegan), John Christian Hopkins (Narragansett), and Larry Spotted Crow Mann (Nipmuc) have struggled to get into print, often resorting to self-publishing, the big houses maintain a barrage of non-Native-authored books about Indians in New England, invariably in olden times. And why not? Histories like Nathaniel Philbrick’s *Mayflower* and novels like Geraldine Brooks’s *Caleb’s Crossing* make big money, despite the thorough critiques they have received from Native intellectuals, such as Linda Coombs’s review of *Mayflower*. Meanwhile, these same Native intellectuals continue to be shut out of mainstream publishing.

Bowman Books’ Native New England Authors series is wide-ranging, including some of the bilingual books named above (*The First Council Fire* and *Two Rivers*), some fiction, and one memoir to date. It gives pride of place, however, to regional poetry. The very first book in the series was a reprint of *When No One Is Looking*, by Carol Dana (Penobscot, a.k.a. Red Hawk/pipikwass). This beautiful chapbook was first published in 1989 by a tiny outfit called Little Letterpress in Knox, Maine, which the year before had published another regionally beloved book by another Penobscot poet, ssipsis, called *molly molasses and me*. Both books, sadly, went quickly out of print.⁸

When No One Is Looking includes poems about broken homes and loving ones, about past traumas and present successes (like the tribe’s hundred-mile spiritual run up Mount Katahdin in Maine, 6), about depression (“a stillness / and loneliness / I haven’t been able to shake,” 34) and gratitude (“I must say we have been fortunate / To have reached out, loved and shared/ in a way uncomparred,” 41). It includes many poems about women—women raising children, women struggling with deserting partners, women who “stand strong, stand together” (28) and at least one enigmatic grandmother who inspired Dana’s own work in Penobscot language revitalization—a figure readers of this journal (and fans of writers such as Louise Erdrich) will appreciate: “Little did I know the ladies joked about having fun, teasing, and sex / They talked about human qualities, / What the neighbors said or done” (35).

If the Abenaki language texts demonstrate, as Brooks puts it, “the continuance of names and stories associated with particular places in communal memory,” Bowman Books’ contemporary publications do the same. Dana, for instance, slides effortlessly from naming a sacred place in the first line to naming Penobscot ancestors and families:

Kthadin, Pamola, Atahando
 Attean, Susep, Nicola
 Were people on the move
 Who laughed, loved, cried and died
 Over eons of time
 We’re forever grateful to be
 from Molasses Molly, Swasson, Susep
 Francis, Neptune and Dani. (Dana, *When* 9)

The Bruchacs have encouraged Dana, thankfully, to publish more of her poetry, now available in a second book, *Return to Spirit: And Other Musings* (2014, no. 15 in the series). This book continues to map Penobscot homeland, history, and language, with some fully bilingual poems as well.

The Native New England Authors series also brought an established Abenaki poet, Carol Bachofner, into the fold. Bachofner lives in Rockland, Maine, where she has been steadily publishing her own themed chapbooks through small presses, while holding workshops, nurturing other writers, and teaching them how to build their own networks and careers. *Native Moons, Native Days* (2012, no. 7 in the series), her most overtly Abenaki collection, is a specific tribute to her Indigenous homeland and language. “It is important,” she says in her prologue, “for the reader to be able to see [Abenaki] words as they are in the old language. A visitor may notice that New England, Ndakinna, is full of strange-looking place names, and wonder where they originate. These are words from the original language of the place . . . For tribal people of the northeast, coming upon a place name in some version of the old language is like finding a long-lost relative in the pages of the phone book of a visited town” (6). In “We Speak the White Man’s Language,” she writes:

Our words are a clearing, a place for fire.
 Where did the language go when the black robes
 threw holy water on it? Did it disappear
 when the switch was on our backs? Into the trees,
 into the streams, into our wombs to wait. (28)

Reconstructing Indigenous language and space in the northeast is a collective project, and a reader can map the continuities across the entire series. Like Jesse Bruchac, Bachofner writes about baskets (“Abazenoda, An Abenaki Basket Tale”); like Laurent and Masta, she revels in the words for the waterways that connect her people. This book is full of poems about water, with the names of rivers, like the place names in Carol Dana’s poems, exercising an incantatory power:

Sebastivcook, Seninebik,
Skowhegan, Baskahegan,
Our stories flow
Through little channels (“Naming Water,” 12)

Given the watery geography of the northeast, and given Native people’s historic and current use of rivers and lakes as gathering places, it is not surprising that water figures so heavily throughout the Native New England Authors series.⁹ It is an organizing motif for another series book that has been getting quite a bit of buzz regionally: Maliseet poet Mihku Paul’s *20th Century PowWow Playland* (2012, no. 9 in the series). With roots that traverse colonial borders (she is an enrolled member of the Kingsclear First Nation in New Brunswick, though she grew up in Maine, in Penobscot territory, and lives now in Portland), Paul celebrates the Wolastoq (St. John River) watershed that connects Maliseet lands and kin: “Picture this. Great rivers snake through a forest; water road, traversed in season, straining and/swollen at ice out, moving endlessly to the sea” (1). This motif, Paul has said in a statement about her work accompanying her *Look Twice* exhibition in 2009, “reflects the importance of these waterways to my people, and is symbolic of time-flow, history and memory as they function to both create and maintain identity.”

