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The editorial board of SAIL invites the submission of scholarly manuscripts focused on all aspects of American Indian literatures as well as the submission of bibliographical essays, review essays, and interviews. We define "literatures" broadly to include all written, spoken, and visual texts created by Native peoples.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Gendered and Intergenerational Violence

The essays gathered in issue 27.2 engage works by Native American authors that depict and critique specific forms of violence against Indigenous peoples. The issue begins with an analysis of Linda Hogan's powerful novel *Solar Storms*. Desiree Hellegers illuminates Hogan's exploration of the "slow" and "accretive" violence of the settler corporation's degradation of Indigenous lands, from the far-reaching, often gendered effects of overtrapping during the era of the fur trade to the devastating loss of lands and displacement of whole communities during the development of massive hydropower projects in more recent times. Hellegers argues that, through her evocation of the cannibalistic windigo ice monster from Algonquin story traditions, Hogan exposes the intergenerational dynamics of the voracious settler accumulation of both capital and political power. Like the cannibal windigo, settler corporations grow by consuming all that they can—lands, animals, and peoples. Next, Alex Pettit analyzes dramatic works by four contemporary Indigenous playwrights, each of whom confronts and ultimately evaluates the "toxic misogyny" and violence toward women evident during the primary years of American Indian Movement activism in the early and mid-1970s. Participating in what Pettit calls "the communal rehabilitation of Native women of the Red Power era," each playwright evokes the still unresolved 1975 murder of the AIM activist Annie Mae Pictou-Aquash. Pettit's close reading and careful contextualization of each play suggests the potential of dramatic performances and their printed texts to "remember" the largely erased history of women in the era of Red Power. In the final essay, Miriam Schacht analyzes the representation of the violence of American Indian boarding schools in the novels of Louise Erdrich. Schacht demonstrates how Erdrich often focuses on the experiences of individual Native children attending the

boarding schools, rather than on the systemic effects of the schools on Native communities, and how Erdrich often portrays the schools as “safe havens” for her child characters. In this way, Schacht suggests, Erdrich’s portrayals are atypical and perhaps “exceptional” compared to historical accounts of the schools. Instructors who teach Erdrich’s popular novels, Schacht argues, should be mindful of the need to contextualize and supplement these works in order to convey to their students the full—and often violent—range of boarding school experiences.

—Chadwick Allen

ANNOUNCEMENT

Please join the current and former editors, the current and former graduate editorial assistants, and the members of the editorial board in expressing our sincere gratitude to Lisa Tatonetti, who has completed her term as *SAIL* book review editor. Lisa assumed the role of book review editor in autumn 2010, when Jim Cox and Daniel Justice were coediting the journal, and she served admirably in this capacity through the transition to Chad Allen's editorship. We all appreciate Lisa's professionalism and dedication, her hard work on behalf of *SAIL* and its readers, and, perhaps especially, her successful efforts to streamline the book review process. Beginning with the current issue, the role of book review editor has transferred to Meg Noodin, a respected scholar in our field and a long-time member of our *SAIL* editorial board. Thanks to Lisa and Meg, the transition has been seamless. Any inquiries about book reviewing should now be directed to Meg.

From Poisson Road to Poison Road

Mapping the Toxic Trail of Windigo Capital in
Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*

DESIREE HELLEGERS

When the government-owned public utility Hydro-Québec began constructing the three-phase James Bay Project in 1971, the James Bay Cree (Eeyou Istchee), the Indigenous inhabitants of thousands of square miles of land to be submerged by the project, were among the last to get word of it. In the absence of an environmental impact study,¹ public hearings, or even *notification* of the plans, the Crees learned about the La Grande Project—the first phase of the James Bay Project—from a 1971 radio broadcast of a press conference announcing the project already underway. At the press conference, Robert Bourassa, the premier of Quebec and self-described “Conqueror of the North,” heralded the plans for “the project of the century” (Richardson 81).

Bourassa's modernist embrace of what remains one of the largest earth-moving projects in history markedly contrasts with the description Matthew Coon Come, Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees, offered in 1991, sixteen years after the completion of the La Grande project. “A project of this kind,” Coon Come observed, “involves the destruction and rearrangement of a vast landscape, literally reshaping the geography of the land. This is what I want you to understand: it is not a dam. **It is a terrible and vast reduction of our entire world.**”² The project, said Coon Come, would serve “only one purpose: the generation of more electricity to get more revenue and more temporary jobs and to gain political power” (Coon Come 82).

In her novel *Solar Storms*, Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan grapples with the cultural and ecological implications of the “destruction and rearrangement” of Indigenous lands caused by massive hydropower projects. Novels such as *Solar Storms* take up the important work of making lived experiences of local Indigenous people vividly real, rep-

resenting both the immediate impact and the “slow violence” of longer-term environmental disaster. While the term “slow violence” may seem a misnomer for a project on the scale of James Bay I, it fits with the historical record of the James Bay Project. In his 2011 book entitled *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon speaks to the urgent need for activist-writers to make visible the incremental poisoning and toxic transformations visited disproportionately on marginalized communities of color globally. The immediate effects of the La Grande complex were catastrophic and included the drowning of an estimated ten thousand caribou (Coon Come 83) and countless other animals, along with “fourteen thousand square kilometers of territory” (82). However, the long-term community, human health, and cultural impacts of the La Grande project, which “wreaked ecological havoc in an additional 67, 954 square miles” (Richardson x), have been rather more “incremental” and “accretive” than “spectacular”—to use Nixon’s terminology (Nixon 2).³

Hogan represents a fictionalized version of the James Bay project as revisiting or replicating on an almost unimaginable scale the long-term, intergenerational effects of overtrapping—including cultural disruption, displacement, food insecurity, and gendered violence—catalyzed by involvement in the European fur trade. Hogan’s novel might also be seen, however, as exploring the intergenerational life of capital. The novel, I argue here, can be read as representing hydropower projects like James Bay I as an *effect* or culmination of capital—and political power—accumulated by corporations through Indigenous trade with Europeans. Read in this way, *Solar Storms*, like Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* and Simon J. Ortiz’s essay “Our Homeland, A National Sacrifice Area,” might be seen as “exploring [points of] compatibility between Marxist political and literary traditions and Native American politics and culture” (Libretti, 167).⁴ In this article, I explore the significance of Hogan’s use of Algonquin windigo stories about cannibalistic ice monsters as an Indigenous framework for understanding the intergenerational life of capital and of corporations that grow more powerful and expansive with every community they consume.⁵

Intergenerational trauma suffered by Native communities—and Native women in particular—is inextricably linked in *Solar Storms* to the intergenerational life of capital rooted in colonial violence and exploitation. In the links that the novel forges between the fur trade

and Hydro-Québec, Hogan's novel can be read as answering "imaginative challenges" issued by Raymond Williams, and echoed by Nixon, for novels that attend to the "'close living substance' of the local" while tracing "the vast economic pressures, the labor and commodity dynamics," the "sprawling webs of interconnectedness" that "invisibly shape the local" (Nixon 45).

The novel focuses on the quest of the protagonist Angel, who, at seventeen, returns to her Indigenous roots in a community called "Adams Rib" in the boundary waters between Minnesota and Ontario after being raised in foster care in the era before the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act. The communal narrative threads together the voices of three generations of women in a mixed family, which includes Cree, Anishinaabeg, Chickasaw, and European ancestry, as well as members of a fictionalized tribe known as the "Fat-Eaters," similar in many respects to the Inuit.⁶ Collectively, the women's stories enable Angel to decipher the scars on her face within the context of colonial exploitation catalyzed by the arrival of European fur traders. Angel must first understand the far-reaching and interrelated familial, cultural, and ecological effects of the fur trade in order to be able to anticipate the intergenerational effects of the massive dislocations that the fictionalized "BEEVCO" dam will engender and to help future generations map strategies for resistance and survival.

Critics have noted the pervasiveness of images of maps and cartography in the novel. Kelli Lyon Johnson situates this imagery within a broader tradition of Native women writers, including Louise Erdrich, Joy Harjo, and Leslie Marmon Silko, who "interrogate European mapmaking as a colonial enterprise, exposing the wholesale theft of land that began in the Americas in the fifteenth century and that continues today" (Johnson 106). Colonial era maps in the novel are identified with colonialist ideologies and attitudes toward land and people, as the protagonist Angel observes, with "incredible topographies, the territories and tricks and lies of history" (123). Christine T. Jespersen has argued that maps frequently serve in *Solar Storms* as metaphors for masculinist viewpoints that treat Indigenous people and Indigenous women in particular, as well as animals, as the "spoils" of colonialist conquest and as "resource commodities" to be depleted and then abandoned (Jespersen 277).⁷

Healing the effects of intergenerational trauma in *Solar Storms* necessarily involves decolonizing history. The healing process necessitates

recognizing and rooting out colonial histories and ideologies; rewriting or *remapping* history to reflect Indigenous values, perspectives, and epistemologies; and formulating—or mapping—new sites and strategies of resistance.⁸ Mapping the expanding web of capital across both space and time, illuminating its roots in colonial violence, and making visible its destructive effects on ostensibly disposable communities and bodies—both human and nonhuman—is, I argue, an integral part of the work of decolonizing history in *Solar Storms*.

As one of the oldest corporations in the world, the Hudson Bay Company (HBC), with its historical roots in the fur trade, seems uniquely suited to explore the roots of transnational corporate power and impunity in the exploitation and appropriation of Indigenous lands.⁹ The “interactive timeline” on the Hudson Bay Company’s website serves as a useful tool in tracking links between capital generated in the fur trade and the emergence of Canada’s major urban centers (which consume a disproportionate amount of the country’s hydroelectric power) from the sites of Hudson Bay forts and trading posts.¹⁰ The timeline illuminates HBC’s central role in Canadian history in fostering the consumerism that in turn drives the pursuit of an ever-expanding supply of hydroelectric power.

In providing an avenue for tracing the corporation’s assets across time and space, HBC’s interactive timeline helps to illuminate links not simply between HBC and Hydro-Québec, but also between HBC and the Alberta tar sands Keystone XL Pipeline. In winter 2012, the struggle to stop the tar sands became a central focus for the emergence of the Idle No More movement. Building on insights drawn from Hogan’s novel, mapping or tracking links between HBC and the Keystone XL pipeline can help illuminate the metastasizing effects of policies that foster the exploitation of ostensibly disposable marginalized communities of color. Tracking the interconnected web of capital that links culturally disparate and geographically dispersed communities can also serve as an essential instrument for coalition building. It can enable people to better understand how capital accumulated at the expense of one community and ecosystem fuels the power, geographical, and extractive reach of corporations in an ever-widening web of destruction. Mapping capital, then, can be an important tool in helping to mobilize communities that might otherwise be inured to violence against “others”—whether that violence is spectacular or slow and “accretive.”

Hogan's attention to the links between the fur trade and James Bay I in *Solar Storms* seems informed at least in part by the pivotal role that HBC's history played in the protracted court battle that ensued when the Cree and their Inuit allies filed an injunction to halt the construction of James Bay I. The petitioners for the injunction "represented virtually all of the people living in all of the Cree settlements of Mistassini and Waswanipi (inland from James Bay) and Rupert House, Eastmain, Painted Hills, Fort George and Great Whale River . . . and the Inuit population of Great Whale River and Fort Chimo in Ungava Bay" (Richardson 25). Legal arguments mounted in defense of the project on behalf of the James Bay Development Corporation invoked the Hudson Bay Company's origins in the seventeenth century. The English claim to the Indigenous lands that comprise contemporary Canada was staked under the auspices of the royal charter that Charles II conferred on the Hudson Bay Company in 1670 to trade in the area newly dubbed "Rupert's Land" after Prince Rupert, the first director of the company. HBC's charter—or monopoly—extended to "the entire [Hudson Bay] drainage system, which in modern geographical terms included northern Québec and Ontario north of the Laurentian watershed, all of Manitoba, most of Saskatchewan, southern Alberta and a portion of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut" (S. Smith). A symbolic act or ceremonial rite, absent any input from the Indigenous inhabitants of the region or even real material European domination over the region, HBC's royal charter was nonetheless invoked in legal arguments by the council for the James Bay Development Corporation as having extinguished Indigenous claims to the region.¹¹

Hogan represents the fur trade with Europeans as the temptation—or provocation—to abandon traditional hunting practices that mandated respect and reciprocity toward animals.¹² Hogan subverts, critiques, and revises Genesis accounts of the fall of Adam and Eve as she traces the origins of Angel's trauma in ecological, cultural, and sexual violence.¹³ In Hogan's counternarrative to Genesis, the contaminating effects wrought by women in the story of Adam and Eve are replaced by the contaminating effects of patriarchal European cultures, which sanction violence against women and animals. "Original sin" in the novel is inextricably linked to the introduction of a market-based economy that transforms everything—including human beings, and women in particular, as well

as animals, plants, water, and vast ecosystems—into sources of profit or disposable commodities.

Solar Storms represents violence against Native women as inextricably linked to the capitalist exploitation of animals and Indigenous lands.¹⁴ In Hogan's narrative, the protagonist Angel's childhood trauma is rooted in the experience of her grandmother Loretta Wing, who, from her first appearance, smells of cyanide. Loretta, as Agnes recounts, "was from the Elk Islanders, the people who became so hungry they ate the poisoned carcasses of deer that the settlers left out for the wolves. The starving people ate that bait" (38). As Agnes narrates:

The curse on that poor girl's life came from watching the desperate people of her tribe die. How she'd lived, I didn't know. But after that, when she was still a girl, she'd been taken and used by men who fed her and beat her and forced her. That was how one day she became the one who hurt others. It was passed down. . . . We judged her, you know. We wanted to blame someone like her. We wanted to hate her. But Loretta wasn't the original sin. (39)

Women bear the brunt of these shifts in cultural practices in a narrative that repeatedly links the commodification of animals with the commodification of Native women in particular.

Though Hogan seems to minimize Indigenous women's participation in the fur trade, the central role that Native people, and Indigenous women in particular, played in the development of the fur trade in North America from its earliest roots has been well documented. Adrian Tanner has observed, "The fur trade was arranged so as to enable the colonizing state to exploit a natural resource without using a large capital outlay, by leaving the organization of production in the hands of [N]ative people" (xiii). As Sylvia Van Kirk has extensively documented, "Widespread intermarriage between European traders and Indian women and the development of extensive kinship networks [were] fundamental to the growth of fur trade society" (202), and intermarriage between fur traders and Native women remained the norm until at least the middle of the nineteenth century.

Like so many contemporary corporations, historically HBC had few qualms in externalizing the risks and real costs of its lucrative trade onto local communities. HBC demonstrated a readiness to exhaust and despoil the ecosystems on which Native communities depended. HBC

engaged in what might properly be described as biological or ecological warfare against animal species to secure the company's competitive edge and discourage American traders and would-be settlers. As George Simpson, governor of the Hudson Bay Company, wrote in an 1827 letter to John McLoughlin, HBC's "Chief Factor" at Fort Vancouver:

The greatest and best protection we can have from opposition is keeping the country closely hunted as the first step that the American Government will take towards Colonization is through their Indian Traders and if the country becomes exhausted in Fur bearing animals they can have no inducement to proceed thither. (Fleming and Rich, lxviii)

Natural predators, like wolves, were also seen as competitors who threatened HBC's monopoly and were variously trapped, hunted, and poisoned (Hammond 17). By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the fur trade was rendered peripheral to the economy that increasingly revolved around homesteading with the arrival of white settlers.

The progressive devaluation of Native women with the increased presence of white women on the frontier beginning in the 1850s and 1860s aligns with Hogan's critique of the treatment of Native women as disposable commodities of a Eurocentric capitalist economy. The women's community at "Adam's Rib" marks the fallen status of women in the wake of the ecological and cultural devastation wrought by the introduction of the European fur trade. In the novel, the near exhaustion of animals, central not only to Indigenous trade and subsistence economies but to cultural traditions as well, gives rise to the sexual exploitation, commodification, and trafficking of women. As Agnes narrates, "When the land was worn out, the beaver and wolf gone, mostly dead, the men moved on to what hadn't yet been destroyed, leaving their women and children behind as if they too were used-up animals" (28). Given that the novel begins in the 1970s, the starvation referenced in Hogan's narrative may specifically draw on accounts of starvation among the James Bay Cree in the 1920s and 1930s. While the causes of "the near-extinction of the beaver in James Bay" during this period are contested, some accounts attribute it to the use of poison by newly arrived white trappers (Richardson 110). In *Solar Storms*, the fish, food, and fur-rich region that French traders dub "Poisson Road" devolves progressively into "Poison Road."

Hogan's focus on European settlers' use of cyanide to poison wolves links the toxic effects of the fur trade with the ecological, cultural, and human health consequences of James Bay I, which included, most notably, widespread methyl mercury contamination. Rotting vegetation caused by the flooding of some four thousand square miles of forest by the diversion of five large rivers, including the La Grande River, "caus[ed] an acceleration in microbial activity converting elemental mercury in submerged glacial rock to toxic methyl mercury" (Grinde and Johansen 223). The drowning of the land resulted in the production of methyl mercury contamination, "equivalent," as Matthew Coon Come has noted, to "a massive industrial spill of mercury" (Coon Come 83). "A 1984 study of the Cree village of Chisasibi, downstream from the La Grande Complex, found that 64 percent of the residents had methyl mercury levels classified as unsafe by the World Health Organization" (Verhovek 4). Health effects of methyl mercury exposure may include "loss of vision, numbness of limbs, uncontrollable shaking and chronic neurological disease" (Grinde and Johansen 223). In the James Bay region, as Matthew Coon Come has testified, "The mercury levels are so dangerous that the Crees are now warned to stop eating fish, a major source of our protein" (Coon Come 83). While reduced fish consumption since the 1984 study has significantly lowered mercury exposure among the Crees, as the Cree elder Andrew Natachequan from the village of Whapmagoostui observed to a reporter for a 1991 *New York Times* article, "Telling us that we'll be O.K. if we don't eat fish is like telling us that we will be O.K. if we just cut our own legs off" (Verhovek 4).