Paul loves to experiment with form; she has written triolets, villanelles, and other older forms. “Return” is a sestina that has the poet “travers[ing] Katahdin’s rocky spine” (55), referring again to the mountain that is sacred for all Wabanaki groups and the location of many creation histories. Many of these poems came out of an exhibition Paul put together in 2009 at the Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor, a gallery focused on Wabanaki culture. *Look Twice: The Waponahki in Image and Verse* included Paul’s poems and drawings, alongside historic photographs of Wabanaki people, including her relatives. The poems and the photographs speak to each other, reinforcing networks of relations between

present and past Wabanaki. In the title poem of the book, for instance, we see “[t]wo faces stare out, children, sepia-toned, museum / quality, pressed to pages” from a photo of Maine’s one-hundredth-anniversary celebration:

In 1920, a centennial celebration, time measured,
 Commemorating that moment
 When everything changed.
 A separation, renaming territory, viciously tamed,
 Carved and claimed, settled, the state of Maine. (58)

“Time-flow, history, and memory,” creating and maintaining identity and community, are themes in a more recent series publication, *Dreaming Again: Algonkian Poetry* (2012, no. 10 in the series), by Joseph Bruchac’s sister Margaret. Better known as an anthropologist (she is now assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania), Marge Bruchac parlayes her historic research into poems that speak to a variety of home places, including Santa Fe as well as the Adirondacks and Deerfield, Massachusetts. There are poems devoted to historical personages, such as the Mohawk saint Kateri Tekakwitha and Wabanaki medicine woman Molly Ockett, and poems dedicated to contemporary northeastern Native friends, including Lisa Brooks and Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel.

As a scholar and performer, Marge Bruchac has been brilliant at indigenizing space, at revealing Indigenous presence where it has been considered invisible or a thing of the past. A particularly beautiful instance of this is her telling of the Old Man in the Mountain, a beloved rock formation in New Hampshire’s White Mountains, which collapsed in 2003. Long known to Abenaki people, the Old Man was “discovered” by settlers in 1805 and became a state emblem, appearing on license plates, coins, mugs and other kitsch. Precarious for decades, it had been held together with chains, steel rods, and concrete gutters; the state’s famously antitax citizens also demanded a memorial or replacement for a time after it fell. In Bruchac’s rendering, however, the Old Man was ready to go home:

Ah, kadosmida,
 He is saying,
 Wligonebi, the water feels good
 The people need me (40)

Critically, this is not just Margaret Bruchac's telling; it is something widely shared among local Abenaki people. Carol Bachofner, too, has a poem called "The Old Man's Walk": "It is a good sign that the Old Man decided to walk / the land again, free of the white man's cords of steel" (26).

These writers take the long view. Lisa Brooks explains that the Abenaki word for birch bark map, *awhikhigan*, came to "encompass a wide array of texts, and its scope is still expanding" (249). Margaret Bruchac likewise "look[s] to those ancestors, / who knew how to make do, to shape whatever came into their hands / whether ochre, shell, bone, paint, wool or metal"; she invites readers

... if you think you can keep your feet on a good path
your head and your heart connected
and your spirit intact
no matter what language
no matter what tools
then send me an email
and I'll meet you at the trailhead. (41)

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Although the Native New England Authors series has so far tended to privilege poetry chapbooks by people Indigenous to what are now the six New England states, it has maintained Bowman Books' fidelity to inter- and intraregional networks, as well as Greenfield's commitment to publishing sustainability, by reprinting some important books. Number 5 in the series was *The White Man's War: Ely S. Parker: Iroquois General* (2011), a reformatting of some poems that Joseph Bruchac had originally published in Cornell University's *Northeast Indian Quarterly*. Number 8 was a revised and expanded edition of *Council Decisions* (2012) by Ron Welburn (Gingaskin and Assateague/Cherokee/African American), a long-time professor of Native American literature at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst. In his author's note, Welburn pays tribute not only to his years of friendship with the Bruchac family but also to his book's first publisher, the American Native Press Archives at the University of Arkansas–Little Rock. That is another site well known to readers of this journal, as Daniel Littlefield and James Parins have likewise been instrumental in ensuring that Native literature sees, and remains, in print.

Additionally, Native New England Authors has published fiction and nonfiction. The second book in the series was a memoir, *Along Came a Spider* (2011) by Mi'kmaq poet Alice Azure. Also in 2011 Azure published her second book of poetry, *Games of Transformation*, a meditation on the Cahokhia mounds in present-day Illinois, where she now resides. Her first book, *In Mi'kmaq Country* (published, like *Games*, by Albatross in Chicago), imaginatively reconnected her to her Indigenous homeland, where she has spent little time. At eleven years of age, Azure was sent to the Cromwell Children's Home in Connecticut, where she stayed through high school. She attended North Park College in Chicago, where she met her first husband and raised three children. When she enrolled in the University of Iowa's School of Urban and Regional Planning for a master's degree, she met John R. Salter Jr., a Mi'kmaq/Mohawk/Abenaki faculty member who encouraged her to work with the Inter-Tribal League of American Indians and to investigate her own Native ancestry.

In *Along Came a Spider*, Azure describes much of this genealogical research, her trips to Nova Scotia to seek out relatives, and her growing awareness of her Native identity. In this, it also charts a story not uncommon among Native people in the United States: one of being uprooted from family and home and of reconnecting with land and kin, often in many locations. Azure travels to the Northeast every summer to visit family, but she maintains a home in the Midwest and has developed an extensive network of close friends and affiliations with place throughout Indian Country.

The Native New England Authors series also includes one short-story collection to date, *Seven Cities and Other Journeys* (2014, no. 14 in the series) by Stephanie Fielding (Mohegan). Fielding is a member of the Council of Elders of the Mohegan Tribe and also the tribal linguist, having earned her master's degree in linguistics at MIT—the same program in which MacArthur Fellow Jessie Little Doe Fermino (Wampanoag) trained. Like Jesse Bruchac, Fielding has built a website, Mohegan Language Project (moheganlanguage.com), with an online dictionary, lessons, list of Mohegan place-names in Connecticut, and many audio files of songs, prayers, and names. And, like Joseph, she has lived a peripatetic, highly networked life: Fielding has lived in Africa (Nigeria), as well as in Hawaii, Arizona, and elsewhere before returning to her ancestral homeland and devoting herself to tribal history and culture.

This global-yet-local consciousness is reflected in Fielding's stories. Her title *Seven Cities* comes from her Bahá'í faith—"The Seven Valleys," written in 1860 in Persian by Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of this transnational religion—and the book's title story describes a woman who finds God on a series of buses from Cheyenne to Phoenix, as she flees a failed marriage. Fielding writes stories of mobility and home, of death and family. In "The Settlement at Yantic Falls," she remarks, "Mystical experiences seem to run in the family" (53), and she describes the visions she had of her ancestors upon returning to Connecticut and visiting some of the tribe's sacred sites: the burial grounds at Shantok; Yantic Falls in Norwich. The last story in the collection, "Uyasunaqak Cits: Leading Bird," represents Fielding's own return to writing literature for Mohegan children, something she did when her own children were small. Like the Bruchacs and other Indigenous language activists, Fielding grounds her revitalization efforts in familial and domestic spaces, with a story that teaches children the value of sharing.

* * *

Bowman Books represents an Indigenous literary project that I have come to think about through the twinned terms *sovereignty* and *sustainability*. Sovereignty has a long history within Native American studies; but sustainability—usually used these days to invoke "green" concerns—has a place here too, for Native people's rights to continued cultural expression and distinctiveness go hand in hand with their maintenance of and relationships to their traditional land bases, even when those have been expropriated. Sustainability, in other words, has cultural as well as ecological meanings. Joseph Bruchac himself has long used it to refer to Native publishing in particular. In his 1980 guide, *How to Start and Sustain a Literary Magazine* (the very title suggests a desire to build the network), he describes sustainability as much more than mere financial viability or pragmatics: "a sustained literary magazine creates, through the years, a meeting place for our culture" (2).

The meeting place: the river, the council fire, the printed page, and the hashtag. Indigenous people in New England have continued to write just as surely as they have continued to exist. They have written under pressure from colonial authorities who wanted to convert them to Christianity or otherwise assimilate them. They have written when high school guidance counselors have tried to tell them they couldn't.

They have published books when no for-profit publisher has cared to read their work, and they have cared for their tribal newspapers and grandmothers' letters when no major funding institution has helped them buy acid-free boxes or hire archivists. They have cited each other's histories, and recited each other's poetry, keeping it alive, often, through oral traditions—the very traditions assumed to be “replaced” by writing. New England's Indigenous writers have thus been reflecting on what it means to survive as self-determining collectivities (sovereignty) over the long haul (sustainability), for the simple reason that they have done so. They offer a vision of sustainability—both ecological and cultural—as an inherently political and decolonial project.

NOTES

1. I thank Joseph and Jesse Bruchac for their hospitality in Greenfield Center, New York, and for their generous input as I was writing this review essay.

2. Some periodicals (most famously the *Cherokee Phoenix* and *Awkwasne Notes*) have been around for much longer; but most Native-run literary book publishers have faced serious challenges in achieving long-term sustainability. Some other outfits that arose in the late 1960s and 1970s have since fallen by the wayside, including Rupert Costo's Indian Historian Press and Maurice Kenny's Strawberry Press. Since the early 2000s there has been a new effusion of Indigenous small presses, including renegade planets publishing (MariJo Moore); Mammoth Publications (Denise Low and Tom Weso); Wigawassi Press (Louise and Heid Erdrich); and Blue Hand Books (Trace DeMeyer). Most of these have been dependent on the financing and labor of one or two extremely dedicated individuals. In Canada, Aboriginal presses like Theytus and Kegedonce have at least had some access to government funding (Chunn), although this has eroded in recent years (Milz). Tribal museums and historic offices have long issued their own books and newsletters for tribal use or local sale. Malki Museum Press opened in 1965, with a focus on California Indians (and on scholarly publishing); the Chickasaw Press, established in 2005, has been publishing high quality Chickasaw-themed books. For a concise history of late twentieth-century literary publishing, including Harper & Row's Native American writers series and the profusion of chapbooks coming out of places like the Blue Cloud Quarterly, see Wiget. I thank my colleagues on the ASAIL-L mailing list for many of these pointers and invite readers to continue updating this information at <http://ssenier.indigenousnewengland.com/a-crowdsourcing-question-indigenous-small-presses/>.

3. Electronic formats are not, of course, free of the potential for loss. One thing we already lose with lulu.com is an accurate chronicle of publishing history: a book's publication date will show up as the most recent version, reflecting any edits or changes. Since the books are being printed on demand and are easily updated and edited, it is hard to know when a book first appeared without having a first edition in hand—and, for that matter, knowing that it was the first edition.

4. Older orthographic convention for Abenaki uses “8” to represent the sound of nasal “o.” Current convention often uses “ô” or simply “o.”

5. As of this writing I count no fewer than five facsimile editions of the Laurent book on amazon.com, some from enterprises committed to increasing access to public domain texts (e.g., Global Language Press in Vancouver), and some by the rapidly proliferating software companies that trawl Project Gutenberg and the Internet Archive looking for public-domain texts to grab and reprint (e.g., Ulan Press, Nabu Press). Although it may be legal—and even ethical—to republish older books like Laurent’s, the role of publishers like Bowman Books in properly curating literary heritage cannot be underestimated. For a fascinating history of POD publishing and its implications for literary history, see Trettien.

6. More recently Jesse has migrated his recordings onto YouTube, with an entire channel devoted to language lessons and videos of him speaking Abenaki with his two small children. There is a scene from the *Princess Bride* dubbed in Abenaki, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCKcYV7OVoo&list=UUDUFBq8CuiSPualfgThwqOw>), as well as a reading from *The First Council Fire*, to which Elie Joubert himself has posted a moving comment (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXoyggp1-uw>).

7. Fielding, qtd. at Mohegan Language Project (<http://moheganlanguage.com>).

8. These books were published by Diana Prizio, a letterpress operator who has worked out of both Knox and Brooks, Maine, as Little Letterpress, Robin Hood Books, and more recently Garden Variety (<http://www.gardenvariety.me/letterpress.html>).

9. Writing about the Connecticut River, Lisa Brooks, Donna Roberts Moody (Abenaki), and John Moody say, for instance, “While the settlers of Vermont and New Hampshire designated this river as a boundary, within Native space, Kwanitekw has operated as a major trade corridor, travel route, and gathering place for indigenous families” (133).