Replacing fur trading in the trapped-out landscape that is the setting for the first half of the novel, taxidermy serves as a metaphor for the necrotic effects of capitalism on human and nonhuman bodies and communities. The primary practitioner of taxidermy is LaRue Marks Time, whose name reflects the increasingly constrained choices that Native people so often confront in the widening toxic and economic wake of colonial exploitation. LaRue's willingness to "trade" the mummified bodies of a mother and child (whose bonds are severed even in death by "two glass and wood containers") in order to finance the museum he dreams of opening is indicative of his internalization of capitalist ideologies that reduce animals, Indigenous people, and Indigenous lands and culture to objects of consumption—and study.¹⁵ LaRue's work as a "dealer in bones, pinned butterflies, hides, traps and firearms"

(28) marks his alienation from traditions that bound hunters and animals in a relationship of respect and reciprocity. By contrast, for Bush, who is defined by her commitment to restoring Angel to the community, taxidermy offers an avenue for reassembling or healing broken things. LaRue's hunger for Bush, whom he eyes "as if he were about to eat a fulfilling meal" (132), together with his traffic in dead things, associates him with the insatiable, cannibalistic hunger of the windigo.

LaRue's self-hatred is an effect of his own sense of being both a victim and perpetrator of colonial violence. His first name evokes the guilt that plagues him, while his nickname, "Done Time" (49), evokes the long history of criminalizing Native men. LaRue's guilt stems in part from his military service in Vietnam, in a war that would have pitted him against Vietnamese people who were themselves struggling to resist waves of colonization. As Angel observes, "What men were capable of, he hated, and his hatred included himself" (29). LaRue's objectification of and aggression toward women are mirrored in the land mass he inhabits, known as "Old Fish Hook," which "point[s] accusingly" at the women's community at Adam's Rib, "as if it had sinned" (28). His aggression is at once a projection of his own self-loathing and evidence of his internalization of the patriarchal ideologies and misogynist violence that Andrea Smith has explored at length as a central strategy and effect of the European colonization of the Americas.

The bodies of Hannah and Loretta bear the marks of that long legacy of patriarchal violence, inscribed as they are with the marks of their rapists and batterers. But like LaRue, both Loretta and Hannah are rendered perpetrators by their own experiences of violence. While all three are identified to varying degrees with the windigo, Hannah is most conspicuously so, given the specifically cannibalistic aspects of her abuse of her daughter Angel. When Angel was barely out of infancy, Hannah tore into the child's face with her teeth. Birgit Hans, who has explored Hogan's use of Algonquin windigo stories to frame Hannah's abuse of Angel, offers the critical observation that "Hogan's constant reminders do not permit the reader . . . to forget that colonization created this windigo" (Hans 102).¹⁶

Hans suggests, however, that acts of individual violence in the novel pale in relationship to systemic forms of institutionalized violence. Hogan, Hans argues, represents big business, corporations, and Hydro-Québec as "ravenous and insatiable monsters" that consume Indigenous

people, animals, and entire ecosystems (Hans 103). In *The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway*, published the same year as *Solar Storms*, Basil Johnston observes that the windigos—or Weendigoes—of traditional Anishinaabeg culture “did not die out or disappear; they have only been assimilated or reincarnated as corporations, conglomerates and multinationals” (235).¹⁷ These modern Weendigoes, with their “cash, bank accounts, interest from investments, in short, wealth beyond belief” (236), “are indifferent to the carnage inflicted on bears, wolves, rabbits and warblers. Who cares if they are displaced?” These corporate Weendigoes, he notes, have no “regard for the rights of future generations to the yield of Mother Earth” (237). If, as Angel reflects in *Solar Storms*, her mother Hannah “was a cannibal, a cold thing that hated life” (247), Hannah is, in this respect, a microcosm and a casualty of the cold calculus of capitalism, which relegates animals, Native people, and lands to objects of consumption to satisfy the needs of urban centers in both Canada and the United States.

The novel’s treatment of the catastrophic effects unleashed by the fur trade contrasts markedly with the romanticized history enshrined on HBC’s website, with its “interactive timeline” spanning three and a half centuries. European “adventurers” occupy center stage in HBC’s timeline. First Nations peoples serve as little more than “local color” in HBC’s romanticized narrative focused on the conquest and development of the Canadian frontier. If Indigenous men are at best peripheral props in frontier narratives produced or shaped directly or indirectly by HBC, the role of First Nation women in the fur trade is erased from the company’s “interactive” history, with the exception of a single entry devoted to the Thanadelthur, the early eighteenth-century Chipewyn guide, interpreter, and negotiator.¹⁸

For all its mystifications, HBC’s timeline helps develop and expand on the allusive, metaphorical, and historical links that the novel forges between the fur trade and Hydro-Québec. The website provides insights into the role that beaver hats in particular played in both the development of HBC’s empire and in the extinction of the beaver, first in Europe and subsequently in Canada. As the website notes, beaver hats not only served as markers of social status but were also invested with healing—if not magical—properties in Europe, including the capacity to restore hearing and enhance memory and intelligence (“Beaver Hats”).¹⁹ Predictably, no mention is made of the inverse relationship

between the enhanced status of wealthy European, Euro-American, and Euro-Canadian beneficiaries of the fur trade, and the impoverishment of Native lands and communities.²⁰ By the seventeenth century, beavers were “virtually extinct in Europe,” the website notes, before moving on to celebrate without any hint of irony, HBC’s role in plundering North American ecosystems:

Fortunately, North America, covered as it was by vast forests and subjected much of the year to cold temperatures, provided an alternate source of supply. . . . Hudson’s Bay Company was created to explore and develop new lands in the ongoing search for this most precious raw material. (“Beaver Hats”)

The rhetoric of “raw material” effectively conflates animals with minerals, oil, and other natural “resources” exploited on Indigenous lands. As such it contrasts markedly with the traditional Anishinaabeg cosmology, which strongly informs *Solar Storms*, and in which every element—including thunder and water—is imbued with agency and intelligence (T. Smith, esp. 43–64; Nelson). The transformation of beavers into “raw materials” for HBC’s hats surged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, driving the expansion of trading posts and forts that would serve as anchors for the development of major urban centers in Canada.

The timeline makes clear that among HBC’s wide-ranging product line is its own romanticized brand of frontier history. Beginning in 1920, HBC embarked on an aggressive campaign to market its own history via a magazine, commemorative medals, catalogs, and an archival collection. The importance of films in the construction and circulation of HBC’s sanitized account of frontier history is documented in a link entitled “Hudson Bay at the Movies.” The link references a 1915 production titled *Alice of Hudson’s Bay*, centering on the “the romantic adventures of a young heroine,” a white settler “in the wild and rugged forests of Canada.” Charles Bartlett’s *Alice of Hudson’s Bay* was followed by the 1923 John Ford film entitled *North of the Hudson Bay* and a 1940 film, *Hudson’s Bay* by Irving Pichel, focused on the “adventurous exploits of early fur traders Radisson and des Groseilliers” (“HBC”). The gendered violence and displacement catalyzed by the fur trade between HBC and Canadian First Nations is perhaps even less visible in these cinematic romances than it is in HBC’s own interactive timeline.²¹

HBC’s timeline provides important insights into HBC’s central role in

shaping the political, cultural, economic—and ecological—landscape of Canada today—as seen through a distinctly white settler lens. HBC's extensive documentation of the development, expansion, and diversification of its retail empire provides evidence of the company's role in fostering the fetishization of consumer goods, absent any concern for the role of these goods in despoiling Indigenous lands, with all the attending traumatic cultural impacts.²²

Solar Storms represents consumerism in Indigenous communities as both an effect of colonial contact and, more insidiously, as offering would-be consolation for the traumatic wounds that colonial violence inflicts. Bush interprets Hannah's serial theft and shoplifting of clothes as a response to her history of sexual abuse. Describing her as a "body under siege," Bush observes that for Hannah, "clothes were the only protection she had, the only skin between her and all the rest" (98). "Your mother was a skin that others wore," Bush tells Angel elsewhere in the novel (77). Metaphorically stripped of her skin, which is literally marked with the history of abuse and torture she has endured, Hannah engages in petty pilfering and shoplifting, which further isolates—if not criminalizes—her. With its intimations of ersatz icicles, "Tinselman's," the name of the store from which she repeatedly shoplifts, mirrors Hannah's frozen heart. The name also evokes the transformation of the frozen northern landscape into consumer goods, only the cheapest of which are accessible to low income Native communities.

Angel's own progressive departure from strategies that mirror Hannah's begins with the feast celebrating her return to her biological family and Indigenous roots. At the feast, the character "Frenchie," whose name evokes the cultural influences of the European fur trade, asks a question—"What happened to your face . . . dear?" (51)—which forces Angel to begin to confront her traumatic past. Frenchie's "ignorance" of her transgression demonstrates her broader ignorance of, or disengagement from, the history of colonial violence and intergenerational abuse that has marked Angel's life, face, and body. Frenchie's own face, however, bears the marks of subtler forms of violence. No character in the novel seems more closely to evoke the fetishization of consumer goods than Frenchie, whose body and face are rendered almost indistinguishable from the commodities in which she is swathed. As such, she arguably mirrors Hannah's response to the traumas of colonialism, even as she, like Hannah and LaRue, blurs the line between victim and

perpetrator. She arrives “wearing a red dress,” “a pink chiffon scarf,” and “too much color on her cheeks,” and “carrying a platter of Russian tea cookies” (49). Frenchie, as Angel observes, “smelled of face powder and wore a strand of pearls around her withered neck” (49). Ironically, Angel’s withering characterization of Frenchie’s neck seems to align with Frenchie’s own sense of aging as disfiguring, hence her attempts to mask its effects through jewelry and makeup, and her solicitousness toward her would-be suitor Justin, at whom she “smiled too much” (50) and “peer[ed] anxiously” (52). Frenchie’s commodification of herself and her own body contrasts with the quiet dignity and equality that characterize the relationships between, variously, Agnes and Husk, Dora-Rouge and Tulik, and ultimately Angel and Tommy. In many respects, then, Frenchie serves as a mirror of Eurocentric influences from which Angel progressively sets out to free herself.

When Angel is confronted with “[t]he forbidden question” that she had spent years evading, “mov[ing] out of houses, run[nin]g away as if I were running from ugliness or pain” (51), she immediately falls back on a longstanding pattern of self-destructive behavior. Trying to “hide [her] feelings” by “cut[ting] off a piece of cheese for Dora-Rouge,” she “cut[s] . . . a deep bite off the tip” of her finger (52). The description echoes the injury that Hannah has inflicted upon her as a child, as well as the long history of self-injury that links Hannah, Angel, and Angel’s sister.

The healing influence of the community at Adam’s Rib is implicitly contrasted with not simply the traumatic effects of Angel’s original injury, but with Eurocentric medical models and coping mechanisms rooted in colonialist/capitalist ideologies. As Agnes bandages her hand in the bathroom, Angel’s flashbacks, her “memory of wounds, the days and weeks of hospitals,” are triggered by the “look of blood in the sink . . . the red, iron-filled water that had stained everything, even the insides of cooking pots” (52). The passage links “cooking pots” and mirrors, among the earliest items of exchange that Indigenous communities sought in trade with Europeans, with the legacy of intergenerational violence and trauma that Angel inherits. Angel’s reflexive response to the flashbacks—“suddenly without warning, I hit the mirror with my hand, hit the face of myself”—can be read as constituting a break with Eurocentric cultural, economic, and aesthetic influences and constructions of identity. The breaking coincides with Angel’s confrontation with her barely repressed anger:

I heard a voice yelling “Damn it!” and it was me, my own voice, raging and hurt. There was a deep pain, and the smell of hospitals of the past, the grafts that left my thigh gouged, the skin stolen from there to put my face back together. (52)

Angel’s self-image, like her reconstructed face, has been pieced together for her by Eurocentric institutions and bureaucracies that enshrine the kind of rugged individualism that prompts Angel’s sense that she should “clean up the glass . . . pull myself together” (53). The dispersal of the broken pieces, which “spread out across the floor, settling in corners” (52), resonates, however, with the novel’s emphasis on communal storytelling and on illuminating forgotten “corners” or margins of history as integral to healing the wounds inflicted by colonialism and capitalism.

Angel’s patterns of self-injury, the novel repeatedly suggests, are rooted in ideologies that render women’s bodies as objects of trade. Angel’s history of self-abuse extends not only to cutting and burning but to tattooing her own skin with the initials of the men to whom she has offered or traded her body in a fruitless quest for love and acceptance. As Angel emerges from the bathroom, Husk disarms the situation, congratulating Angel for breaking the mirror: “Thatta girl, Angel. Those things . . . are the source of vanity”(53). The breaking of the mirror links Angel with Bush, who recognizes LaRue’s windigo hunger for what it is, and repeatedly rebuffs his advances. Epitomizing Bush’s anticapitalist deindustrialist ethos, her house, Angel observes, contains “no bathroom, no electricity, and no mirrors” (69). Bush’s explanation for the absence of mirrors, that “mirrors had cost our lives”(69), reinforces the persistent link in the novel between the fetishization of consumer goods, colonialism, and capitalism. In *Solar Storms*, mass-produced consumer goods are the engines of an economy that alienates Indigenous people from all that defines them—from their own bodies, land, labor, histories, cultures, and families.²³

Like mirrors, electrification in *Solar Storms* is linked to consumerism and to an expanding web of Eurocentric settler values and aesthetics. Angel reflects on the impact of electrification on Holy String Town:

With the coming of this light. . . . Standing before mirrors, people looked at themselves as if for the first time, and were disappointed at the lines of age, the marks and scars they’d never noticed or clearly seen before. I, too, saw myself in the light, my scars speaking again their language of wounds. (267)

Electrification is represented metaphorically as a web that displaces and threatens the web of life referenced in Indigenous creation stories (see Allen 11–29). The web of electrification in *Solar Storms* is inseparable from the ever-expanding web of capital, and from the circulation of histories, images, and products that enshrine racist, sexist, and ageist ideologies and aesthetics. What Hogan writes of electrification is equally true of capitalism: “alchemy in reverse” (268), it transforms ancient rivers into kitchen appliances. Fueled by electricity, consumer culture feeds on Native lands; it erodes traditional values and “romanticize[s] [an Indigenous] past in fantasy,” while, as Angel observes, it “despise[s] our real human presence” (343). Consumer culture—like the romanticized frontier history peddled on the Hudson Bay Company’s website—mystifies historical and ongoing violence against, and exploitation of, Native peoples, and in so doing perpetuates the cycle of intergenerational trauma.

The passage on the electrification of the northern Canadian territory also foregrounds the thawing of the permafrost, linking it to the climate impacts of the James Bay project:

Under our feet, the moist ground gave a little. The outer lights, not yet really needed, were carried by poles that had been cemented by workers from warmer climates into unsolid ground. At places the top layer of permafrost had thawed and the poles already slanted. It made the place look uncomfortable, temporary, and chaotic. (267)

By the 1995 publication of *Solar Storms*, the thawing of permafrost in the Arctic and subarctic regions was already well documented. Over the past two decades, scientific studies have increasingly linked hydropower with climate change, as a substantial body of literature has arisen on the climate impacts of trapped sediments and CO₂ and methane produced from the outgassing of thousands of miles of submerged organic materials.²⁴ Recent studies have indicated that “the global-warming impact of hydropower plants can often outweigh that of comparable fossil-fuel power stations,” given that methane has “more than 20 times the warming impact of carbon dioxide over a 100-year period” (Parekh). Ecological changes catalyzed by global climate change are compounding the effects of methyl mercury contamination of fish and game. A 2012 study linking July 2005 fish die-offs with rapid climate change in the Arctic and subarctic region indicates “unique food security challenges are being faced by Aboriginal people” in the Hudson and James Bay regions

of northern Ontario “due to the impacts of climate change on subsistence hunting” (Hori et al. 1).

Consuming vastly disproportionate amounts of hydroelectric power, urban spaces are identified in the novel with the voracious and all-consuming hunger of the windigo. The elder Tulik traverses the disorienting urban landscape on his way to the hearings at the courthouse, which he calls “the House of Units, Measures, and Standards,” in which all things are reducible to “numbers, dollars, grams” (343). The city serves as a daily reminder of the disposability of Indigenous people in the face of the capitalist urban windigo: “It looked as if the walls of buildings, the street signs, the electric lights, the markets could have swallowed him, the way they had swallowed land” (341). In the electrified, barren landscape of the city, Tulik is rendered an exoticized “curiosity,” a spectacle to be consumed by settlers for whom “his wisdom was nothing more than a worn-out belief that had no more place in this world where the walls themselves came from the lost lives and worlds of men like Tulik” (341). The privileged settler colonialists either are oblivious to the violence their disproportionate consumption engenders, or “if they continued with this building” in the full knowledge of its impact on Indigenous people, they were in fact “evil,” windigos, “cannibals who consumed human flesh, set fire to worlds the gods had loved and asked the humans to care for” (343).

The concerns that the novel raises about global climate change and energy development schemes that consume the lands of First Nation and Native American peoples resonate strongly with the battle over the Alberta tar sands and the Keystone XL pipeline. Not surprisingly, the historical and geographical roots of the Keystone XL pipeline also originate with HBC, in Hardisty, Alberta, on Indigenous lands that Charles II laid claim to in 1670 as “Rupert’s Land.” Two hundred years later in 1870, HBC surrendered 90 percent of its holdings in both Alberta and Saskatchewan to the Dominion of Canada (“Mineral Rights”). “In 1930, Canada transferred ownership of the mineral rights held by the federal Crown since 1870” to the provincial governments of Saskatchewan and Alberta, which administer them today (“Mineral Rights”). The Tory governments of both provinces are enthusiastic boosters of the Keystone XL pipeline, with the Alberta provincial government spearheading an expensive ad campaign touting the merits of the pipeline for both the United States and Canada (Weismiller; see also Graham).