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BOOK REVIEWS

James W. Parins. *Literacy and Intellectual Life in the Cherokee Nation, 1820–1907*. American Indian Literature and Critical Studies Ser. 58.

Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2013. ISBN: 9780806143996. 276 pp.

Kirby Brown, *University of Oregon*

Traversing the boundaries of history, biography, and literary and cultural studies, *Literacy and Intellectual Life in the Cherokee Nation* is an extensively researched, nuanced exploration of an Indigenous people's qualified adoption and repurposing of settler-colonial technologies to their own ends, as well as the story of the development of a national ethos and collective commitment to distinctly Cherokee understandings of language, literacy, education, intellectualism, and nationhood. To characterize the text as ambitious would be an understatement. In just over 253 text pages, Parins examines everything from early literacy efforts propelled by Christian mission organizations driving the revolutionary developments of Sequoyah's syllabary, Cherokee constitutional law, and the national press, to post-Removal debates over education philosophy, the explosion of newspapers and periodicals throughout Indian Territory, and the emergence of a prolific Cherokee intelligentsia writing across a variety of genres, forms, and geographic locales. Drawing upon focused examinations of specific historical figures, the last half of the book highlights the voluminous forms—petitions, testimonies, correspondences, editorials, poetry, fiction—through which Cherokees navigated internal crises generated by Removal and the Civil War, as well as external efforts to stave off judicial incursions, industrial and railroad interests, and advocates for allotment, territorialization, and tribal dissolution throughout the late nineteenth century. An epilogue

connects the historical narrative to contemporary efforts to strengthen Cherokee language literacy via legislation and policy; recovery, revitalization, and immersion programs; technological innovations; and a continued legacy of literary and intellectual output. The nod to contemporary Cherokee literacy movements transforms the narrative from one of disruption, dislocation, and dissolution to one of adaptation, innovation, and continuity-through-change.

In a project so titled, it is not surprising that language itself emerges as a central actor, whether in its implication assimilationist federal policies and legal decisions, its power to advance Cherokee agendas, or its place within larger debates over Cherokee cultural and political identity. Parins frames the introduction of graphic literacy to Cherokee people (ch. 2) as both a product of and reaction to missionary efforts to “civilize” Cherokees through biblical instruction and institutionalized education. Though initially introduced as an explicitly assimilationist technology, the innovation of Sequoyah’s syllabary (ch. 5) quickly repurposed literacy to cohere Cherokee national identity and advance Cherokee political and intellectual goals. At the same time, such adaptations also exposed growing divisions within the nation along racial, cultural, gendered, and economic lines. Parins outlines how the national press (ch. 3) and post-Removal newspaper industry (ch. 6) were used both as open forums to debate shifting political conditions in the territory and as propagandistic organs of partisan politics, the latter indexed not only by the political commitments of their editors but also in the amount of Cherokee-language content they elected to offer and the consequent readerships they sought to reach. This tension is best illustrated in heated contests over education policy and the relationship between language instruction, curricular design, and the ultimate means and ends of a free, *Indigenous* national education system (ch. 4). Questions over party politics, national policy, and political leadership in the nation were also framed as much around a candidate’s relationship to language as they were around questions of platform or personality, with language often standing in as an indication of one’s social, cultural, and political commitments. Though Parins frames “Cherokee literacy” as communication in both Cherokee and English, the uneasy relationship between the two remained (and still remains!) a site of contestation and debate.

As in his previous work, Parins is at his best when ferreting out the often-shifting interests motivating his principle actors and their rela-

tionships to the larger contexts in which they operate. To this point, the last half of the book examines the lives and writings of recognizable and lesser-known names in Cherokee history. While these figures' educational attainments, business acumen, and literary-political service to the nation align them with previous generations of Cherokee writers and speakers, their expanded travels throughout California and the East, esoteric intellectual interests, and diverse literary pursuits also position them as a kind of "transitional" generation of Cherokee experience into modernity. For instance, while most eventually returned to Cherokee country and put their experiences to work on behalf of the nation, some such as John Rollin Ridge, Dewitt Clinton Duncan, Ned Bushyhead, and Ora V. Eddleman (Reed) also built productive lives and careers outside of the nation, marking places such as Washington DC, California, Texas, and the Midwest as sites of a developing Cherokee diaspora. Similarly, though on opposing political and familial sides of both the Removal crisis and the Civil War, William Penn Adair and William Potter Ross shared anti-territorial sentiments and often allied themselves against pro-territorial advocates such as E. C. Boudinot, who also drew public and vociferous opposition from his own brother, William Penn Boudinot. Speaking across culture and class, Duncan, Johnson Harris, and John Lynch Adair—all educated, bilingual, relatively comfortable mixed-bloods—consistently advocated for the rights and interests of full-blood Cherokees against the threat of land monopolies at the hands of whom they believed to be self-interested, mixed-blood elites. Through these and other examples, which consistently cut across familial, cultural, economic, geographic, and racial divides, *Literacy and Intellectual Life* goes a long way to complicate reductive paradigms (traditional/progressive, full-blood/mixed-blood, Ross/Ridge, capitalist/conservative, etc.) that often structure Cherokee histories.

That said, one such structural paradigm that the text fails to address—indeed, reproduces—in its heavy attention to Anglo-Cherokee male writers is the marginalization, if not erasure, of both Cherokee female and Afro-Cherokee/Freedmen voices from Cherokee intellectual and political histories. Of the over twenty principal figures examined, Ora V. Eddleman (Reed) is the only female Cherokee discussed at any length. While Parins gives passing mention to Catherine Brown's *Memoir* (1831) and the poetry and prose produced by students at the Female Seminary (1850s), his narrative omits entirely the female-authored petitions of the

1820s, the biographical and historical writings of Narcissa Owen (1907) and Lucy Lowrey Hoyt Keys (1889), and the fiction and nonfiction of Reed's contemporary and fellow *Sturm's* contributor, Mabel Washbourne Anderson (1903–06), all of which are readily accessible. The omission of Afro-Cherokee/Freedmen voices in the study is striking not only in that they constituted a significant, though perhaps not as prolific, constituency in Cherokee politics, but also that so much has been written about their contributions—primarily through oral accounts and court testimonies—to Cherokee intellectual and political life in recent years. While both omissions likely reflect a combination of Parins's focus on newspapers and periodicals, limited access to avenues of publication for Cherokee women and Afro-Cherokees/Freedmen, and a host of other factors, more attention to writing by these communities across the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—whether in already available texts or through archival recovery—is necessary in order to properly recognize their central place as intellectual, political, cultural, and creative actors in Cherokee history.

These significant caveats aside, *Literacy and Intellectual Life* is an important book that should find the widest possible readership. It not only advances Cherokee scholarship produced over the past decade, demonstrating the continued advantages of tribally specific approaches, but also productively contributes (though indirectly) to ongoing discussions about identity and belonging in the nation today. More broadly, Parins's introductions to and sketches of lesser-studied figures also greatly expands our understanding of the diversity of Indigenous literary and intellectual production throughout the nineteenth century and provides ample resources for more in-depth scholarship on these writers and texts. In addition to its contributions to Indigenous literary and intellectual history, its exploration of Cherokee debates over land, language, identity, and nationhood will resonate strongly with contemporary interdisciplinary studies in Indigenous political theory, philosophy, and nationhood/nationalism studies, while its attention to the intersections between Indigenous language, education, literacy, and literary/rhetorical form should appeal strongly to scholars working across those areas. Finally, its engagement with US political history in the late nineteenth century from an Indigenous-nationalist perspective should interest those in American studies pushing for a more explicit interrogation of the historical and ongoing settler-colonial legacies of the field and its

object of study, and the centrality of Indigenous peoples, theories, methods, and experiences to such efforts.

Jace Weaver. *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000–1927*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-4696-1438-0. 340 pp.

Eric Hinderaker, *University of Utah*

Jace Weaver's *The Red Atlantic* is a wide-ranging exploration of American Indians' engagement with the Atlantic world across roughly a millennium of time. Loose in structure and conception but rich in both anecdote and reflection, this is a capacious, thought-provoking, and engaging book. Weaver is not principally concerned to catalog every known transatlantic passage of a Native American; instead, he aims to expand his readers' understanding of Native peoples as "active agents" (xi) in the Atlantic world. This is largely a synthetic work, and much of the material Weaver discusses is familiar, yet few readers will know about all the individuals and contexts with which he engages. Weaver's distinctive contribution is to draw attention to the density of American Indian engagement with the Atlantic, its long time span, and the many forms it took. In the process, he also succeeds in identifying connections across space and time that are often as powerful as they are surprising.

Weaver groups his material into five thematic chapters that examine different dimensions of the Red Atlantic. He considers captives, slaves, and prisoners; soldiers and sailors; diplomats and cosmopolitans; celebrity Indians; and Indians as they were represented in literature. He explores texts written by Native Americans, texts about Native Americans, and Native American experiences independent of any close examination of the texts that relate them. The book's method, like its source material, is eclectic. At times Weaver writes like a literary critic, at times like a historian, and sometimes simply like a storyteller.

The Red Atlantic is self-consciously modeled on Paul Gilroy's path-breaking *The Black Atlantic* (1993), but it is a strikingly different kind of book. While Gilroy introduced his book by exploring the problems of double consciousness and modernity and thus set an ambitious analytical framework for what follows, Weaver enters into his subject in a more anecdotal, less rigorous mode. This is not to say that *The Red Atlantic* is

“merely” anecdotal, but it operates in a different register; both its virtues and its pitfalls are different from those of *The Black Atlantic*. While Gilroy offers sustained readings of a limited number of texts to develop a complex and tightly woven argument, Weaver ranges widely across the materials available to him, developing examples drawn from various times and places and evoking a wide range of interpretive insights. He argues that the Red Atlantic took shape as a result of “the circulation of information, material culture, and technology” (29), and contends that “[h]ybridity—whether genetic or cultural—and cosmopolitanism are natural by-products of the Red Atlantic, but they do not necessarily represent a diminution of indigenosity” (xi). He stresses that “literature is a defining element of the Red Atlantic” (273), and that, from the earliest years of the European colonizing project in the Americas, Native peoples began to appropriate European modes of writing and turn them to their own purposes. Weaver also emphasizes linkages between the Black and Red Atlantics throughout the book. He places special emphasis on the way that particular individuals like Crispus Attucks and Paul Cuffe straddled the two worlds; he also underscores the thematic continuities that joined the Black and Red Atlantics.

The principal contribution of Weaver’s wide-ranging text is its capacity to combine and juxtapose materials in ways that can be profoundly insightful. He moves from context to context, highlighting parallels and in the process illuminating the persistence and continuity of American Indian engagement with the Atlantic. In chapter 2, for example, Weaver introduces us in turn to Francis Pegahmagabow, an Anishinaabe who “became the top sniper in the Canadian army” (100) in World War I; Garcilaso de la Vega, the son of a Spanish soldier and an Inca princess who traveled to Spain, enlisted in the army, and helped suppress a Moorish rebellion before returning to Peru to write his *Royal Commentaries*, a scathing critique of Spanish colonization; Captain Louis Jackson, a Kanawake Mohawk who led a unit of fifty-six Mohawk volunteers to serve as boatmen in Britain’s relief of Khartoum in 1885; and Paul Teenah, an Apache Indian who served in the US Army in Cuba in 1898. In their complex, peripatetic biographies, each of these characters offers a compelling example of participation in the Red Atlantic; taken together, they illustrate the fact that American Indians, like African populations, have been subjected to diasporic pressures that have shaped their engagements with the Atlantic world.