Despite HBC having surrendered all but 10 percent of its corporate holdings to the Canadian government in 1870, the company nonetheless played an important role in the longer historical trajectory out of which the pipeline emerged—and more broadly in the global political power, and accompanying environmental threats, of “big oil.” The landholdings that HBC maintained after 1870 provided a foundation not only for the development of HBC’s retail empire, but also for the exploitation of natural “resources” on historically Indigenous lands in the north and west in particular. HBC’s expanding encroachment on Native lands is evident on its interactive timeline, with links that reference HBC’s 1921 “agreement with Imperial Oil Company to exploit HBC mineral rights on all lands sold since 1910 in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan,” and the 1929 formation of the Hudson Bay Oil and Gas Company (HBOG) in partnership with the American Marland Oil Company (“Diversification”), the same year the latter company acquired Conoco. Only the decade before the formation of HBOG and the merger of Marland Oil and Conoco, British speculators, under cover of the crown in what would one day become Iran, formed the Anglo-Persian Company, which would assume the mantle in the 1920s of British Petroleum. In 2002, one of the largest mergers in recent corporate history would give birth to ConocoPhillips, a corporation the Political Economy Research Institute has ranked as the eleventh of the “100 worst US polluters” (“ConocoPhillips”). ConocoPhillips enterprises include, variously, “hydraulic fracturing for natural gas, offshore oil drilling, pipeline expansion in Alaska, and chemical manufacturing” (“ConocoPhillips”). In the 1980s HBC’s 52.9 percent stake in HBOG was sold to Dome Petroleum (Sawyer), which was in turn sold to Amoco in 1988 (Arndt), which was purchased in 1999 by none other than British Petroleum (BP) in one of the world’s largest industrial mergers to date (Labaton). BP and ConocoPhillips are continuing to lobby Congress and public opinion for the construction of the Keystone pipeline, which would transport oil from the Alberta tar sands to the Gulf of Mexico, where cleanup is still underway at the site of the catastrophic 2010 BP-sponsored Deepwater Horizon spill.

Solar Storms suggests that in the face of an ever-expanding web of capital, consumption, and electrification, the hope for the survival of Indigenous cultures and of the planet as a whole is contingent, at least in part, on critical examination of Native participation in the windigo economy. LaRue’s progressive transformation leads him to confront

his complicity in the death of a mysterious and beautiful animal species that is identified with the land and cultures about to be consumed by the rising waters of diverted rivers. He brings Angel with him into the “smelly dark basement” (339), which is redolent with evidence of his participation in an economy in which nothing is sacred, in which “bones and hides and glass eyes” (339)—animal and human life and manufactured goods—are all treated as disposable, interchangeable commodities. LaRue’s grief is clearly heightened by the guilt he feels in the death of a mysterious, beautiful animal species, “the last of this kind of creature,” which was shot by “[o]ne of his regular customers” who was “proud for taking it” (339). The distance and difference between traditional hunting practices grounded in reciprocity and the logic of the windigo capitalist fur trade and of the massive hydropower project is emphasized in Angel’s reflection on the implications of the word *take*: “Take, I thought then, what a strange word it is. To conquer, to possess, to win, to swallow” (339). LaRue’s tears signal his divestment from a patriarchal ideology that is inextricably linked to colonialism: “He cried for the animal, for us, our lives, and for the war he’d endured and never told about” (339). The sentence, with its emphasis on violence LaRue “endured” rather than possibly perpetrated, sidesteps questions of complicity raised elsewhere in the passage, even as it links the disposable status of entire animal species and Indigenous people and cultures of North America with the colonialist violence and environmental devastation wrought by the US military in the Vietnam War.

LaRue’s transformation, catalyzed by his participation in an Indigenous-led movement to resist the construction of the hydropower project, provides one of several glimmers of hope at the end of the novel. The conclusion of Hogan’s novel, like her accounts of extensive activism, including road blockades, takes poetic license with history, conflating aspects of the struggles to stop the La Grande and Great Whale Projects. By the novel’s close, whole towns and rivers have been drowned, landscapes rearranged, and many, like Tulik, have been forcibly relocated to “new, government-built house[s]” (346) in towns modeled in the European mode. But the court battle succeeds in halting the construction of more dams. In reality, the court battle to halt the La Grande complex culminated in more limited, but significant, gains for the Cree and their Inuit allies in the form of the 1975 James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA).²⁵

The fruits of the activism—including sometimes “militant” direct action—that followed Hydro-Québec’s 1988 announcement of its intent to embark on a second phase of the project were more immediate. Together, Indigenous activists and non-Native allies succeeded in halting the construction of the Great Whale project. At forums and public events, including New York’s 1990 Earth Day celebration, Inuit and Cree leaders, including Matthew Coon Come, the newly elected Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees, spoke to the environmental and cultural impacts of both projects and to promises made—and already broken—in the JBNQ Agreement. In a speech delivered at a conference on the Lummi reservation in Washington State in 1991, and aimed partly at non-Indigenous allies, Coon Come drew on public concerns about biodiversity in the Amazon and links between the destruction of the Amazon and global climate change, alternately warning, castigating, and pleading:

You will kill our culture. You will kill my people and our way of life. . . . This is our Amazon but, unlike the Amazon, we can prevent a major ecological disaster before it happens. . . . They plan to sell the energy in New York and Vermont. They plan to continue this environmental racism. Together, we can save James Bay. We can tell the governors of the Northeast United States they must not have energy taken off the back of Native Peoples. . . . We love the land. . . . We need your help and for everyone to realize [that] the holocaust of “discovery” is still going on in James Bay. (Coon Come 83)

With Hydro-Québec dependent on millions of dollars in energy sales to New York State, environmental groups lobbied residents of New York, Québec, Maine, and Vermont alike on the range of issues from Indigenous rights to the aesthetic, environmental, and potential human health effects of the huge networks of transmission lines needed to deliver the power. “At one point there were at least thirty anti-Great Whale groups on college campuses throughout the state” (Houck). When Maine and subsequently New York State backed away from the contract with Hydro-Québec, the Great Whale project folded. The organizing succeeded in halting James Bay II.

In *Solar Storms*, before the court case succeeds in halting further construction, the devastating effects of the BEEVCO dams is softened

somewhat by passages that represent the redirected rivers as at once destructive and rejuvenating, and ultimately uncontrollable.²⁶ The rising waters are repeatedly linked with the promise of enduring and revitalized anticolonial resistance. The title of the novel itself also evokes the promise of intergenerational resistance and resonates with the name conferred on Angel's sister Aurora. Even as an infant, Aurora, whom Tulik addresses as "my grandfather" (264), "seemed to be listening to the [court] testimony" (343). Aurora is associated with intergenerational connections, memory, and resistance. Her name evokes *aurora borealis*, which, in Angel's description, "moves across night" with "strands of light that remind me of a spider's web or a fishnet cast out across the starry skies to pull life through it" (349). Aurora embodies the hope of future generations of activists who will triumph over the windigo capitalism, the heir and continuation of colonialism.

But the title of the novel also resonates with the March 1989 geomagnetic storm, caused by an explosion on the sun, which generated a "cloud of gas" with the "energy of thousands of nuclear bombs exploding at the same time" ("The Day"). The "solar flare that accompanied the outburst" jammed radio signals in Europe; the geomagnetic storm that reached the earth's magnetic field on March 12 "caused spectacular 'northern lights' that could be seen as far south as Florida and Cuba" ("Day"). Electrical currents generated by the magnetic storm knocked Hydro-Québec's generators offline, resulting in a twelve-hour blackout, disrupting power grids in New York and New England. The title *Solar Storms* can be read as invoking the success of organizing efforts to block the Great Whale project, but also arguably the broader wave of global Indigenous organizing and resistance that emerged under the auspices of the World Council of Indigenous People (WCIP), during the protracted court battle over James Bay I.²⁷ While WCIP dissolved in 1996, two years after the historic Chiapas uprising, it nevertheless played an important role in modeling global Indigenous resistance to corporate and state-sponsored exploitation and repression.

As James Tarter has noted, however, Hogan's vision for global resistance, reflected in both *Solar Storms* and *Dwellings*, includes both Natives and non-Native allies. In *Solar Storms*, he notes, Hogan "moves from stressing common ground between people and nonhumans to an alliance politics, one that sees new possibilities for intercultural alliances formed on an environmental basis" (142). The animating force behind

those alliances, in *Solar Storms*, is a deepening understanding of capitalism as an exponentially expanding and increasingly indiscriminate web of destruction.²⁸

While concerns about the environmental impact of the tar sands Keystone pipeline are many and varied, concerns about the climate impacts of tar sands oil have been centrally important in galvanizing public resistance and organizing, linking Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies. James Hansen, former director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies and author of a landmark 1981 study on climate change, has described the grave climate implications of the tar sands pipeline in particular, using imagery that resonates with Algonquin windigo stories: "If this project gains approval, it will become increasingly difficult to control the tar sands monster" (Hansen). With the tar sands oil compounding existing CO₂ emissions from coal and other sources, predicted Hansen, "[i]t is essentially game over" for the planet (Hansen). Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation activist and spokesperson Eriel Tchekwie Deranger has described the economy based in "bottom-of-the-barrel resource development not just here in Canada, but globally" as "out-of-control [and] psychotic." "Indigenous people," she went on to observe, "have become the canary in the coalmine" (qtd. in Stephenson).

In 1991, in the midst of the fight to stop James Bay II, Winona LaDuke, Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) writer and activist, two-time Green Party vice presidential candidate, and former cochair and founding member of the Indigenous Women's Network, invoked the James Bay Project in the litany of "seemingly endless proposals of nightmarish proportions" that have confronted Indigenous communities in North America:

We have had more than our share, from lethal uranium mines, to coal gasification and slurry pipelines in virtual deserts, to the Frankenstein monster of all hydroelectrical projects, an untested ecological manipulation intended for American markets and an outmoded development plan for Quebec. (LaDuke 102)

The alternative vision that LaDuke voices to an economy controlled by transnational corporations is one that is based on "Indigenous values," and as such is "decentralized, self-reliant, and very closely based on the land of the ecosystem" (LaDuke 105).²⁹ "Indigenous people," LaDuke observed, "remain on the front lines of the North American struggle to protect our environment. We understand clearly that our lives, and

those of our future generations, are totally dependent on our ability to continue resisting colonialism” (102). In 2013, in the midst of Attawapiskat chief Theresa Spence’s six-week hunger strike, writer and activist Bill McKibben, who was among the first to sound the alarm on climate change in his 1989 book *The End of Nature*, seemed to echo LaDuke’s analysis. Contrasting Idle No More organizing with the Occupy Movement, McKibben emphasized the shared cultural principles and historical understanding that inform Idle No More activism. Idle No More’s Indigenous organizers, he observed, “know what exploitation and colonization are all about, and so it’s natural that at a moment of great need they’re leading the resistance to the most profound corporatization we’ve ever seen” (McKibben, “Idle”).

The sense of hopefulness with which *Solar Storms* concludes, the belief in the rejuvenating possibilities of the flood in a world in which “creation is not over” (350) and in which “the earth itself is just now starting to form” (351), invokes the possibilities for new social and economic relations rooted in a renewed sense of the interdependence of all communities—human and nonhuman. Today, nearly twenty years after the publication of Hogan’s novel, the “monster” that is the Keystone pipeline, like global climate change itself, is linking communities in new and unexpected ways. Historically privileged settler communities are increasingly awakening to the recognition that their own survival is contingent on standing in solidarity with Indigenous communities to protect Indigenous lands from corporate exploitation. The hope for the future in *Solar Storms* is contingent on a deeper understanding of the historical roots of both the climate crisis and windigo capitalism in colonial violence and exploitation. But the best hope for forging common ground and for preserving the fragile alliances that are emerging, *Solar Storms* and Idle No More organizing both suggest, lies not in attempting to persuade Indigenous communities to embrace Eurocentric models of liberation, but in a deepening exploration of and engagement with Indigenous stories, practices, and cultural traditions—of survival, struggle, and resistance.

NOTES

1. Grinde and Johansen note in *Ecocide of Native America* that Canadian law mandates environmental impact studies only for projects south of the 49th parallel (225).

2. The bold text is original to Coon Come.
3. Boyce Richardson's *Strangers Devour the Land* offers the most sustained account of the struggle to stop James Bay I. For an overview of impacts and critiques of hydropower in central and eastern Canada, see Thibault Martin and Steven M. Hoffman. For studies of the impacts of damming on Native communities in the United States, see, for example, Michael L. Lawson, and Katrine Barber.
4. For an exploration of links between Marx, Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, and Ortiz's "Our Homeland," see also Tamara M. Teale. For a broader examination of the relationship—and tensions—between Marxism and Native American frameworks for resistance, see Ward Churchill.
5. The links between capitalism, extraction, and climate change are taken up at length in Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything*, which was published while this article was under final review. For background on windigos (or Weendigoes), see Basil Johnston, 221–37.
6. Laura Virginia Castor notes, "The Fat-Eaters resemble the Inuit in terms of the Northern landscape they inhabit and their livelihood based on hunting caribou and fishing" (176n6). James Tarter addresses Hogan's use of fictionalized tribes in his analysis of *Solar Storms*.
7. On maps in *Solar Storms*, see also Summer Gioia Harrison.
8. See Harrison's discussion of trauma and decolonizing history in *Solar Storms* in which she aptly observes that the novel "links contemporary and past traumas, bodily and environmental traumas, personal and communal traumas, and draws on the knowledge of multiple narrators to recover obscure histories and construct a community of resistance" (114).
9. In *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Arthur J. Ray describes HBC as "the oldest incorporated joint-stock merchandising company in the English-speaking world."
10. My analysis of the HBC website was undertaken in June and July of 2013. Significant changes to the website, and to the interactive timeline in particular, were made at the end of October 2013, which tailored the website more narrowly as an educational resource for secondary education. However, the earlier iteration of the website and timeline can be accessed via the Internet Archive at <https://archive.org/index.php?&ui3=1>.
11. The central arguments mounted on behalf of the Cree by their lawyer James O'Reilly hinged on the claim that the "Royal Proclamation issued in 1763 following the British takeover of Quebec" applied to the James Bay Cree. The Proclamation issued by King George III "forbade anyone to take possession of any of the lands reserved to Indians 'on Pain of Our Displeasure without our Especial Leave for that Purpose first obtained'" (qtd. in Richardson 25–26). Justice Albert-H. Malouf ruled in favor of the Cree, affirming that the Cree "have had since time immemorial, and continue to exercise, personal and usufructuary rights, including rights of hunting, fishing and trapping." The ruling, which emerged out of months of hearings, was struck down a week later by the Quebec Court of Appeal, which claimed that arguments bearing on "Indian rights were irrelevant to the case at hand" (Richardson 300) and opened the way for the completion of James Bay I.

12. On the gift economy and reciprocity in traditional Cree hunting, see Adrian Tanner.

13. On the dialogue Hogan constructs between Indigenous spirituality and Judeo-Christian beliefs and narratives in both *Solar Storms* and *Mean Spirit*, see Ellen Arnold.

14. In its attention to the links between resource extraction and violence against Native women, the novel has bearing on the spike in violence against Native women in the booming oil economy of the Dakotas. See, for example, Pember.

15. Jespersen examines the novel's treatment of taxidermy at length, linking LaRue with both masculinist tales of frontier adventures and conquest and with the "history of western anthropologists and museum curators who collected, studied, and named Native peoples" (278).

16. For insights into the links between the effects of trauma in *Solar Storms* and Hogan's own experiences in parenting an adopted child diagnosed with "attachment disorder," see Hogan, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, 68–91.

17. Rachel Stein and Laura Virginia Castor both touch on the links between the destructive power of corporations and windigos in their analyses. My analysis of Johnston was spurred by a footnote in Castor (177n15).

18. A version of the popular story of Thanaldelthur, who is "frequently credited with having negotiated a peace between the Dene and the Omushkego Crees who traded at York Fort" (McCormack), is also included in HBC's comic book series *Tales from the Bay*, which is among many HBC-produced teaching tools. Among HBC's e-books designed for young readers (and complete with a teacher's guide) is *Adventurers*. "Generously illustrated with maps, diagrams, paintings and modern colour photographs," HBC's website pronounces, "*Adventurers* vividly recreates the saga of the company whose history is the history of Canada." <http://www.hbcheritage.ca/hbcheritage/learning/ebooks/home>. 28 July 2014.

19. The text on beaver hats, which can be found under "Social History: Fashion and Popular Culture: Beaver Hats," remained unchanged in the wake of the fall 2013 overhaul.

20. The website does briefly attend to the collapse of the beaver population in 1929 in an entry heralding the heroic roles of James and Maude Watt, as "Protectors of the Beaver" for their work in the creation of the first Canadian beaver reserves.

21. Again, my critique is specific to the version of the website cached in the fall of 2013, though the quotes used in my analysis of "HBC at the Movies" also appear in the updated version.

22. The iteration of the website that was available prior to November 2013 provides a clearer mechanism for tracing the diversification of HBC's assets via a drop-down menu devoted to the topic. As of February 17, 2015, it could be accessed on HBC's main timeline via the Internet Archive at <http://web.archive.org/web/20131017035528> and <http://www.hbcheritage.ca/hbcheritage/history/timeline/hbc/hom>.

23. The passage resonates with Marx's observations that products produced in the context of "satisfying the needs of another human being" and "confirm[ing] my authentic nature" as well as "[my] human, communal nature . . . would be so many

mirrors from which our natures would shine forth.” In the context of alienated labor, however, the product serves as an “expression of my self-loss and my impotence” (Marx 278–79).

24. For a review of the literature, see Payal Parekh.

25. Though the injunction issued by Judge Malouf was struck down on appeal, the initial verdict succeeded in pressuring the federal Canadian and Québec governments and Hydro-Québec to enter into the historic 1975 James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement with the Grand Council of the Cree and the Northern Québec Inuit Association. The JBNQ Agreement managed to wrestle important social, educational, and economic concessions in the face of the forced appropriation—and, ultimately, the drowning of ancestral lands. See Richardson 318–27.

26. See Nelson’s “The Hydromythology of the Anishinaabeg” on varying representations of Mishipizhu, “the underwater panther and powerful *manitou*,” whom, she notes, is sometimes represented as “one of the causes of climate change,” as both a “creative destroyer and regenerator” (227).

27. See Sanders. The first international WCIP conference in Port Alberni, British Columbia, in 1975 brought together representatives from nineteen countries, including representatives of the Americas, Nordic countries in Europe, and New Zealand.

28. Libretti’s assertion about Ortiz’s “Homeland,” might apply also to *Solar Storms*: Indigenous people who are “First in line for genocide. . . . occupy the most advantageous position from which both to achieve a full consciousness of . . . capitalism and to intervene consciously in redirecting historical development” (Libretti 181).

29. LaDuke’s comments strongly resonate with observations made by Missauga Nishnaabeg writer, scholar, and INM activist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson in a 2013 interview with Naomi Klein. Simpson invoked a “resurgence of [I]ndigenous political thought that is very, very much land-based and very, very much tied to that intimate and close connection to the land, which to me means a revitalization of sustainable [I]ndigenous economies that benefit local people” (Klein, “Dancing”). For a vision of an Indigenous postcapitalist future, see also Glenn Coulthard.

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A Legacy of Furious Men

The American Indian Movement and Anna Mae Aquash in
Plays by Tomson Highway, E. Donald Two-Rivers,
Yvette Nolan, and Bruce King

ALEXANDER PETTIT

Four Indigenous plays first staged from 1989 to 1998 evaluate the legacy of the American Indian Movement, with particular attention to AIM's history of violence against women. Using the artifice of drama to render divisive experiences coherent, the plays expose conflicts and contradictions within AIM in order to posit a top-down misogyny at odds with the organization's mission as an agent of change. All the plays draw on the period framed by the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973 and the murder of Mi'kmaq activist Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash in 1975. All of them bear witness to the feminist backlash against AIM and to the communal rehabilitation of Native women of the Red Power era. And all of them call out AIM's furious men, with anger, with laughter, with or without indulgence, and with the ironic imposition of distance from the events they re-create or the visceral sting of immersion in them. They honor women elided in most accounts of AIM, whose histories they suffuse with wisdom and compassion. Maybe they offer transcendence, too. Yvette Nolan recently remarked that "much of the work being done in Native theatre . . . [is] about becoming whole again through the very act of remembering, and then being able to move forward" ("Hopeful" 31). These plays remember.

Collectively, the plays illustrate drama's ability to examine reform movements and to clarify and evaluate the fissures intrinsic to them. The skill and vigor with which they do so suggest that all of them deserve serious attention of the sort already accorded to the earliest entry: *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* (1989), by Tomson Highway (Cree). Highway presents Wounded Knee as the epicenter of the toxic misogyny that his play fears. His attempt to counter this malevolence is formulaic by design, a pleading and artificial search for relief

in a plot that he recognizes as uncooperative. E. Donald Two-Rivers (Ojibwa) follows suit in *Chili Corn* (1997; 2001) when he employs the formal apparatus of comedy to mock what he regards as the incompatibility of AIM's ideals and the attitudes toward women displayed by some of its members.¹ Two-Rivers applauds local engagement but dismisses preening radicalism as incompatible with the comic business of falling in love. Although closure rewards one couple, the play's dark prologue and ambiguous final scene suggest that comedy's terminal beneficence is inaccessible to Native women like the young Ojibwa Chili, a victim of domestic violence.

Recuperative comic fantasy finds no quarter in the hagiographic *Annie Mae's Movement* (1998; 2006), in which Nolan (Algonquin) confronts Aquash's murder, the horror that Highway and Two-Rivers had swerved to avoid. Endorsing charges advanced in 1977 and bolstered in the 1990s, Nolan declares AIM and the FBI partners in Aquash's death. Its circular representation of life and death ensures that the play will reference but not endorse the telic assumptions of bourgeois tragedy; Nolan writes a lament but not a requiem. Nolan's criticism of AIM places *Annie Mae's Movement* in dialogue with Bruce King's uneasily comic *Evening at the Warbonnet* (1994; 2006). King's play is also critical of AIM, but the playwright (Haudenosaunee-Oneida) writes men Native or otherwise out of Aquash's death by pinning the murder on Mable, a dramatization of Aquash's friend, fellow activist, and (King reminds us) rival in love Kamook Banks, wife of AIM cofounder Dennis Banks. King absolves Mable, and we hear nothing more of Aquash. But Mable lingers as a reminder of her husband's infidelity, devastating in its destruction of the belief in AIM's male leadership to which she had once adhered. A young pimp-junky-wannabe who styles himself "Brave Eagle" has inherited all the ugliness of AIM and none of its nobility of purpose. Its activist phase over, King suggests, AIM endures as a cover for the abuse of women.

My analysis relies whenever possible on Indigenous commentators. I have benefited particularly from the foundational commentary of Gerald Vizenor, critical since Wounded Knee of what he sees as AIM's opportunism, and from the more recent work of Devon A. Mihesuah, unparalleled in her knowledge of women and AIM and unrelenting in the asperity that she brings to the discussion. Indigenous female activists of the Red Power era are represented by commentators uniformly sensitive to, if variously indulgent of, problems of gender within AIM, for

example, Shirley Hill Witt, Paula Gunn Allen, Spiderwoman Theater, Mary Crow Dog (Mary Brave Bird), and Lee Maracle.

When the demands of the argument and the substance of the plays have authorized me to do so, I have noticed some of the AIM's positive contributions. As late as 1998, Two-Rivers expressed his self-identification with AIM (see Preface vii), and King finds plenty to praise in AIM before Wounded Knee. Even Nolan, the most polemical of the playwrights, recognizes the dignity of AIM's "survival schools" of the early 1970s, although she circumscribes her point by making only Aquash representative of them (see *Annie* 6–9, 53). But none of the playwrights has the option that Hanay Geiogamah had exercised in *Foghorn* (1973; 1980), first staged six months after Wounded Knee, of using AIM to symbolize unity among Native peoples (see 80–82).² Too many women had been betrayed. Aquash, a character in Nolan's play, is a point of reference in the others.

The story of Aquash's life and death is recorded in work by Native commentators and others. A 1978 biography by Johanna Brand remains valuable; Mihesuah's later researches are indispensable, as are online reports at *News from Indian Country* and "Justice for Anna Mae and Ray."³ A few facts will help frame the present argument. Aquash was born Anna Mae Pictou in 1945. She married twice, once at Wounded Knee in 1973, and she had two daughters. In 1970 she became active in AIM, with which she participated in several high-profile protests, including the occupation of Wounded Knee. A romantic relationship with Dennis Banks had begun by 1975. In February 1976 she was found dead near Pine Ridge, South Dakota, having evidently been shot late in the previous year. One low-ranking AIM associate was convicted of her murder in 2004; another was convicted six years later. The complexity of response to the convictions is suggested by the commentary of Native activist Lee Maracle, who condemned the 2010 conviction even as she acknowledged that by the late 1970s some AIM leaders "were rumored to be violent toward their women partners," and others "were rumored to have raped women supporters" ("Support Letter"). The US attorney for South Dakota closed the case in 2011; three years later, an article in the *New York Times* argued that other AIMsters, male and female, had been involved in the murder (see Konigsberg). The matter has not been resolved in any comprehensive sense.

The debate over AIM's role in the murder is bookended, rhetorically,

by two statements. Soon after Aquash's body was discovered, Banks worried that "if it was true that AIM was involved, it would crush our movement" (qtd. in Weir and Bergman 54). And in 1999, with Russell Means by his side, Aquash's cousin Robert A. Pictou-Branscombe claimed that AIM grandee Vernon Bellecourt had ordered the execution and that by March 1976, Banks and others "were exactly aware of what happened to Anna Mae" ("Russ Means"). The intervening years, including the span that produced the plays under consideration, were marked by legal stasis. Three grand juries and an investigation by the US Commission on Civil Rights failed to identify the killers (see Weller; Mihesuah, *Indigenious* 124, 133).

But the extra-legal narrative was evolving and, broadly speaking, tending toward the condemnation of AIM that Pictou-Branscombe would articulate in 1999. Rumors that the FBI or the BIA had killed Aquash gained legitimacy due to both organizations' history of violence against Native peoples, and AIM was not slow to encourage such talk.⁴ Gradually, however, a composite theory of guilt emerged, according to which a paranoiac AIM leadership had ordered Aquash's death after having been duped by the FBI's strategy of "fram[ing] her as an informant for the FBI" (Mihesuah, *Indigenious* 126; see also Brand 147–48, and Konigsberg). Banks, generally fretful, had fretted specifically about this possibility (see Weir and Bergman 54). The publication of Brand's book in 1978 helped focus the discussion. By 1987, an account was circulating that AIM's Denver chapter had "found [Aquash] guilty of being a snitch, shot her, then drove her body to Pine Ridge and dumped her there" (Stern 285; see also 304). Pictou-Branscombe began his investigation in the early 1990s (see Mihesuah, *Indigenious* 126). Articles published in *News from Indian Country* from 1994 to 1998 complemented his work by finding AIM culpable, although the paper placed greater stress on the complicity of the FBI (see Mihesuah, *Indigenious* 126). Pictou-Branscombe and Means's bombshell, which would have been unimaginable in the mid-1970s, may have seemed all but inevitable by 1999.

Recorded principally in ephemeral publications through the 1990s, these developments might have remained on the margins of the historical record had not Mihesuah turned her attention to Aquash in a groundbreaking 2001 essay, later folded into *Indigenous American Women* (2003). One learns little of the Aquash case from the Native men who have codified AIM's achievements. In his 1996 autobiography,

Means ignores Aquash. As Mihesuah observes (see *Indigenous* 12), Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior mention Aquash once in their history of AIM, also published in 1996, and then only to notice her marriage at Wounded Knee (see 246).⁵ Nine years later, Banks would nod at her several times before numbering her among those who “had given their lives for the movement” (353). Although Alan R. Velie (1N1) regrets the “adulation” of AIM in Peter Matthiessen’s earlier *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* (1983), and although Mihesuah (*Indigenous* 15) criticizes that book for “glorifying men’s positions and ignoring women’s,” Matthiessen (267–68) at least followed David Weir and Lowell Bergman (54) and Brand (143–45) in acknowledging suspicions of AIM’s involvement in the murder. Later accounts often failed to clear even this low bar.

This is the historical context in which Highway, Two-Rivers, Nolan, and King operate. Highway sounds the keynote by linking AIM, violence, and clubbish misogyny throughout *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*. The play’s earliest reported event thematically anticipates Wounded Knee, and the androcentrism that Highway associates with the occupation shapes the play’s later events. In this way Highway assigns a grim continuity to the span of time that interests him: 1969, 1973 (at Wounded Knee), 1973 (after Wounded Knee), and 1990, the play’s initial and terminal date and the year of its main action, as dreamed by Zachary Jeremiah Keechigeesik. In 1969, Zachary, Spooky Lacroix, Creature Nat-aways, and Big Joey McLeod, eighteen to twenty-one years of age, had gathered in a tough bar in northern Ontario. As Spooky remembers the evening, the ritual by which they pledged friendship was immediately punctuated by a violent assault. “We mixed blood,” Creature reminds Spooky, “Swore we’d be friends for life. Frontenac Hotel. Twenty one years ago. You got jumped by seven white guys” (106). The lack of coordination and subordination enables Highway to telegraph a theme: all-male groupings quickly give way to violence, even when the males are guilty only, or “only,” of exclusivism.

Highway’s interest in Cree theology helps explain the error behind the men’s lack of interest in women. Returning to a favorite point in a 2002 lecture, Highway noted that “there is . . . no concept of gender in the Cree language.” “God,” “trees,” “budgie-birds,” and “even rocks” are all “he/shes”; and we are all “both male *and* female simultaneously, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually” (*Comparing* 40–41). By meeting at a place that Highway represents as male (a bar), and by engaging there in stereotyp-

ically male behavior (a brawl), the friends cordon themselves off from their “shes” within as surely as they have excluded the “shes” without. Three of the male characters in *Dry Lips* mature into gender-ambiguous “he/shes,” in keeping with Highway’s usual practice as a dramatist.⁶

Big Joey, soon to embody the play’s misogynistic energies, provides the counterexample. Creature merely mentions Big Joey in his and Spooky’s recollection, and Big Joey is not onstage at that moment. Dramatically, he does not yet exist. He will exist, soon and, indeed, dramatically. Four years after the episode at the Frontenac, Big Joey, Spooky, Creature, and three other young men travel to Wounded Knee. Highway’s decision not to describe the 2,400-mile round trip constitutes another act of compression, a way of imputing to Big Joey’s emergence a frightening suddenness.⁷ Joey’s pugilistic misogyny will erupt at Wounded Knee.

Angry throughout the play about the loss of friendships with men who have turned out to be queer (Creature), two-spirit (Spooky), or just respectful of women (Zachary), Big Joey reconstructs Wounded Knee as an idyllic affirmation of his own machismo. His recollection of a swim with Spooky casts his friend as effeminate and debased, an instance of the tendency among a certain sort of man to reimagine a desirable male as female and thus to obscure the troubling nature of his own desire. Spooky, having suppressed his aquaphobia sufficiently to swim one way across a lake, was terrified about reentering the water to swim back to camp. In Big Joey’s account, Spooky chose to walk “all the way around” the lake, clad like himself in “bare feet and wet undershorts” (62). The men encounter a bear, further frightening Spooky, who will try without success to interrupt Joey’s narration by muttering that Joey had been “scared too” (63). Recounting the fireside bonhomie that the group of men had shared that night, Big Joey recalls Spooky as “beautiful” even as he represents himself as the stud who swam with vigor, laughed at bears, and, as later references to his impressive “ass” and “dick” suggest (104), sported “wet undershorts” to better effect than Spooky. Soaked and humiliated by the episode in 1973, Spooky is humiliated and made “*extremely uncomfortable*” by Big Joey’s recounting of it in 1990 (63). The scene closes with Big Joey pouring whiskey on the “toothless old bugger” Spooky, “*attempt[ing] to pick him up gently*” after he collapses in tears, and finally preparing to punch him in the face (64–65). The

“bugger” is treated like a woman: violently. That was Wounded Knee, this is its legacy, Highway suggests.

In a superb reading of *Dry Lips*, Sam McKegney notes that Big Joey “has internalized destructive aspects of Euro-Canadian ideology,” specifically about the treatment of women. He relates this to Big Joey’s “affiliation” with AIM (166).⁸ The misogyny, like the homophobia, is hard to miss, but the “affiliation” perhaps exists principally in Big Joey’s mind. The play’s climax finds Big Joey revealing the plangent wannabeism of his attraction to AIM. “This is the end of the suffering of a great nation,” he recalls having intoned at Wounded Knee (119). In memory, he musters all the pomp of the doughtiest orator, but presumably his auditors were a few buddies from the reserve. Highway never suggests that Joey was keeping company with hotshots like Banks and Means or that he was commanding their audiences. Spoken by Big Joey, the peroration is parodic and bitter. It is self-condemnatory, too, coming moments after the rhetor-warrior manqué calls Creature a “little cock-sucker” and stands by as Dickie Bird Halked knocks Creature unconscious with a rifle (119). The queer Creature qualifies for Joey’s rage as surely as the two-spirit Spooky.

Highway’s refusal to reference AIM’s male leadership—and women of any sort—recasts Wounded Knee as a Frontenac of the Black Hills peopled by Joey, his fellows, and their assailants, the lot of them furiously male. As at the Frontenac, violence answers a grand, gender-restrictive gesture. Note Joey’s clipped syntax in this longer excerpt, reminiscent of Spooky’s account of the 1969 brawl: “‘This is the end of the suffering of a great nation.’ That was me. Wounded Knee, South Dakota, Spring of ’73. The FBI. They beat us to the ground. Again and again and again” (119). The “that was me” pretends to position Joey as a mouthpiece for AIM but actually establishes him as someone who has learned to speak in a certain manner. Joey has learned, too, how AIM defines “us,” at least with respect to gender. Moments later, he will reference Wounded Knee in his revelation of his own misogyny. The “bitches” on the reservation, he says, “took the fuckin’ power away from us faster than the FBI ever did” (120). “Us” means Native guys. This is Joey’s takeaway from Wounded Knee: Native men are under attack. As Randy Lundy observes, “in Big Joey’s mind, non-Indigenous males and Indigenous females are characterized as threats to Indigenous male longing for political power” (108). Anna Mae Aquash best affirms the irony of Big Joey’s position.

Also ironic is Big Joey's inability to recognize that he is not an "us" of AIM in the first place, although he pays for his fantasy of inclusion with the coin of real pain. Vizenor's critique of AIM makes Big Joey a common type in revolutions real and "symbolic": the credulous kid duped by "the vain advertisements of peripatetic mouth warriors" ("Dennis" 138). Vizenor simultaneously represents Wounded Knee-era AIM as the thieves of youth and suggests why "the movement" might have been attractive to men a bit younger and less discerning than he. In 1973 he lamented AIM's abandonment of the program of local relief that had once accounted for its popularity among Native people:

When the militants provided services to urban people, they were supported and defended by those they served. Since the direct services have ended and the issues have become symbolic, the constituents have become the followers, and they change with each confrontation. The followers are young and alienated. Many have dropped out of high school, and some have dropped out of college, to be part of what they believe is a revolution. ("Urban" 184)⁹

Vizenor describes a betrayal, but he describes a seduction as well. AIM hawked affiliation, purpose, and belief to the vulnerable youngsters whom Vizenor finds numerous enough to justify the mordant clause "they change with each confrontation." These goods may have been simulacra sold by "simulations," to use one of Vizenor's favorite terms (e.g., *Interior* 230), but the period had shown itself adept at peddling them. Scores of doggedly alienated white kids had for several years been "dropping out" in the service of a "revolution" even more abstract than the one promised by AIM and similarly distinguished by the thinness of its historical imagination. Its mode was imitation, or theft. The "beads, bones, leathers, ribbons" and "hunks of fur" that Vizenor finds ridiculous on Banks ("Dennis" 124, 131) attracted tuned-out young Indians, as Vizenor implies. Proximate recyclings of "turn-of-the-century tribal vestments" (Vizenor, "Urban" 183) had dazzled comfier youths when the likes of Jimi Hendrix donned them, albeit without the cynicism that Vizenor imputes to Banks.¹⁰ Vizenor's version of AIM's appeal is familiar, attractive for both its antique tribal resonances and (another irony) its racially diffuse counterculturalism.