The cultural legacies that Weaver outlines are more diffuse than those traced by Gilroy, and as a result the argument of *The Red Atlantic* is less focused than that of *The Black Atlantic*. In part, this is because Weaver's definition of the Red Atlantic is so broad. He does not focus exclusively on the contributions of (for example) indigenous writers who embody the complex identities of the Red Atlantic; he is as interested in individuals with fascinating biographies as he is with influential writers or artists. He deals briefly with numerous contemporary American Indian writers, including Paula Gunn Allen, Gerald Vizenor, and James Welch. But his most sustained readings of literary texts—in chapter 5, on the literature of the Red Atlantic—deal entirely with American Indian characters invented by European or Euro-American writers, including Voltaire, Susanna Rowson, Edgar Allen Poe, and Karl May. The fictional lives of these authors' protagonists often seem far removed from the experiences of the American Indians whose lives are detailed elsewhere in the book, though there are some thematic parallels.

Weaver defends his use of the phrase *Red Atlantic* in the book's title, but a reader can still quibble with him on at least two grounds. The first is that, for anyone who does not work in American Indian studies, *Red* is more likely to call to mind a leftist political tradition than a Native American one. The second, more serious reservation I have about the title is the use of the term *Atlantic* to characterize a work that deals almost entirely with Natives originating in North America and texts that are overwhelmingly in English.

But if Weaver's definition of the Red Atlantic is overly narrow geographically, it is expansive both in chronology and in the kinds of experiences it includes. His discussion of the Beothuk Indians, for example, begins with their contacts with the Vikings, ca. 1000 AD, and proceeds through the voyages of John Cabot and Gaspar Corte Real. Weaver notes that the exigencies of contact and colonization finally drove the Beothuks to extinction around 1829. "Yet even in death," he concludes, "some of the Beothuk made a last macabre voyage on the Atlantic" when a collection of Beothuk skulls found their way to the National Museum of Scotland, "where they rest uneasily to this day" (56–57). Such wide-ranging examples of transatlantic contact and influence make it difficult for Weaver to offer a clear definition of the Red Atlantic, or a concise explication of its significance. Instead, the power of Weaver's Red Atlantic derives from its sweeping scope and its deft evocation of a kaleidoscopic array of Atlantic encounters.

Melanie Benson Taylor. *Reconstructing the Native South: American Indian Literature and the Lost Cause*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2011.

ISBN: 978-0-8203-4066-1. 253 pp.

Eric Gary Anderson, *George Mason University*

Published under the imprint of the University of Georgia Press's paradigm-shifting New Southern Studies series, *Reconstructing the Native South* both honors "the rich diversity and range of southeastern Indian writing" and advances provocative claims about the ways "the Native" and "the Southern" interact with each other and with an oppressive, relentless global capitalist system. In this courageous, passionate book, Melanie Benson Taylor makes what she acknowledges is a beginning: indeed, hers is the first literary studies monograph to take on the challenging work of reading, as she puts it in the title of her conclusion, "The South in the Indian and the Indian in the South."

Taylor argues that "the biracial US South and its Native American survivors have far more in common than geographical proximity" (1). The wording is telling: the South has been perceived as biracial (black and white) for nearly two centuries, and as Taylor suggests, this perception remains operational and powerful. It seems more accurate to assert, as she does, that the South both is and is not biracial. More problematic, however, is her claim that southeastern Indians are a subset of this biracial South—that they belong to it more than it belongs to them. That said, positioning Indians within a regional construct allows Taylor to put forth her major argument that Indigenous and non-Indigenous souths not only inform and inflect each other but also resemble each other. More kindred than they realize and, as Taylor further contends, inadequately served by the "fierce idiosyncrasy" (2) of separatist or nationalist thought and action, native southerners and southern Natives alike struggle to constitute or reconstitute viable cultural identities out of their experiences of loss, peripheralization, "theft, deprivation, isolation, narcissism, and violence" (2). Native Southern literature gives shape and voice to these experiences; ironically, "Native and non-Native Souths together offer a bleak, composite account of domination, hunger, erasure, and greed; the space they occupy together is bloody historical terrain and persistently embattled contemporary ground, striated by racial hostility and competitive anxiety" (209). Most of all, they share a nostalgic longing for an irrecoverable past, a Lost Cause. In the face

of this bleak and unbidden common ground, she proposes a guardedly optimistic attentiveness to the “reconstructed terrain of unnoticed relations, stories of the power and the danger of inter-cultural contact, and injunctions to face the sublime new threats of the present economic age rather than the nagging ghosts of an effacing past” (210).

Taylor finds not only sovereignty but also hybridity insufficient to the task of charting this reconstructed terrain. In her estimation, Native southern writers “attempt to reconstitute their indigeneity distinct from non-Native culture, [but] ultimately betray their entanglement in more typically ‘southern’ ideologies, discourse, and ways of forging and preserving identity and community in defensive and recuperative ways” (3–4). Further, as she insists throughout her study, this entanglement is always shadowed and always intensified by the encroachment of a tenacious and merciless global capitalist system that subsumes us all and renders self-determination futile. Indeed, she explains that her “goal is to uncover the injurious ways that region, tribe, and nation fracture, suffer, and dissemble similarly under the pressures of capitalism” (5).

Thus, the paradox that both animates and, to some extent, bedevils her study: in working to identify a distinctively “Native Southern” region, she finds that the very ideas of “tribe” and “region” melt into air. Her concerted effort to avoid flattening tribal-national differences within a porous, transnational “South” collides with her larger argument that the world is already flat. The paradoxes thicken when she writes that “Native and non-Native southerners find themselves pitched in a contiguous and kindred battle for tribal and regional sovereignty, respectively” (11). Here she presents a discretely “southern” form of tribal sovereignty that sounds quite lively but that, in her view, gains little traction and has little hope of success either on southern ground or in broader transnational contexts. But she might productively say more about both the history and the interdisciplinary practice of Indigenous sovereignty in the US South, in the interest of opening up more space for advocates to speak for themselves and to reflect on their tangled southernness.