And AIM promised manliness. Vizenor quotes from Banks's testimony at his 1974 trial for activities related to the occupation. AIM, Banks

declared, was “a new way to express our manhood” and, in a telling conflation, our “Indianness” (“Dennis” 126). This new man/Indian will “prove to Mother Earth and all the female objects of this planet, to all the female things, that we would like to share some of the pain.” Vizenor observes that “Banks seems to represent the dominant male view” even as he “presents himself as a tribal traditionalist” (“Dennis” 127), but AIM’s “revolutionary caravan of young adventurers” lacked the critic’s discernment (“Urban” 183). Banks hints at sexual abundance and at coition as an act of noblesse oblige, unlarded with the onus of commitment. This is the stock in trade of the “male AIM leaders” (Mihesuah, *Indigenous* 165) who, in Paula Gunn Allen’s pithy formulation, were “fuckin’ their way across the United States” (qtd. in Mihesuah, *Indigenous* 165).¹¹ What chance does a kid like Big Joey have against such a pitch—against such clothes, against such men?

Joey comes home to the reservation libidinous and angry, a warrior against “objects” and “things,” his sense of what Vizenor calls “victimry” rampant.¹² None of the play’s prior analysts has had occasion to note the suddenness with which Big Joey becomes monstrous after Wounded Knee, although Roberta Imboden considers etiology more generally when she observes that in *Dry Lips*, “Wounded Knee casts a long shadow of devastating drunkenness, brutal rape, razor-edged misogyny and accidental death over the reservation” (117). Big Joey and the others return from the occupation and endure a violent night that testifies to Joey’s degradation and splinters the band of brothers who had traveled to South Dakota. The event that Geiogamah had celebrated as unifying Indians has become the event that exacerbates divisions among them.

At another crappy bar, a drunken Black Lady Halked gives birth to the child that Big Joey had fathered before the trip. Six times Highway dates the episode to “seventeen years ago” (22, 75, 87, 91, 95, 118); the effect is to emphasize not only its distance from the present, but also its proximity to the occupation. Joey, prey to sanguineous nightmares after Wounded Knee, is horrified by Black Lady’s blood and afterbirth. Tainted by a “non-Indigenous association of vaginal fluids with impurity, filth, and contamination” (McKegney 168), he vomits at the sight of her parturient body falling from a jukebox. But that same night he is frenzied by the body of the leaner, undulating Gazelle Nataways when she “strips down to silk tassels and G-string” (87). This is a fine bit of Brechtianism, in which the viewer or reader is implicated if he or she

follows Joey in seeing the one body as disgusting, the other as alluring. As McKegney suggests, AIM has been transformed by non-Native values, and Big Joey has been polluted by AIM. Again aided by his decision not to describe the passage to Wounded Knee, Highway presents the transformation as the prompt synthesis of two proximate events: the occupation and the birth. Or perhaps the occupation itself was sordid and generative, to no good effect. Vizenor finds it so, as, we shall see, do Nolan and King.

Recrudescent in 1990, Big Joey's misogyny and his fear of blood prevent him from stopping his son's crucifix-rape of the pregnant Patsy Pegahmagahbow. This action/inaction represents both a revision of the bloody birth(s) of 1973 and the apparent termination of the neo-Nativist strain that Patsy and her fiancé Simon Starblanket had embodied, joyously and without ad hoc "hunks of fur." But in an Aristotelian manner, the rape hastens the process of recovery from the violence that Highway finds radiating outward from Wounded Knee. The incident prompts Joey's acknowledgment of Dickie Bird as his son, and this complements the emphasis on genetic continuance that Highway affirms in his closing tableau of the "beautiful naked" Zachary and the "naked baby Indian girl" (130) that Zachary and his wife Hera will raise together. Now inhabiting comic tradition, Highway proposes a new generation as the corrective to the inadequacies of an older one, characterized here by an abusive activism that has devastated "Indian girl[s]" as well as the men of whom Big Joey finds them suggestive. Highway's incorporation of a birth-mystery plot has already hinted at an interest in indigenizing the European comic tradition, as has his coupling of the Hebrew-cum-Indigenous Zachary and a Cree-speaking Hera, twice a goddess of maternity (see also Imboden 119).

To pun, it remains to be seen whether these elements coalesce sufficiently to constitute a solution. Denis W. Johnston thinks not. "If the tragic conditions are real," he argues, "then the upbeat tag ending . . . undermines the issues which the play has raised" (263). The classical modes, however, often clash in good plays; and "tag endings" both tragic and comic are not meant to be credible, just comforting. Meaning thrives in this disjunction: Shakespeare's problem plays are familiar examples; later, the modal tug of the main action and conclusion of *A Streetcar Named Desire* comes to mind. The "tragic conditions" of *Dry Lips* are evident and familiar. Hence the provocativeness of Highway's

decision to graft a comic solution onto them. Like the fluffier woes of comedy's fretful youths, violent misogyny is a problem that drama can only "solve" artificially. Highway knows this. His response to the violence triggered by Wounded Knee is formulaic, and the formula on which it draws is optimistic by nature, animated by energies other than those that dominate the main line of his plot. The ending of *Dry Lips* is a transparent capitulation to convention, a wishing-into-coherence of the discordant conversation about violence, guilt, and recovery that Highway has furthered.¹³

The late E. Donald Two-Rivers finds this strategy appealing, too. Unlike Highway, Two-Rivers is rarely staged and is absent from academic debate. His lack of stature is regrettable: a published poet, a prize-winning short-story writer, and the founder of Chicago's Red Path Theater Company (see Jensen), Two-Rivers was also a clear-eyed social critic and a capable comic dramatist. He described himself as "an old AIM man" (Preface vii) and was associated with Means in Cleveland around 1970, when Means founded that city's chapter of AIM. In 1971 he participated in the occupation of Chicago's abandoned Belmont Harbor missile base; also present were "Clyde Bellecourt and six other AIM members from Minneapolis" (LaGrand 241).¹⁴ Although Two-Rivers was evidently proud of an early association with AIM, he joins Highway and the other playwrights in criticizing misogynistic behaviors that he finds in the AIM of the mid-1970s.

The plot of *Chili Corn* is simple and, formally, familiar. The eponymous protagonist, abused by her boyfriend Waabooz, seeks shelter with the student and AIM dog soldier Benny Red-Beaver. Illinois coordinator Gabriel Peoples is less enthusiastic than Benny about protecting abused women; his passion is a scheme to blow up a "big-assed statue of a white woman getting scalped by an Indian" (105). Rosario Chavis, a Mestiza activist, arrives in Chicago carrying a packet that Gabriel wrongly assumes contains the bomb he needs. She and Gabriel establish themselves as a modern comic couple by promptly doing things that premodern comic couples don't do until after the final curtain. Chili and Benny, the would-be complementary couple, circle each other tentatively; she is wary of men, he, of commitment. Waabooz appears outside, shouting and shooting into the building. Gabriel picks up then fumbles a gun. Rosario grabs it and fires at Waabooz, who screams in pain, for a time darkening this tonally strobe-lit play.

A short second act finds the foursome huddled as “the pigs,” in Gabriel’s thoughtful locution, mass outside (124). Concerned about the “bomb” and their cache of guns, they debate whether to resist the arrest they assume is imminent. They decide to do so—until Gabriel, now sensible of the delights of love and unequal to his revolutionary rhetoric, demurs, declaring that he will leave Chicago with Rosario, go to college, and work in the family business. The police pour into the building but march past Benny’s door en route to the apartment of a drug dealer, from which they assume the shot had originated. (“Hey! We’re in here,” hollers Gabriel as the footsteps recede [138].) A phone call informs them that Waabooz has survived but confessed to a murder. Confused and relieved, the characters open the package, which contains a bottle of mescal. Those who drink, drink; and everyone celebrates Rosario and Gabriel’s union and their move toward the mainstream. Chili and Benny decide against a union of their own. Thanking him for his help and acknowledging her attraction to him, Chili heads off to “get my life back on track” (143). Benny’s future looks good: he has college, a hyperactive sex life, and a healthy aversion to the guyish “cloak-and-dagger shit” (104) that he and Two-Rivers agree represents AIM at its least attractive.

The socially modest characters, the architectural arrangement of the couples, the overcoming of obstacles, the boozily coalescent ending, the promise of a roseate future: these are the familiar trappings of comedy. But if Two-Rivers’s panacean use of formula recalls Highway, so does the skepticism with which he regards the comic enterprise. Plot in *Chili Corn* is a series of moves toward and away from extreme violence. A somber prologue saddles the play with a tonal and thematic burden incompatible with the norms and potentialities of comedy. Rosario begins the recitation:

She took it until her broken bones
And broken heart
Ached like an old woman’s.

Gabriel continues it, writing Chili into a gender-centered “war”:

In recovery from the war
That was strapped to her back
And drilled into her brains.

Chili concludes it:

Kicked and choked and socked,
 Trying to comprehend
 The nature of my enemy,
 My tormented tormentor.
 I'm staggering, but not down. (89)

The plot teases us with the pretense that a bit of amorous piffle and a few shots of mescal will allow Chili to get “back on track.” If only, counters the prologue. Good comedy works because we allow ourselves to be seduced by its emphases on youth, beauty, sex, and status into denying our own ugly mundanity. Two-Rivers problematizes this show of faith by asking us to consider what happens when a young Ojibwa woman, alone and with “the war . . . drilled into her brains” (89), walks away from comedy’s terminal bounty and into the disturbing circumambience that comedy conventionally contains.

The effect of Two-Rivers’s experiment is not to tarnish the majesty of comedy but rather to illustrate the brutality with which some are beaten out of its charmed circle. Men like Waabooz and Big Joey exemplify a problem that would have no resonance if they were eccentric or manageable. We may choose to believe that the courts will handle Waabooz with uncharacteristic efficiency, but surely we are meant to see in him a problem the durability of which provides the play with its emotional substratum. Once, Gabriel orders Benny to return Chili Corn to the street, where Waabooz lurks (see 95). Once, Benny “*has to slap*” the distraught Rosario to calm her down (124). This comedy is not short on opportunities for being “kicked and choked and socked,” even if its pratfalls and other farcical elements smooth out the transitions between what is and is not funny.

The dating of the play’s action historicizes this tension between artifice and reality. Two-Rivers sets *Chili Corn* “around 1975” (89), but its action is contemporaneous with a protest two years earlier against an actual “big-assed statue of a white woman getting scalped by an Indian.” More soberly known as *The Fort Dearborn Massacre*, the statue by Carl Rohl-Smith was on display in the lobby of the Chicago Historical Society until 1973, when it was removed, unblown-up, following a protest by Native activists, Two-Rivers among them (see Two-Rivers, Preface ix; “Fort Dearborn Monument”; Karamanski). Jiggering the date allows

Two-Rivers to present AIM as anachronistic and distant from an event—Wounded Knee—whose organizers sought to convey a grandeur of purpose contrary to the playwright's design. Aquash seems to hover hereabouts, too. By hinting at but not specifying 1976 ("around 1975"), Two-Rivers both acknowledges and shields his play from Aquash's murder, which probably occurred late in 1975 but was not discovered until February of the next year. "1975" authorizes, just, the incorporation of AIM into comic fantasy; "1976" would not have done so. One struggles to read the prologue ("the war . . . drilled into her brains") without thinking of the murder; and Gabriel's baseless suspicion that Chili is "a fed and an informant" (102) inevitably recalls Aquash.

Two-Rivers is less critical of AIM than Vizenor but is in conversation with him nonetheless. His choice of historical referent allows him to underscore Gabriel's attraction to the "ideologies of confrontation" that, Vizenor believes, made Banks and his acolytes into "warriors of headlines," remote from "the heart of the best stories that turn the remembered tribal world" ("Dennis" 129–30). As Two-Rivers knew, the protest against Rohl-Smith's statue had been resolved without much fuss. Benny says as much when he informs Gabriel that the Historical Society had already acknowledged that the placement of the statue violated the state constitution. Gabriel responds to this recitation of fact by saying that Benny's attraction to negotiation makes him "sound just like a white man" (100), and his dejection upon learning that the statue has been moved will soon reveal him as a lover of confrontation for confrontation's sake (see 131).¹⁵ Like Highway's Big Joey, Gabriel mimics the language of radicalism, and the actions to which both characters are drawn are senseless and cruel. These characters are Vizenorite "simulations," phony inferences from hand-me-down ideals that neither understands. Both are types of the overdressed and powerless AIM follower whom Vizenor observed at a 1972 "armed confrontation." After having introduced himself in a "trembling voice," the man declared, "we came here to die" ("Dennis" 130–31; *Interior* 233). Vizenor does not find this noble, and neither would Highway or Two-Rivers.¹⁶

Two-Rivers and Vizenor portray the more zealous sort of AIMster as pretentious and inept; but the "old AIM man," writing after the fact, allows Gabriel a nostalgic glow, albeit of low wattage. Gabriel is a pretender caught on the downslope of "the movement." He is marred, not defined, by his shortcomings, and as we have seen he makes a good bid

for redemption. His status as a decorated veteran assures us that Two-Rivers does not intend him merely as a galoot (see 88), although he *is* that at times. Overall, Gabriel is a caricature in the manner of Vizenor: he wears “a beret with an eagle feather attached to it” (88), and his loud, muddled bombast establishes him as a card-carrying “mouth warrior.” Like AIM’s leaders as Vizenor portrays them (and like Big Joey), Gabriel is deaf to humor and irony.¹⁷ A gun-fetishist like Vizenor’s Banks, he can neither draw nor shoot.¹⁸ He shows no interest in books and is fuzzy on Native languages and history.¹⁹ As his determined and futile pursuit of the media suggests (see, e.g., 125), he longs to “rave in television scenes,” as Vizenor claims AIM’s “media simulations and ersatz leaders” had “learned” to do (*Interior* 230). Two-Rivers adopts a stereotype that Vizenor had created, like Vizenor ramping up its comic value by representing it as anachronistic.

The play is essentially a contest between Gabriel’s and Benny’s modes of activism; and in *Chili Corn* as in *Dry Lips* and Vizenor’s polemics, political gestures become less effective as they move exhibitionistically from the local to the national level.²⁰ When Chili asks Benny why he is helping her, Benny proudly identifies himself as a member of AIM, an organization meant to “serve our people” and “protect our community” (91)—the AIM respected by Vizenor and, as we will see, King. But he comes on to Chili by saying, smarmily, “You’re an Indian woman and looking good” and “I’m an Indian man.” She checks him: “So is Waa-booz” (92). This registers. Their subsequent banter integrates a comfortably mild strain of flirtation and a good measure of mutual respect. Gabriel enters via a recorded message. “Eagle flies over the valley tomorrow,” he mouth-warriors mysteriously; “This ain’t no panty raid, college boy—this is the real deal” (93). As it happens, “this” is not the “real deal” at all; it is a foil for Benny’s lower-key, higher-yield activism. When Gabriel appears on-stage, he will mock Benny’s commitment to helping Chili by dismissing it as “woman stuff” (95). His stagey hand wringing over Chili’s potential to disrupt his nutty plan assures us that “woman stuff” is Two-Rivers’s “real deal,” even if it isn’t Gabriel’s. The prologue has already told us as much.

For Two-Rivers no less than for Highway, resolution is a fraught process. The circular structure of *Dry Lips* points up the fugitivity of the solutions that the play seems to endorse, and Two-Rivers’s linear comedy twists into a rough circle when we recognize in its prologue and

conclusion the credible threat of revenant abuse. Nolan's imposition in *Annie Mae's Movement* of a circular plot onto a historical sequence disallows the luxury of even apparent resolution.²¹ Twenty-three scenes dramatize the last two years of Anna Mae Aquash's life, from her tenure at an AIM "survival school" in Boston to her wedding and other activities at Wounded Knee; her involvement with Dennis Banks ("so you're the little woman warrior I've been hearing about" [15]); her marginalized status in AIM's hierarchy ("we can't run a political movement on women's intuition," says Dennis [40]); her conflicts with Banks and his bodyguard, the informant Douglass Durham; and her interrogation first by the FBI and then, seriatim and at Dennis's behest, by Leonard (Peltier) and a factotum named Lawrence, formerly her student in Boston. In the final scene, Anna is raped and murdered by an amalgam of Dennis, Lawrence, and Doug, who has morphed into the FBI Guy.²² Having risen from death in an introductory scene, she dies in the final scene. The Rugaru, a "rank, foul" figure of rapine (6), haunts the play, sometimes visually, sometimes referentially, and finally by providing the template from which Nolan creates Anna's corporate assailant, which sniffs its prey and "*moves like an animal*" (53).²³ The play is purgative but claustrophobic, an homage that names the murderers of the hero/martyr Aquash while running Anna the Native Everywoman through a loop of birth, aspiration, struggle, abuse, death, and rebirth.

By implicating AIM and the FBI, Nolan participates in the move toward the shared-guilt theory that I outlined earlier in this essay, in this way augmenting the small canon of twentieth-century Native women's writing about AIM. Soon after the discovery of Aquash's body, Shirley Hill Witt wrote that women at Wounded Knee "organized, planned, provided support and materiel, and, in effect, gave continuity to the endeavor." Impressed as Vizenor had been by the leadership's posturing, she added, "the cameras hummed and clicked upon the faces of male AIM members" (42).²⁴ But for Witt, Wounded Knee was meant to be a rebirth. She sees AIM emerging from the occupation as a feminocentric collective, grieved but solidified by the death, incarceration, and disappearance of "male leaders" who "have been made ineffectual" (43).

History would rule against Witt, but Nolan honors her perspective. Like Witt, Anna imagines a post-male AIM: in a vision of Wounded Knee, she sees a woman who "stands between" armed white and Indian men "like an avenging angel, and the whole world is watching her" (9).

Anna's appropriation of the leadership's appetite for media is a nice touch, but more important is the belief in woman's power within AIM that she will indulge until the play's antepenultimate scene, when she realizes that a hardened Lawrence has been sent to interrogate her (see 50). Anna might until that moment have been persuaded by Witt's passive "have been made ineffectual," an evasion evident as well in a polemic by Regina Brave from which Witt quotes and, later, in Mary Crow Dog's account of the sexual opportunism of AIM's "warriors" (see 68–69, 78–79).²⁵ Mihesuah observes that "like many other Native women," Crow Dog "rationalized men's conduct as a result of colonialism" ("Anna Mae" 217).²⁶ She may have been mindful of Brave and Witt. Had her interest extended to imaginative literature, she might have thought, too, of Nolan's Anna, who recognizes Dennis's and Lawrence's perfidy only when it is forced upon her.

Spiderwoman Theater and Lee Maracle took a harder line than Witt, Brave, and Crow Dog. Lisa Mayo of Spiderwoman remembers the unpreserved *Women in Violence*, first performed in 1976, as an "angry" reaction against "things that were happening in AIM."²⁷ The play emerged in part from Mayo's sister and collaborator Muriel Miguel's "awful" experiences at Wounded Knee, where women were barred from "really negotiating and talking with the powers that be" but instructed to "make the coffee" and "write the letters" (Mayo 339). Maracle would evince an analogous contempt by recalling 1973 as "the lowest ebb in the movement." AIM's leaders at Wounded Knee, she claimed, acted "like arrogant white men" and manifested "the worst, most dominate white male traits" (*I Am Woman* 98–99).

Nolan follows Maracle and perhaps Spiderwoman in finding AIM's misogyny more distressing for being mimetic, a willing appropriation of what's worst about a skilled set of appropriators, and not, as it was for Crow Dog and others, an infection caught from them. Disgusted by the paranoia evident in Dennis's reliance on Doug, Anna asserts, "we're turning into them" (21). This prefigures both the un-"we"-ing of Anna in the interrogation scene with Lawrence and the melding of the male characters at play's end. ("Un-'we'-ing" is Big Joey's trope, too.) As Anna's lament suggests, ironic pronomial play is part of Nolan's method. In her introductory speech, Anna says, "There are all kinds of ways of getting rid of people. In Central America they disappeared people. Just came and took them away in the middle of the night. . . . Well, here they

disappear people too" (3). Who are "they"? The FBI? AIM? Both: the "we" whom Anna imagines becoming "them" will antecede "they" only after a deadly winnowing. Anna chases this antecedent for twenty-two scenes before encountering it as hydra-headed and transracial but exclusively male and redolent of "the worst, most dominate white male traits."

Nolan's community of disenfranchised "theys" is expansive. During the rape, Anna "*stops begging*" her assailant and recites the names of family members and exemplary "sisters," including several Native playwrights and performers (53; see Stanlake 147). The printed text of *Annie Mae's Movement* enables us to recognize this gesture as the completion of an appeal evident earlier in Nolan's epigraphic use of a familiar Cheyenne saying—"A nation is not defeated until the hearts of its women are on the ground" (v)—and continued in the text's dedication to "*all the brave-hearted women*" (v). Anna's essentially epic invocation, displaced to an ending that is also a beginning, includes mention of Monique (Mojica), author of *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (1988; 1991). Aquash appears in Mojica's play as a counterpart to an unnamed victim of Augusto Pinochet (see 53–54), whose regime gave us the transitive use of "disappear" that allows Nolan to hint at the analogy that Mojica spells out. By invoking Mojica, Nolan piggybacks on the earlier playwright's own terminal appeal to feminocentric community, which Mojica had bolstered through references to Gloria Anzaldúa, Diane Burns, and others, and through the inclusion in two languages of the proverb with which Nolan would preface her play (see Mojica 59–60).

Nolan enters this sorority by way of her play's title. "My name is Anna Mae," Anna tells an overly familiar Doug, "only my friends call me Annie" (23; see also 53.) By preferring Aquash's intimate name in the title, Nolan places herself among Aquash's "friends." This also allows Nolan to distinguish herself from the male characters who treat Anna poorly. Lawrence is never allowed this onomastic privilege, and Nogeeschik (Aquash) calls his wife "Annie" just once, in a moment of emotional crisis (10). Dennis employs "Annie" six times, always as gestures at intimacy or attempts at manipulation, to split a hair that Dennis prefers to leave entire (see 26, 29, 30, 38).²⁸ Indeed, Nolan's use of "Annie Mae" is the sole unironic aspect of the title *Annie Mae's Movement*, which telegraphs the play's thesis that "*the movement*" is not Annie Mae's, or Anna Mae's, "movement," and which implies a freedom of physical movement that Anna will be denied. Anna Mae's psychic "movement" tends in the

same direction as *Annie Mae's Movement* (and *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*): away from a violent and repetitive history and toward an extrinsic world of "sisters."

Nolan's remark about Indigenous theater as a vehicle for "remembering," "becoming whole," and "mov[ing] forward" comes to mind. In *Annie Mae's Movement*, Nolan "moves forward" by reaching backward to the likes of Mojica and Aquash, who commune with the author beyond the reach of her prescribed plot. But the play's circularity complicates the yearning for resolution evident in Nolan's entry into the legal and ethical debate about AIM and in her expansive gestures of affiliation. By denying Anna egress from the play that bears her name, Nolan both affirms Aquash's exemplary value and renders it abstract. As the lights go up, Anna's dead body rises, crawls, then walks; seconds before the lights black out, her violated body dies and again assumes the fetal posture in which we had first encountered it. The playwright accents the organicism of her method by the introductory use of a long cloth as the "good red road" of Native virtue onto which Aquash rises (3), and by that prop's terminal refiguring as the blood that issues from the body of the dying woman. "Moving forward" is possible only in the absence of conditions that the play represents as ceaseless and tentacled, and here are none of the comforts of the "tag ending" that Johnston finds incongruous in *Dry Lips*.

To frame the point in terms of genre, *Annie Mae's Movement* simultaneously deploys and frustrates the implosive and telic tendencies of tragedy. Conventionally, Nolan represents amplitude as fatal. By conflating death and life in a manner uncharacteristic of non-Native drama, however, she makes closure chimerical, its normative function irrelevant. Nolan's skepticism about closure affiliates her with Highway and Two-Rivers; her skepticism about specifically tragic closure affiliates her with Vizenor, who evinces a Brechtian mistrust of the assumptions of bourgeois tragedy, an individualistic mode equally keen on representing and eulogizing greatness. (*Hamlet* needs the rote curtain speech of Fortinbras as much as Hamlet's great soliloquys.) The purgative function of tragedy—a wee vomit by way of response to the protagonist's annihilation and his supersession by a dork—justifies Vizenor's criticism of the "tragic" rendering of Native stories as "a racial burden, a postcolonial over-simplification at best" ("Postmodern" 11).²⁹ Nolan dares her audience to "over-simplify" and weepily to wave off a real-life heroine whose

death the playwright refuses to regard as final and whose “sisters” constitute the lineage that, for example, the childless Hamlet never engenders. Shakespeare’s point is that Hamlet dies; Nolan’s is that Aquash doesn’t, really. There is not a Fortinbras in sight as the dying Anna “*curls into a foetal position*” (53), no broom to sweep this mess offstage, just a courageous woman whose cycles of defeat and recovery are inseparable. Nolan, who would later insist that her Anna is not the “Indian as victim” (“Selling” 101), rejects the finality of her historical source and thereby refuses to add to the “racial burden” that Vizenor disdains.³⁰

When Banks includes Aquash among those who “had given their lives for the movement” (353), it is as though he had laid hold of Nolan’s point and sapped its irony. Bruce King seems as unsure as Banks (and Means, and Smith and Warrior) about how to handle Aquash, whom he references but does not represent in *Evening at the Warbonnet*. The play dramatizes a night in an “Indian bar” (233) staffed by Ki (Coyote), a wise-cracking senex, and Ducky (Loon), his boss and verbal sparring partner. As Geiogamah notes, the setting situates *Warbonnet* in the “genre of bar plays” that he finds typified by William Saroyan’s *The Time of Your Life* (Introduction xiv), although Eugene O’Neill’s barroom epic *The Iceman Cometh* seems a sturdier antecedent in its interest in “movements” betrayed. Into the Warbonnet parade four characters who “represent an end-of-the-trail lineup of the most representative of internal Indian stereotypes from the 1960s and 1970s” (Geiogamah, Introduction xiv). The newcomers are all dead, if reluctant to regard themselves thus. Artsy is a Vietnam vet and former AIMster who turned to self-loathing and crime. Brave Eagle—born, prosaically, Randle Curtis Bonapart—is a doped-up young narcissist who learned to dress and talk like an AIM “warrior” in order to seduce women and press them into prostitution. Sugar Lin is a victim of abuse who shot her pedophile father and became a prostitute. The vengeful Mable stands in for Kamook Banks (Darlene Nichols), wife of Dennis Banks at the time of his affair with Aquash, here designated “Ann.” In order to pass out of the Warbonnet and into the happier part of the hereafter, the foursome must confess their “secrets, sins, and self-punishment” and “drop their burdens,” in a recurring locution that King associates with Anishinaabe religion (233).³¹ Although the sinners prove “tough nuts to crack,” they fess up and move along, thus avoiding “the punisher,” a nifty gimmick that Ducky dreams up to prod them on their way (322–23).

In King's account, Mable denounced Ann as an FBI informant after learning of the affair. When Mable explains her betrayal by saying, "she was sleeping with my old man" (317), we feel the tawdriness of shrunken ideals. But if a dropped dime may double as a red herring, this one does. The betrayal troubles Mable, but "what really haunts her" (319), Ki badgers her into admitting, is her contemporaneous aborting of the fetus that she and her husband had created.³² Aquash flickers out of King's interest at the moment of this revelation. Freed of her presence, the play absolves Mable easily enough: "The hard part seems to be over," Mable says moments later, as she exits into a new day's dawn (322). Mable regrets that AIM's higher-ups had acted on her tip, but King chooses not to take his comedy in that direction, making little of the betrayal and less of the murder. King recalls Kamook Banks's husband in refusing even to consider the possibility that AIM's leadership was involved in Aquash's death.

Mable is a difficult character to assess, in part because the "burdens" with which King encumbers her encourage a reliance on stereotypes that are at odds with postmodern orthodoxy. King tarts her up, introducing her as "*attractive, tough and semi-tipsy*" (247) and as the occasion for an outpouring of libido that will abate only with the entrance of the younger, curvier Sugar Lin. Mable relishes the role, wittily rejecting Ki but inviting Artsy to "grab something a little warmer and softer than that cold, unfeeling, unresponsive glass of beer" (252). This is a good line, but it forces us to confront a stereotype nastier than the glory-days radical that Geiogamah expects us to see: Mable is a sottish barfly, aging, fervid, and alluring only in the absence of a fresher alternative. The lack of sympathy with which Geiogamah finds King regarding his "self-centered, deluded characters" (Introduction xiv) serves the playwright's retrogressive interest in equating licentiousness with treachery. "Ann" died in a catfight, the victim of a jealous vamp.

The record of AIM's abusive treatment of women generally and Aquash in particular, more substantial when *Warbonnet* was published in 1999 than when it was written in 1991 (see King, Interview 309), perhaps made this play feel outdated upon delivery. This is understandable but to some extent unfortunate. King is no more an apologist for "the movement" than Highway, Two-Rivers, or Nolan. Nor does King's expedient reliance on a stereotype that the others eschew dull him to AIM's problems with misogyny. If he differs from Nolan in his willingness to

consider Aquash the lesser of two “dropped burdens,” he is nonetheless in synch with hers and Highway’s sense that by circa 1973, AIM had become associated with violence against women.

King’s juxtaposing of Artsy and Mable pertains. Artsy, a two-bit crook at the time of his death, joins Mable in recalling the first wave of AIM protests. Like him, she was unable to extend her commitment beyond what he calls “the right-on early days” (258). Their experiences, however, differ considerably. Artsy’s angry rejection of AIM is part of a process of linear maturation, the aging radical’s realization that the ideals of his youth had failed to blossom in his maturity. AIM’s rhetoric, he says, “made sense to me at the time” (259); but he has come to believe that “it’s the grunts who pay . . . not the speechmakers and the stars” (264). He has a point, but the dead “grunts” whose names he rattles off are as male as AIM’s “speechmakers and the stars.” He expresses no interest in the treatment of Native women in AIM or elsewhere, and we are not surprised to hear him confess that “I turned my back on my service [after Vietnam] so I could run with my Indian brothers and get laid” (320). King may or may not intend irony when Artsy praises AIM for “looking out for skins” in the late 1960s (259), but Artsy’s sense of AIM as a band of “brothers” hardly requires amplification.

Mable frames her experience in AIM as a reaction to the opportunism of Artsy and his type. While Artsy declines to consider gender in his bitter observation that Indians post-AIM are underemployed (see 263–64), “still dying young and drunk,” and “still being exploited” (264), Mable notes that years after the protests, “the slaughter and rape go on and on” (318). When she adds that Ki and Ducky “have no idea of the price we paid” (318), she leaves open the possibility that her own experience included abuse of the sort that Maracle and other Native women have associated with AIM’s men. Like Maracle and like Nolan’s Anna, Mable had to learn that AIM was not her “movement.” She recalls Witt and Crow Dog in her initial admiration of the “AIM guys” (260) and her initial respect for AIM’s male leaders. AIM was the province of “guys [who] took on the aura of heroes” (259), and Mable acknowledges that remembering the men of AIM “walking proud and dressed . . . still gives me a shiver” (261). And why not? An organization that had conducted community workshops on raising money for Native causes (see 258), masterfully worked the media (see 259), built schools for Indigenous people (see 263), sued government agencies and sought repara-

tions (259), fought harassment and discrimination (see 259), and loudly declared that Indians were not “vanquished and forsaken people” (259) had given a young Native woman the courage to stop “hating [her]self” (261). King’s moral agents in the play, Ducky and Ki, have been promoting just such a goal, as they acknowledge when they respond to Mable’s nostalgic tribute with uncharacteristic humility and respect (see 261).

But Mable’s residual eroticized attraction to AIM is most telling for emphasizing the organization’s abdication of its professed role of protector of Banks’s “female things” and “female objects.” All too quickly, Mable says, AIM “got bad” (265). Although Mable doesn’t tack a date onto this observation, her dewy memories of early AIM and her recollection of “being harassed by the feds, the cops, the goons” after Wounded Knee (302) establish the occupation as the turning point. The men erred in “taking over the whole damn works,” she says (261). This putsch, coincident historically with Banks’s affair with Aquash, is inseparable for Mable from the male promiscuity that has become commonplace in feminist discussions of AIM.³³ Mable’s husband—unseen and unnamed but also unmistakable—becomes both her betrayer and the agent of her betrayal of Ann. A pregnant and confused twenty-year-old (see 303), wowed by and wed to a thirty-something “hero,” had cast her lot with the hierarchy that her husband sat atop. Like “many other Native women,” to recall a passage from *Mihesuah*, Mable found a way to justify having done so; like some of this group she was forced to confront the error of her faith, in her case when her husband took up with a comrade. When Mable says “I was so mad at them” (319), we need to recognize more than the anger of a cheated-on wife: however bland the locution might seem in print, it testifies to the collapse of the cultural and ideological edifice on which the wife’s pride and self-respect had rested. Having been given identity, Mable suffers its theft. Her betrayal of Ann is chilling, but it is preceded by her husband’s self-serving and more exemplary opportunism.

The incompatibility of this sympathetic portrayal of Mable and her concurrent representation as, again, a jealous vamp may represent a dramaturgical problem but need not obscure King’s concerns about gender roles within AIM. Brave Eagle helps King convey his critique of AIM’s misogyny. Ridiculed throughout the play for his attempts to primp himself into a past of which he is ignorant—Ki accuses him of “felonious overdressing” (270)—Brave Eagle is nonetheless AIM’s legitimate or

perhaps inevitable offspring. An addict and a pimp, Brave Eagle craves in the 1990s (see 274) the affiliation to which Big Joey had pretended twenty years earlier. The desire serves him as poorly as it serves Highway's character.

Like Big Joey, Brave Eagle is an anachronism and a pariah. King establishes his status in his initial exchange: "Greetings, my brother," Brave Eagle says to Artsy; "Though we've never met, we are bonded by culture and fate. Our numbers may be few and our current situation may be destitute, but we will survive . . . together, as warriors, as brothers" (254; ellipsis in original). Although a director might choose to have the non-"brother" Mable respond with a gesture of weary disgust, King allows Ki to represent the sentiments of the play's larger community: "Greetings to you too, grandson, uh, whatever your name is. It is with perpetual gas . . . that I greet you" (255). King continues this pattern of fake-talk and smack-down throughout the play. For example, Brave Eagle claims that he "took out" the "snitch" who ratted on Leonard Peltier. "For what?" responds Ki, "Dinner and a movie?" (283). Brave Eagle even mimics AIM's defining illness, paranoia, as though to be sick were truly to be well (see, e.g., 255). Artsy and Mable, however, remember late-era AIM's psychosis unromantically (see 262, 306).

Although no pathos inheres in Brave Eagle's character, there is more to him than the ridiculousness that makes him an effective comic butt. By representing his furious AIMster as a dim, bombastic pseudo-nostalgist, King is able to rend Brave Eagle's present-day rage from the archaic rhetoric with which he would justify it and thus to reveal supposedly righteous anger as the expression of unvarnished misogyny. In a mordant move, King makes Brave Eagle's trickle-down attachment to AIM a strategy for attracting women. "As long as I braided my hair," Brave Eagle confesses, "[I could] treat 'em like shit, kick 'em in the ass, throw 'em out in the street . . . they'd come back for more" (312; ellipsis in original). Brave Eagle reifies the libidinal aspirations of the young Artsy, dragging the veteran's desire to "run with [his] Indian brothers and get laid" into a modernity that refuses to sanction its ideological pretenses.

The "burden" that Brave Eagle has to "drop" is not sartorial or linguistic. Rather, he has to admit to hating and mistreating women. In a sequence reminiscent of O'Neill's treatment of the "foolosopher" Larry Slade and the postradical young misogynist Don Parritt in *The Iceman Cometh*, Ducky and Ki force Brave Eagle to confess his hatred

of the women he claims to “love.” (Big Joey is a closer analogue.) “All right, I hate them!” Brave Eagle shouts; “Okay? You hear that? I hate them because they made me hate me! Do you understand?” (311). No doubt they do understand, because their job continually puts them in the way of “internal Indian stereotypes” like Brave Eagle and because, sadly, dead AIMsters are not in short supply. But Ducky and Ki do not countenance this malice. On the contrary, they reserve their strongest contempt for Brave Eagle, whom Ducky calls a “witch” who doesn’t “give a shit about [his] culture, [his] people, [or] the earth” (311).