In a wide-ranging opening chapter, Taylor establishes that one of the enduring markers of southern identity for both Natives and non-Natives is their experience of wrenching, world-changing loss. She begins with a solid discussion of Indians as “ghostly signifiers” in modern southern fiction by William Faulkner, Forrest Carter, and Barry Hannah. Then, for the remainder of chapter 1, she turns to Native writers, focusing primar-

ily on Stephen Graham Jones, Louis Owens, LeAnne Howe, and Diane Glancy to help her develop an argument that emphasizes what Indigenous writers *cannot* do to get out from under a long history of colonial thefts, betrayals, and murders. In spite of the best efforts of their “imaginative acts of nostalgic reconstruction and retaliatory violence, southeastern Native writers testify repeatedly to the inaccessibility of the past under the real and present dangers and anxieties of the present” (70). Under this rubric, she particularly likes Glancy’s *Pushing the Bear* because it “offers a narrative ‘failure’ that becomes one of the most significant and promising attempts to fairly assess the wreckage of an entire culture and, in the process, to prepare to see more vividly our own hybrid and still haunted contemporary reality” (68–69). This argument in its broad contours is the stuff that good, healthy literary debate is made of; but the argument falters in the details, as when she characterizes “Cherokee words and phrases” in *Pushing the Bear* as “flashes of archaic speech” (67). In this chapter and in subsequent ones, her readings at times capture the urgency of her thesis more than the breadth and nuance of particular Native texts. Chapter 1 also contains Taylor’s most puzzling interpretation: in reading the ending of *Shell Shaker*, she concludes that Auda Billy acts alone and deserves censure for her actions.

In chapter 2, Taylor turns to red/black/southern “alliances and erasures.” She extends her argument that intercultural divisions and dysfunctions outweigh and often overwhelm attempts to win back at least some measure of self-determination: “the African American employment of Native allies and histories—while obviously more kindred and sympathetic—is ultimately no less fraught than the white appropriations demonstrated in chapter 1. . . . While the peculiar institutions of slavery and segregation did much to bring black and Indian southerners together, it did nearly as much to drive them irrevocably apart” (77). To build this analysis of southern disaffiliation, she reads Julie Dash’s film *Daughters of the Dust*, WPA slave narratives, and Toni Morrison’s novel *A Mercy*; then she turns to Geary Hobson’s *Last of the Ofos*, Louis Owens’s *The Sharpest Sight*, and Dawn Karima Pettigrew’s *The Way We Make Sense*. She briefly mentions Cherokee freedmen, but perhaps because she largely excludes Oklahoma from her analysis, she does not explore the freedmen’s expulsion in detail.

In chapter 3, Taylor offers her most sustained and searching analysis of the “competitive antagonisms, exploitations, and denials” driven

by “the vectors of capitalism” (118)—the global economic system that saturates all cultures and communities, disregarding if not openly defying their own interests. In this chapter she circles back to Pettigrew and Hobson’s novels and also turns to nonfiction, primarily *Walking the Trail* by Jerry Ellis and “To Carry the Fire Home” by Kathryn Lucci-Cooper. As in the previous chapters, the approach here is tough-minded, verging on grim and bleak at times, as she considers what might come next for a South that is overrun by forces that doom self-determination, frustrate optimism, and stifle cultural prosperity.

The outlook brightens in chapter 4, in which Taylor finds some reason for guarded hope in an emerging “pragmatic, unified, and regenerative new sense of human community and commonality” (173) forged by both Natives and non-Natives. Her texts, all written by women, are Alice Walker’s *Meridian*, poems by Karenne Wood and Janet McAdams, Awiakta’s *Selu*, and Belle Boggs’s *Mattaponi Queen*. McAdams’s volume *Feral* makes for an odd choice, as it simply does not support Taylor’s claim that “Over and over again, McAdams’s poems interrogate the conjoined artifacts exhumed from the South’s unquiet earth: what stories do they tell, separately and together?” (189). In a daring move, she closes this final chapter with Boggs, a non-Native writer who Taylor presents as a harbinger of a newly capacious, potentially transformative native-southern terrain.

Reconstructing the Native South undertakes the daunting task of bringing Native studies and southern studies, disparate fields with different constituencies, into productive conversation. Taylor performs the difficult work fearlessly, with considerable intellectual muscle and ardent conviction. Throughout, her angle of vision strikes me as more “southern” than “native”: she brings Indigenous texts and perspectives into a southern studies frame more than she brings southern into Native. Put another way, she envisions “southern” as a larger category than “native southern,” in part because she defines “native southern” rigorously to include only southeastern Indians living in the Southeast. Taylor could also more consistently circumvent her impulse to cast “the Native” and “the Southern” as monolithic groups. (Likewise, she flattens her audience into a “we.”)

Then again, in writing the first book-length account of Native southern literature, Taylor sparks and invites such questions of method, rhetoric, and more. This is to her very great credit. With *Reconstructing the*

Native South, she gives us a first book-length map of Native southern literary souths, monsters and all. Better still, she gives us the welcome gift of a vigorously healthy contestable claim, along with cautious hope for a Native southern future that has the power to transform worlds.

James H. Cox. *The Red Land to the South: American Indian Writers and Indigenous Mexico*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012.
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In James H. Cox's latest book the author of *Muting White Noise* furthers his agenda at liberating the discourse on American Indian literature from the colonial paradigm, which has long imposed language and political boundaries around the literary expressions of Indigenous peoples forced to live in what is today the settler-colonial nation of the United States. Whereas in *Muting White Noise* Cox demonstrated how writers such as Thomas King, Gerald Vizenor, and Sherman Alexie subverted the dominant society's Manifest Destiny master narrative, in *The Red Land to the South* what is overturned is the standard definition of American Indian literature, which has been largely limited to the continental United States, irrespective of the fact that traditional homelands did not abide by contemporary international boundaries.