King metaphorizes Brave Eagle’s historical perpetualism—his legacy, in effect—by making him HIV-positive and sexually active. What is worst about him stands best to survive. This gets to the nub of King’s meaning, formally and thematically. King tempts the charge of trivialization by making AIM and Aquash elements of dramaturgy, “burdens” to be “dropped” in the interest of self-improvement. And, indeed, Brave Eagle and the others pass their tests, to their apparent benefit. This emphasizes *Warbonnet*’s status as a comic play, albeit of a dark sort. But the stereotypes on which comedy depends, and that Geiogamah identifies in this play, behave strangely when they are attached to characters more sinister than comedy’s usual lightweights. After all, the benefit of a stereotype is that it may be endlessly recycled. This phenomenon accounts for the pleasure we take in the *n*th manifestation of the Plautine braggart soldier in early modern comedy, but the very possibility of continuance complicates *Warbonnet* much as it complicates the other plays that I have been discussing. Circularity promises the return of Nolan’s Dennis as well as her Anna, and Big Joey will outlast Zachary Jeremiah Keechigeesik’s dream of him. Waabooz, himself a stereotype, partakes of his sort’s invincibility. Like Highway and Two-Rivers (and for that matter Shakespeare), King knows that thematic dissonance effectively counterpoints the euphony of comic closure.

King, Highway, Two-Rivers, and Nolan offer programs for “moving forward” that meld wisdom and dramatic artifice in the interest of palliating a troubled history. None of the plays that I have discussed quite manages to end, at least in the punctuational sense characteristic of Euro-American drama. “Moving forward,” after all, is a continual process, and history is an unruly abstraction with a lousy record of resolution. Where, with whom, and to what effect do these plays remain in motion, imaginatively speaking? Where do their anger and their laugh-

ter and their efforts at what I have called “the communal rehabilitation of Native women of the Red Power era” position them in gynocentric Indigenous apologetics more generally? Answers may depend partly on where one lives. Sheri M. Huhndorf and Cheryl Suzack recently noted that “gender has been less central in [Indigenous] social movements in the United States” (7), home to King and the Canadian native Two-Rivers, than it has been in Canada, home to Highway and Nolan. Huhndorf and Suzack press this contrast. The Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) is one of several “major national organizations [that] have furthered women’s struggles to achieve political and social justice.” Also founded in 1974, the US-based Women of All Red Nations (WARN) is an “extension” of AIM, evidently uninterested in gendered divisions within AIM or unwilling to carry them into a period during which many of AIM’s men were dead, jailed, or in hiding (7; see also Matthiessen 416).³⁴ A WARN spin-off group, the Indigenous Women’s Network (IWN), is dedicated to an unexceptionable but apparently nonconfrontational program of “supporting women’s leadership and perpetuating traditional knowledge” (Huhndorf and Suzack 8). The backlash against AIM evident in the four plays may in this sense be seen as contingent and contextually modest.

But there are other ways to conceptualize the matter. Finding a place for these plays depends on more than geography: it depends, too, on our recognition of the potentialities of dramatic performances and printed texts. The power of good political and historical drama inheres in its ability to find resonance in moments and attitudes that might otherwise be evanescent. Drama “remembers” magnificently. Writing on her own, Huhndorf presents a generically focused demography that complements the broader narrative that she advances with Suzack. She is speaking of Indigenous criticism of the “gender politics of some Native activist groups, most famously the American Indian Movement” (187):

It is not accidental that some of these criticisms of Native politics should arise . . . from within the theatre community. The pan-tribal origins of Native theatre companies and their multiple influences enable . . . alternative political practices and revisions of dominant literary paradigms that engage pressing transnational questions, including those surrounding gender and feminism.³⁵

“These issues,” Huhndorf continues, “came to the fore in Indigenous

women's performances in the 1980s and 1990s" (188). Indeed they did, and in several Indigenous men's plays about what Two-Rivers's Gabriel calls "woman stuff." As Huhndorf points out, a generative pan-tribalism is built into the performance histories of Native plays. (Pan-ethnicity also stands to stimulate discussion, given the frequent hybridity of Native plays in performance.) Whenever these plays are mounted, they bid for continuing vitality, not merely continuance.

Canadian audiences have unmatched access to Native plays that more neatly complement the broader activism of their country. The dissemination of printed texts, however, incalculably extends the discursive range of drama. Should we offer them the courtesy of our attention, the plays—the books—that I have discussed will continue to promote debate on Huhndorf's "pressing questions" long after AIM and the backlash against it have quit personal memory for the mnemonic always of wise words.

NOTES

The author wishes to express his gratitude to James H. Cox for his sharply perceptive reading of an earlier version of this essay and to the two thoughtful referees who reviewed the manuscript for *SAIL*.

1. When two dates accompany first references to plays, they indicate initial performance and publication, respectively.

2. Geigomah would later say: "Those poor kids that got killed at Wounded Knee martyred themselves for a fifty percent cause, a half-baked, inchoate cause. The whole thing was to me unnecessary, the way that they zealously let it get out of control" (Interview 296).

3. For *News from Indian Country*, see indiancountrynews.com. For "Justice for Anna Mae and Ray," which presents a collection of information on Aquash and Ray Robinson Jr., see jfamr.org.

4. Paul DeMain of *News from Indian Country* recalls that "for a long time, it was a given among Indians that the F.B.I. engineered Aquash's murder as a way of scaring and destabilizing AIM" (qtd. in Konigsberg). See, e.g., Banks, after the discovery of Aquash's body: "Her murder is another example of an FBI cover-up in an attempt to destroy the leadership of the American Indian Movement" (qtd. in Matthiessen 264). Weir and Bergman (54) and Brand (148) consider the theory of the FBI's guilt; Witt posits the guilt of the BIA and the FBI (44–45).

5. The pertinent heading in Smith and Warrior's index reads "Aquash, Nogeeshik" (335). See *Brave Bird*: "Their ceremony was beautiful. . . . But [Nogeeshik Aquash] had a dark side where women were concerned. Annie Mae told me . . . that he held her like a hostage for weeks and beat her" (188). Mihesuah finds Smith and Warrior's

Like a Hurricane a “one-sided, male-oriented book” that “offers no analysis about AIM or the men’s sexism” (*Indigenous* 12); cf. Velie, who calls it “the most balanced and comprehensive account of the Red Power movement” (1).

6. Highway anticipates recent queer Native theory; see, e.g., Rifkin on the inapplicability to Native peoples of the “homo/hetero binary” (6)

7. Cf. Highway’s almost picaresque *Rez Sisters* (1986; 1988), in which the trip from the reservation to Toronto props themes of questing and discovery.

8. McKegney reads unironically Big Joey’s remark that he “work[s] for the betterment and advancement of this community” (Highway, *Dry Lips* 22; see McKegney 166). The passage seems rather to testify to Joey’s attraction to platitude, here seasoned with bitterness and self-interest.

9. Vizenor’s critique of AIM concerns the period around Wounded Knee. In 1972 Vizenor praised AIM’s urban activism (see “Inside Toilets”). He praises several AIM leaders in the generally critical “Dennis” (see 129, 130). In a presumably later piece from 1974, he notes that “since the occupation of Wounded Knee, [AIM’s] radical leaders have been speaking a mellow language of spiritual revivalism”; Banks, even, “speaks in mellow tones now, and his gestures are gentle” (“Speaking” 193, 195). For AIM’s early achievements, see, e.g., Smith and Warrior 127–37.

10. Cross notes that Hendrix’s great-great-grandmother was Cherokee (17) and identifies “Native American elements” in his stage apparel (297).

11. Mihesuah (see *Indigenous* 208n15) reproduces the quotation from Judith Anne Antell, “American Indian Women Activists,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1990 (170–71).

12. See Vizenor: “The natives in this theater [‘victimry’] are cast as representatives, the racialist tropes of vanishment. . . . These are the absolute victims of modernity” (*Fugitive* 91). Joey regards his “vanishment” in terms of gender.

13. Imboden argues that “freed of ancient poisoning obsessions,” the baby “will be able to create her own world.” Her claim that “[this] world will be founded upon reality, rather than illusion,” retreats from a position strong on generic artifice (119). When she asserts that Big Joey and his “obsession with . . . Wounded Knee” have “vanished” by play’s end, she leans hard on her model, Northrop Frye (119). Zachary has not dreamed Big Joey, he has dreamed about him; and Big Joey seems unlikely to “vanish” with the decorousness of an also-ran in early comedy.

14. For Two-Rivers and Means in Cleveland, see Potomacus (92); for Means and Cleveland AIM, see Matthiessen (38). Both Jensen and Cumpian report Two-Rivers’s participation in the missile-base protest. Two-Rivers approvingly references Means in Preface (vii).

15. For Vizenor on “negotiation” as an alternative to “confrontation,” see, e.g., “Confrontation” (160).

16. See also Geiogamah on this sort of talk: “if Russell [Means] had to die, he wouldn’t like it, you know” (Interview 296).

17. Gabriel is insensitive to the play’s ironies; see, e.g., the mooted statue controversy as “bigger than all of us” (130). His humorlessness is unmistakable. Cf. Vizenor on an AIMster immune to conversational irony: “The radical missed the humor, the

trickster signature; he had assumed too much from the white teachers on the reservation" (*Interior* 230).

18. Gabriel "*trips and falls*," and drops the gun that Rosario retrieves (123). Cf. Vizenor's account of Banks's fumbblings with a shotgun (see "Dennis" 132; *Interior* 233).

19. Chili and Benny read (see 93, 94); Gabriel does not. Cf. Vizenor on AIM's leaders: "literature and communal dreams were rare in their travels" (*Interior* 230). Gabriel mangles Native history and languages (see 98, 99). Vizenor criticizes the speech of AIM's leaders as monoglot and affected and their grasp of Native history as naive (see, e.g., "Urban" 183).

20. See also the 1973 interview with Deloria on AIM: "[They] come along and hit people over the head with a baseball bat, and the public turns and they say: 'OK, what's this?,' and AIM says, 'We're here to dramatize the conditions of Indians,' and then they dramatize it three times longer than necessary, and keep raising all these issues as though they were all on the same level of importance" (10).

21. In the only essay on the play, Stanlake works from a 1997 typescript that, quoted passages indicate, was revised substantially for publication (see 149n1).

22. I have used name-forms that distinguish between Nolan's characters and their historical referents (e.g., "Anna" and "Aquash"). As far as I know, only Nolan even symbolically places Banks at the scene of the crime.

23. The "loup-garou" or werewolf (later "rugaru") was linked to the Algonquin windigo as early as 1695 (see Brightman 342).

24. See also Margo Thunderbird, "[AIM] wanted to present an image, and the angry Indian man was better than angry Indian women. . . . The men were showtime" (qtd. in Konigsberg).

25. Witt (42) credits to Brave an embedded passage presumably from Brave's rare pamphlet *An Indian Woman at Wounded Knee* (1974). Note the passive construction: "We're tired of seeing our men driven by despair, turn to alcohol, commit suicide, or end up in penal institutions! . . . we're standing up next to our men."

26. Miheuah omits the passage from *Indigenous American Women*, as she does this one: "To be fair, by no means have all Native men absorbed the patriarchal mindset that colonialism brought to the New World. Women speak glowingly of AIM male members who treated women with respect and honor" ("Anna Mae" 217).

27. In an email written when she was Special Collections librarian at Miami University Libraries, Kimberley Tully noted that no script of *Women in Violence* survives in the Spiderwoman papers at Miami's Native American Women Playwrights Archives. She added, helpfully, that "much of Spiderwoman Theater's work was improvised."

28. Anna is the play's sole female character. Monologic phone conversations with an unseen sister and daughter accent her seclusion and the pathos of Nolan's onomastic gesture (see 47, 49, 52). In the scene "*Anna amongst the Women*," a monologue until Dennis enters, a director may or may not choose to suggest other women by props or lighting; cf. a more prescriptive draft, where the audience stands in for the women (see Stanlake 146).

29. Appleford, applying this passage to Daniel David Moses's *Almighty Voice and*

His Wife (1991; 1992), places Vizenor and Moses among the “many Native artists” who “emphasize the limitations of the tragic form” (21). Nolan belongs in this company.

30. Moses’s research for *Almighty Voice* impressed upon him the “tragedy” of the story of his central character, a Cree man arrested in 1895 for killing a cow and shot by a militia. Moses anticipates Nolan in having found himself unwilling to “serve up for public consumption yet another image of the defeated wild Indian” (72). See also Moses, quoted in Appleford (22).

31. The Anishinaabe Vizenor uses this scenario ironically in *Chair of Tears*, complete with a tavern, terminal confessions (“last lectures”), and the awarding of “postindian identities” to buffoonish characters (e.g., 78–79).

32. Däwes notes only the abortion in her account of Mable (see 296). Only she and Geiogamah have discussed *Warbonnet* in print. King invents the abortion: Nichols was eight months pregnant in November 1975, one month before Aquash’s disappearance and five months after Nichols learned of her relationship with Banks (see Brand 135; “Testimony”; Königsberg).

33. Anderson attributes the “pro-natalist” beliefs of some members of AIM to Native peoples’ status as “survivors of smallpox, massacres, eugenics, enforced sterilization, residential schools, and child welfare intervention” (87).

34. In “Anna Mae,” Mihesuah places WARN among the organizations through which “American Indian women continued the struggle for Native rights” (218); in *Indigenous American Women*, she omits WARN from a list of groups “formed by women . . . to deal with the problem of abuse” (166). WARN fell short of the gynocentric AIM that Witt, and Nolan’s Anna, imagined (see above).

35. Huhndorf does not reference the plays that have principally concerned me.

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Games of Silence

Indian Boarding Schools in Louise Erdrich's Novels

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There are many stories about Indian boarding schools in North America, and they run the gamut from unthinkable abuse to positive support. Some boarding school graduates describe the schools as nurturing and helpful. Others, many others, describe emotional trauma, physical punishment, and sexual abuse. Many schools punished students for speaking their native languages; after the reform era of the 1930s, some schools allowed students to retain and speak their native tongue. Some pupils received food and housing far more reliably than they could have at home; others were malnourished as a matter of school or government policy.

Even within the same school and the same general time period, stories differ. Adam Fortunate Eagle reports that during his time at Pipestone (1935–45), he and his fellow students “never [saw] anybody punished for speaking their tribal language” (48). Jim Northrup, who attended Pipestone from 1949 to 1952, writes that one of his first experiences at the school was when “the house matron twisted my ear because I had used an Ojibwe expression. She told me we don’t use that language here” (130). Just as there is no uniform “Indian experience,” so too is there no single “Indian boarding school experience.”

Thus we should not be surprised when we encounter a similar diversity of representations in Native fiction. It is nonetheless worth drawing attention to those novels that do not seem to reflect this range of experiences, particularly in the work of a writer like Louise Erdrich, whose novels encompass such a wide range of Ojibwe history and community. As E. Shelley Reid notes in “The Stories We Tell: Louise Erdrich’s Identity Narratives,”

Erdrich creates a new set of textual gestures that can more faithfully capture the multiple voices and extended family networks of

Native American “individuals.” Her narratives also allow the representation of a larger community identity and weave her audience into the fabric of this extended family and its stories of survival. (67)

Particularly in Erdrich’s early novels, the boarding schools most frequently function as safe havens for children who face uncertain situations at home, which elides their historical role in breaking up Native communities. For example, in *The Plague of Doves*, the narrator tells us,

It was a question of survival, after all. If I had not found the music, I would have died of silence. The rule of quiet in the house became more rigorous and soon my sister fled to the government boarding school. (203)

It is not Louise Erdrich’s responsibility to represent a comprehensive take on Ojibwe history. However, especially for those of us who teach her work, it is important to know where we must supplement the text, and where we should offer additional voices. Because of Erdrich’s popularity, her work is often drawn upon to represent not only Native literature but Native experience, and she has also taken on some of that responsibility herself. I do not argue that Erdrich should not write about students for whom schools were safe places, but I wish to point out that many of her novels do not reflect the diversity of Indian boarding school experiences. This, in turn, may make it difficult for readers to understand the reasons why—or even recognize that—contemporary Native families and communities still bear scars that date back to the boarding school era.

BOARDING SCHOOLS

Certainly not all Native students who attended boarding schools were personally traumatized; some had (and have) positive memories of their time in these institutions. However, boarding schools had extremely disruptive effects on Native communities, and many researchers suggest that American Indian communities continue to show dysfunctions that can be traced back to the trauma of child removal and boarding school experience:

Many residential school children experienced a loss of culture, language, traditional values, family bonding, life and parenting skills,

self-respect, and the respect for others. Their parents, in turn, lost their roles as caregivers, nurturers, teachers, and family decision-makers. Overtime [sic], the residential school system had loosened the emotional bond between parent and child, which Morrisette (1994) has likened to a residual holocaust effect. . . . Upon release from the schools, survivors reported a legacy of alcohol and drug abuse problems, feelings of hopelessness, dependency, isolation, low self-esteem, suicide behaviours, prostitution, gambling, homelessness, sexual abuse, and violence. (Elias et al. n.p.)

At issue is thus not whether some children experienced boarding schools in a positive way, but rather that the authoritative voices in Erdrich's novels return, again and again, to the notion that boarding schools were safe places. To use "safe" as a blanket term is to elide the trauma and abuse that many children suffered at the boarding schools. It is also at odds with the way that Erdrich describes the boarding school in her poetry, specifically her 1984 poem "Indian Boarding School: The Runaways," suggesting that perhaps the struggle is to explain and place that trauma within the interconnected world of Erdrich's fiction. Because the multigenerational, communal boarding school trauma had lasting effects on Native communities, leaving them out of the story omits one of the central reasons for some of the community and family dysfunctions that Erdrich so capably describes.

For much of the early colonial period, Native American education was the domain of churches and missionaries. Driven by the desire to introduce the "heathens" to biblical teachings, Christians founded Indian schools in areas already colonized and sent missionaries to more distant tribes to introduce Native children and adults to those skills they needed in order to understand the basic teachings of Christianity. Colonial authorities were content to leave schooling under church control, seeing education as mostly unconnected to the larger project of subjugating or eradicating Native nations.