One of the effects of colonialism on Indigenous literature is the "living in two worlds" mentality, in which writers struggle with a conflicted identity, specifically limited to American Indian, on one hand, and white American on the other. More to the point, Cox cites Louis Owens's observation that the "search for identity" drives much of American Indian writing, especially creative writing. Furthermore, Cox cites Charles Larson and Kenneth Lincoln, two scholars who have done the most to define the scholarly trajectory of American Indian literary studies, who collectively "identify explicit resistance to assimilation and distinctly Native oral traditions as characteristics of Native literature most worthy of scholarly consideration" (35). In the case of the writers covered in the current volume, they are anything but preoccupied with their identity. In fact, they are by and large writing about Indigenous people other than their own tribal community. More specifically, Cox focuses primarily on writers active during the decades 1920–1960,

which is treated as a literary Dark Age, in which scholars typically overlook this epoch as having any significance in American Indian literary history. *The Red Land to the South* attempts to rehabilitate this much-ignored stretch of time in Indigenous literary achievements.

Robert Warrior referred to these decades as a time of “free agents,” by which he meant two things. One, the era was defined less by any significant development in federal Indian law and policy and more by the vast participation of American Indians in the war effort—for example, the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act was put on hold and the burgeoning policy of termination would have to wait for the end of hostilities. This observation is noteworthy when one takes into consideration that many historically important American Indian writers were often responding critically and creatively to changes in their tribe’s relationship with federal authorities. In light of which, the second part to Warrior’s “free agent” appellation is the notion that writers during this time were more singular in their contributions to American Indian literature, as opposed to being a part of a movement.

Most frequently, the work of D’Arcy McNickle, whom Cox includes in chapter 4 of his book, is made to represent the above generation. Also included in Cox’s work, similar to other studies, is Will Rogers, who was more of a raconteur, a live performer, than a writer. Nonetheless, Rogers is accorded a place alongside John M. Oskison, a fellow Cherokee, mostly because he fits within the book’s time frame. What Cox adds to the mix that explains his book’s title are two hitherto unknown writers: Todd Downing and Lynn Riggs, also Cherokees and both fascinated with the Indigenous people of Mexico, who serve as inspirations for the novels covered in this treatise. Of particular interest are *The Mexican Earth*, a mystery novel that Downing published in 1940, and *Green Grow the Lilacs* and *The Cherokee Night*, two plays that Riggs published in 1931 and 1932, respectively.

In addition, then, to expanding notions of American Indian literature to cover more than the proverbial search for identity, Cox wants to commendably initiate a discourse that is more intertribal and hemispheric in scope. Not only is North America made up of three modern nations and not just one, but also the historical connections between Indigenous nations have their own boundaries, defined by countless generations of trade and alliance. The latter includes the Indigenous groups on both sides of the present US-Mexico border. With this in mind, Cox argues

that his study of Downing's and Riggs's work ought to appeal to scholars working in transborder studies (19–20). However, what Cox articulates clearly as the twofold objective of the book—initiating a transborder discourse and diversifying the types of narrative addressed in Indigenous literary studies—runs into some issues, which, for this reader, were quite glaring by the end of the book.

First of all, Cox does not address the most obvious obstacle to advancing the kind of dialogue he seeks between Indigenous scholars across both sides of the US-Mexico border, which is language. Excepting a handful of ethnohistorians concentrating on the Southwest, American Indian/Native American studies has been perennially hampered by a dearth of scholars working with Spanish resources. Efforts at crossing colonial boundaries are typically limited to English-language Canadian sources, with occasional references to the Maori, who, of course, are also from an English-oriented colonized nation. With respect to *The Red Land to the South*, the language barrier is still evident in the absence of any reference to Mexican writers or scholars, let alone resources written in Spanish. Instead, when Cox is not repeatedly citing Warrior, Weaver and Craig Womack—exhibiting a deliberately Oklahoma-centric discourse—he struggles at maintaining his focus on Mexico. This is most obvious when he spends a good deal of effort discussing *The Heirs of Columbus* by Gerald Vizenor and *Almanac of the Dead* by Leslie Marmon Silko, whose books appeared during the 1990s.

More specifically, Cox's analyses of Downing and Riggs are actually limited to approximately a third of the book. Instead, while Cox takes great strides at convincing his reader that their books and plays belong in the history of American Indian literature, he consequently forgets about connecting his discourse to current trends in transborder literary studies. What results from the latter situation is that Downing's and Riggs's works are read uncritically. Cox never looks closely at how Mexican characters and Indigenous Mexican cultures and histories are portrayed. Did these Cherokee authors represent Mexican people accurately and insightfully or did they rely on stereotypes? Were the books historically accurate or did they take poetic license? Were these books ever translated into Spanish for Mexican readers? Were they ever reviewed by Mexican book critics, then or now? Cox does not answer any of these questions. He seems to presume that because Downing and Riggs were enrolled members of the Cherokee Nation, they unquestionably cre-

ated works of unassailable quality. Unfortunately, the number of times that Cox refers to the Maya as a Mexican Indigenous people without acknowledging that their traditional homelands extend into Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize, not just the Mexican Yucatan, is symptomatic of the limitations of this study.

Cox also never takes into account the political status of the borderlands region during the decades covered in *The Red Land to the South*. For example, Cox does not observe that Mexico was an allied nation, facilitating the American war effort, in addition to forging closer ties between the two nations. In turn, Cox completely overlooks developments in tribal affairs during this time in the borderlands region, such as the Tohono O'odham (then known as Papago), the Pima and Maricopa communities at the Gila River and Salt River reservations, not to mention Navajo Nation, as well as the Pueblo and Apache communities of Arizona and New Mexico. Cox's discourse is limited to Oklahoma. In light of which, some of the questions that entered my mind, which were left unanswered, were, Why Oklahoma? and Why these particular authors?

In the end, it is dubious that this book will add to the dialog on either transborder Indigenous studies or American Indian literature. In my estimation, the limitations of the material analyzed (Downing and Riggs) and the method with which it was analyzed (it is still US-centric) ultimately preclude it from bringing about effective changes in the dialogue between Indigenous peoples across the international US-Mexico border. At the same time, allow me to be clear that I make this criticism reluctantly, for the reason that as a scholar who is enrolled in the Gila River Pima-Maricopa Community, in addition to being Chicano, I would very much like to see the objectives set forth in *The Red Land to the South* achieved. It just may need to come about through other channels of research.

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