In the 1870s, however, on the basis of an educational project targeting prisoners of war at Fort Marion, Florida, Captain Richard Henry Pratt began to advocate for government involvement in Indian education. With government support, he founded the Carlisle Indian Industrial School:

This was an educational experiment intended to demonstrate that separating members of the younger generation from their

home environment and intensively schooling them in white ways offered a means of obliterating tribal cultures and acculturating a whole race. (Fear-Segal 26)

The government-supported boarding schools thus began as part of a campaign to eradicate Native American cultures. This policy prevailed in US schools until the late 1920s, at which point some—but by no means all—schools underwent radical transformations, some even straying so far from their original mission that they became part of an effort to preserve Native cultures rather than eradicate them.

During the early years (from the 1870s to the Great Depression), the schools' goal was to break up and assimilate Native communities. As Brenda Childs puts it in *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940*, her history of the boarding schools from “an Ojibwe point of view” (xiv), “The institution was designed to separate children from all that was familiar to them—their families, tribes, languages, traditions, their very identities” (6). Children were gathered up by Indian agents, who did not need parental consent to send them to boarding schools hundreds of miles from home. In her article “Federal Boarding Schools and the Indian Child,” historian Margaret Connell Szasz suggests,

In the early decades of the federal boarding schools, most Indian parents were opposed to sending their children . . . so far from home. Thus, the boarding school concept went against the strong family ties common among Indian people. (371)

The commissioner of Indian affairs encouraged agents to enroll every eligible child in the schools (DeJong 261), meaning that some communities, at least temporarily, lost an entire generation of children.

A generational distinction in boarding school experiences is vitally important between the first generation of boarding school students from any given community and those students who attended after those first students had returned. First-generation boarding school students approached the school with no knowledge of what awaited them, and with little or no English. In her article on the commonality of Indian boarding school experiences from the 1750s to the 1920s, Szasz explains:

Native boarding school students were thrust abruptly into a foreign culture. In each school the staff demanded that students learn

to conform to a Euro-American style of child rearing, which relied on physical punishment; a Euro-American expectation of gender roles, which ignored gender role practices of Native nations; and English-only instruction in Euro-American history, religion, and cultural values. ("I knew" 78)

As students returned from the schools and as some became parents themselves, Euro-American culture became more familiar to children on reservations, and by the 1920s many children understood at least some English. Those children whose parents had attended boarding school often learned English at home, even if their parents were still able to speak their native language, as Jacqueline Fear-Segal points out:

Even those [boarding school survivors] who returned still fluent in their own language often carried a time bomb planted by the schools. They had been so humiliated for speaking "Indian" that they chose not to teach their native tongue to their own children. (63)

Schools also gradually began to employ their graduates as staff members, so after the turn of the century there were usually at least one or two Native American adults at the schools who understood what the children were going through.

The impact of the boarding schools extended far beyond the students at the schools. When children were removed from a community, the entire structure of the community changed. Grief over the loss of the children affected everyone. Relationships were fractured, families were torn by guilt, shame, and recrimination, and those people who were caretakers of children (which, in traditional extended kinship networks, included far more than merely the parents) were often left with a central emptiness in their lives.

This emptiness was compounded by the high mortality rates in the early (pre-Depression) boarding school era. In his study of Indian boarding schools from 1878 to 1918, historian David H. DeJong writes,

During the first decades of the federal government's Indian boarding schools, stories of morbidity and mortality among students were prevalent. . . . In Hampton's first ten years of educating American Indian students, one of every eleven students died (31 of 304) at school and one of every five died . . . soon after returning home. (256)

During the early 1900s, as schools were being filled beyond their capacity, “student health was endangered as children known to be in . . . poor health were placed in the schools. . . . Some schools therefore became synonymous with death and disease” (261). Many of the children who had been taken from their families never returned home—or were sent home to die, in a cynical attempt to lower the school mortality rates (264). A 1908 report on conditions at Haskell, “thought to be one of the better boarding schools,” revealed widespread tuberculosis caused by unsanitary and crowded conditions in the dormitories (267).

In spite of a number of governmental and independent reports that lamented the poor nutrition and ill health to be found in the Indian boarding schools, substantial change began only with the 1928 Meriam Report and the appointment of John Collier as commissioner of Indian affairs in 1933. The Meriam Report, a document produced by a congressional committee tasked with looking into the situation of American Indians, did not mince words; in its summary, the committee stated, “The survey staff finds itself obliged to say frankly and unequivocally that the provisions for the care of the Indian children in boarding schools are grossly inadequate.”

The outstanding deficiency is in the diet furnished the Indian children, many of whom are below normal health. The diet is deficient in quantity, quality, and variety. The effort has been made to feed the children on a per capita of eleven cents a day, plus what can be produced on the school farm, including the dairy. . . . but even at the best schools these sources do not fully meet the requirements for the health and development of the children. At the worst schools, the situation is serious in the extreme. (11–12)

The Meriam Report ushered in an era of reform that gained further ground as Bureau of Indian Affairs commissioner John Collier radically changed its outlook on the relationship it had with Indian communities, and “federal Indian policy was subjected to the first serious reform in fifty years” (Szasz, “Federal” 376). BIA-affiliated schools were no longer to be instruments for “killing the Indian and saving the man,” at least not as a matter of national policy. Instead, the BIA acknowledged that “students would probably return to their own cultures,” and thus “the educators of the thirties attempted to obviate potential alienation” (380). As Szasz describes it, some of the changes included

courses in Indian history and Indian art . . . [and preparation] for tribal responsibilities through study of the Indian Reorganization Act . . . Traditional strictures against Indian religions were relaxed and where students lived near their homes, they were allowed to return for religious holidays . . . [Most] schools moved away from a military routine and the atmosphere “was a little bit more free,” as one student of the mid-thirties remembered. (380)

The era of boarding school reform was also the era of the Great Depression, and the national crisis changed attitudes toward the schools in Native communities. Many Ojibwe communities had become reliant on wage labor during the previous decades, and were thus vulnerable to the Great Depression. Families increasingly faced drastic poverty, and many could no longer rely on the traditional extended family for help. Parents found themselves unable to feed their children:

Many Indian families lost their crops [in the early 1930s]; savings and jobs virtually disappeared. Food was scarce and clothing was hard to come by. . . . [T]hese circumstances . . . [and the improved] conditions within the boarding schools heightened their appeal. . . . [By] 1931–32 most schools served a balanced diet . . . The children’s weight was checked regularly and those who were underweight were fed between meals. Fulfilling these needs gave a new and more positive image to federal boarding schools. (376)

Native parents, many of whom were boarding school survivors themselves, began to see the schools as places that might at least ensure their children’s physical survival when they themselves could not.

The boarding schools thus changed significantly, both in their governance and in their perception by Native people, during the Depression era. From this point on, there were great differences among schools. Some schools allowed students to speak native languages; others continued to punish those who dared speak the language they had learned from their parents. Some boarding school graduates described the schools as nurturing and helpful. Many others described traumatic physical punishment or sexual abuse.

While children could now be reasonably sure of their physical nourishment, their physical safety was another matter. Both before and after the 1930s, it is clear that children in the boarding schools suffered

both physical and sexual abuse. Experiences ranged from beatings with a leather strap or a broom (62, 49, 41, 42) or “with a steel ring full of keys so hard it cuts [the student’s] head” (130), as Adam Fortunate Eagle describes, to incarceration. Brenda Child connects the physical punishments with the boarding schools’ military atmosphere and organization:

To remain true to the military style the schools sought to imitate, students were subjected to harsh forms of discipline. Recalcitrant students were flogged, and most boarding schools had some form of “jail” on the premises. (39)

The issue of sexual abuse in the schools is a difficult one, surrounded by a great deal of silence. Basil Johnston, a Canadian Ojibwe author whose boarding school memoir *Indian School Days* omits all mention of abuse, says of his own rape and mistreatment in the schools:

Abuse is too mild a word. It’s a violation of the worst kind. It violates not only the body—the flesh—but also the spirit. And you live with this fear of death and fear of being dispatched to Hell.

And I thought, and many of us thought, that we were the only victims. (McKegney 266)

Because so many victims felt isolated and afraid, many never revealed what they had suffered; as a result, data on sexual abuse is difficult to come by. The issue is additionally complicated by the fact that some children (like Johnston) were abused by other students. The fact that these abusers had in all likelihood been victims themselves does nothing to mitigate the trauma that their victims in turn suffered. Regardless of the culture of silence and shame that surrounded this abuse, it is clear that sexual abuse of children was a significant problem in the boarding school system.

As Anishinaabe scholar Lawrence W. Gross writes, “community, children, and land” are “what matters most in the Anishinaabe life” (51). Entire communities found themselves unable to protect not only their families but also their future as a people, as embodied in the children (and underscored by the vast land seizures in the 1800s through the early 1900s). Although he does not deal specifically with the issue of boarding schools, Gross points out that land loss and the destruction of whole families due to famine and illness represent the “end of the world as the Anishinaabe had known it” (49), leaving even terms like

“Posttraumatic Stress Disorder” inadequate in describing the upheaval suffered not just by individuals but by entire communities. He suggests the term “Postapocalypse Stress Syndrome” (50) as a way of describing the condition of those Anishinaabe who survived this cataclysmic loss of land and community; the term applies equally well to those who survived the boarding school era.

BOARDING SCHOOLS IN LOUISE ERDRICH’S NOVELS

In Erdrich’s fictional universe, the earliest boarding school experiences are those of Margaret Rushes Bear and Nanapush, as we learn in *Four Souls* (2004). Given other clues about Margaret’s and Nanapush’s ages, their attendance would have been around the 1880s, putting them among the earliest of boarding school pupils. Margaret tells us that she was taken very late, when she was a teenager: “My mother hid me from the agents at the government school for as long as she could” (177). Significantly, she points out that at that age “I knew who I was in relation to all who went before,” which allows her to resist the schools’ pressure to unlearn her language and renounce her culture. Because she does not discuss her experiences at the school any further and, in the novel, also comes to represent the continuity of Ojibwe tradition, it is implied that the school did not have a lasting impact on her.

Nanapush’s experience in the schools is mentioned even more briefly, in the novel that arguably addresses the boarding schools most centrally: *Tracks*. Like Margaret, Nanapush seems to be able to shrug off the experience easily: “I had a Jesuit education in the halls of Saint John before I ran back into the woods and forgot all my prayers” (33). Both Margaret and Nanapush would have attended the schools when conditions were at their harshest. While we might read their experiences as demonstrating resilience, that interpretation becomes more difficult when both characters seem to agree that a government boarding school is a safe place for Fleur Pillager’s daughter Lulu.

As is characteristic for Erdrich, the issue of the boarding schools is raised obliquely throughout *Tracks*: chapters narrated by Nanapush are framed as explanations to his adoptive daughter Lulu Pillager as to why she was sent to the boarding school (her attendance comes during the 1910s and early 1920s). Lulu is angry at her mother Fleur for sending her away; Nanapush gently reprimands Lulu, telling her that she should not

be angry but should instead understand and appreciate Fleur's decision. "[Y]ou, heartless one," he tells Lulu, "won't even call Fleur mother or take off your pointy shoes, walk through the tough bush, and visit her. Maybe once I tell you the reason she had to send you away, you will start acting as a daughter should. She saved you from worse, you'll see" (210).

[Fleur] sent you to the government school, it is true, but you must understand there were reasons: there would be no place for you, no safety on this reservation, no hiding from government papers, or from Morrisseys who shaved heads or the Turcot company, leveler of a whole forest. There was also no predicting what would happen to Fleur herself.

So you were sent away, another piece cut from my heart . . .

After you were safe, Fleur came back to Matchimanito. (219)

The fact that Nanapush, one of Erdrich's most prominent characters, and the one who most often functions as the voice of the people, uses the word "safe" while speaking to Lulu about the schools should give the alert reader pause, as that word seems a very curious choice to describe the schools, particularly during this early time period, before the Depression and the Collier reforms. Given that Lulu is only six years old at the time, and once almost died in part because she was unprepared for harsh winter weather and insisted on wearing patent leather shoes, it appears that, unlike Margaret, she does not yet have a strong grounding in Ojibwe culture.

Knowing Nanapush is named after the Ojibwe trickster Nanabozho, and has more than a few of his attributes, it may be tempting to read his words as a trickster move. Perhaps, we might argue, he is using the word "safe" as a deliberately misleading one to make readers aware of just how wrong he is. However tempting this reading is, it is also unlikely. In her article "The Stories We Tell: Louise Erdrich's Identity Narratives," E. Shelley Reid says that Nanapush "embodies the whole of tribal history and tradition. . . . His life story *is* the tribe's life story" (79, emphasis in original). Of all Erdrich's characters, none seem to carry more authority than Nanapush, who narrates parts of several novels and functions in some ways as tribal memory keeper. Nanapush is a survivor who has learned to navigate the colonial world while staying true to his Ojibwe traditions and identity. His word carries weight in the fictional world of the novel as well as in the reader's world; though he often makes mis-

takes, he is nonetheless wise. His mistakes come in the personal realm (especially in his love life), but his wisdom is such that he can take a mistake like turning up hung over and wearing his wife's dress at a tribal meeting and turn it into a successful bid for tribal chairmanship.

As Jill Jepson suggests, Nanapush's primary aim in this novel truly is to reunite Fleur and Lulu. Given that, it would be an unusual move for Nanapush to deliberately mislead his daughter, who has firsthand experience of the boarding school, and it seems rather more likely that he is trying desperately to convey to her that however much she may have disliked it, the boarding school was a better choice than remaining on the reservation. Perhaps the school kept her safe from known threats at home, but as both Nanapush and Margaret are familiar with the colonial school system, and Margaret experienced a government boarding school, they would know that children in the boarding schools faced many other threats and did so in a place where their parents and other protectors had no power. To suggest that the boarding school kept a child in her situation safe would be very much at odds with the historical reality of the government schools in the 1910s and early 1920s.

The powerlessness of Native people when it comes to the boarding schools becomes clear in *Tracks*, when Nanapush and Margaret try to get Lulu back and have difficulty doing so—even the white priest Father Damien cannot manage it (225). But eventually, in 1924, she returns. The other children coming home are “dazed” (226), but Lulu is irrepressible:

You were the last to emerge [from the government bus] . . . Your grin was ready and your look was sharp . . . Your braids were cut . . . and your dress was a shabby and smoldering orange . . . that any child who tried to run away from the boarding school was forced to wear. . . . Your knees were scabbed from the punishment of scrubbing long sidewalks, and knobbed from kneeling hours on broomsticks. But your grin was as bold as your mother's, white with anger that vanished when you saw us waiting. (226)

This is as close a description of boarding school trauma as we get, with its references to the punishments Lulu suffered and the repressed anger in her face. Margara Averbach reads it as a

description of the violence of this translation in the white people's school: . . . violence appears in verbs like cut, smoldering, forced,

straining, in the symbolic fact of the size of the clothes, obviously too small for the child, and in her short hair, a style that goes against tribal tradition. The result is generally shameful, as it is with all people forced to abandon their identity in these works. (n.p.)

The scene indeed suggests the punitive aspect of the boarding schools, but because Lulu is wearing that orange dress that marks her as a potential runaway, the suggestion remains that the physical abuse is punishment for Lulu's perceived transgressions, rather than the everyday abuse that students would face in the government schools during the 1910s and 1920s. This novel most strongly echoes the themes Erdrich covers in her poem "Indian Boarding School: The Runaways." Using the imagery of a train and its tracks, which is also suggestive of the Jewish Holocaust, she describes boarding school children hoping to escape, noting how "[t]he worn-down welts of ancient punishments lead back and forth." After describing the runaways and their "shame," the green dresses they are forced to wear, as well as the sidewalk-scrubbing punishment, the poem ends with the children "remembering / delicate old injuries, the spines of names and leaves" (*Jacklight* 11).

The poem suggests not only longing for home but also both the fear and resistance of children taken to the school against their will—and we can easily imagine Lulu as one of these children. The poem implies both the physical and emotional injuries sustained by the children, and while it focuses on the runaways, it does suggest that suffering and shame were not confined to those who tried to escape, and were among the reasons students sought to flee the schools. This is one of the aspects that separates the poem from the very similar scene in *Tracks*. The other is that the poem's ending focuses on the remembrance of old injuries, the lasting impact of the schools, while the scene at the end of the novel shows us Lulu's "grin . . . as bold as your mother's," and the "anger that *vanished*" (226, my emphasis) as she returns home. Readers of the novel are left with the sense that the boarding school experience can be shaken off, can vanish like Lulu's anger. Though this provides a more hopeful feeling for the novel's ending, it elides the lasting impact the schools had on the students who attended.

If this scene in *Tracks* were the only mention of boarding schools, one could argue that here, as in many other places, Erdrich relies on the reader's knowledge to flesh out the details. Silence, after all, is not the

same thing as absence. However, we arrive at this point only after having been told that both Nanapush and Fleur and, it is implied, Margaret, the most powerful and traditional members of the tribe, two of whom have firsthand knowledge of the schools, decided that the school was a safe place to keep their child. Further, Lulu's poor treatment is described as "punishment," perhaps for the attempt to run away, rather than as the standard treatment that many boarding school attendees during that time period reported. Abuse and mistreatment are thus exceptions rather than rules. And yet, as Erdrich's poem implies, "scrubbing long sidewalks" would have been part of the curriculum rather than punishment. The 1928 Meriam Report described the conditions in most boarding schools:

The boarding schools are frankly supported in part by the labor of the students. Those above the fourth grade ordinarily work for half a day and go to school for half a day. . . . [T]eachers of industrial work undertaken ostensibly for education say that much of it is as a matter of fact production work for the maintenance of the school. The question may very properly be raised as to whether much of the work of Indian children in boarding schools would not be prohibited in many states by the child labor laws. (12–13)

The reader of *Tracks* is not privy to any details about Lulu's boarding school attendance, though we understand that she hated it enough to try to run away. In *Four Souls* and *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* we learn that Lulu prefers the school to her mother's company; when Fleur tries to bring her back, Lulu refuses multiple times (*Four* 86; *Last* 252) and stays at the school. Evidently the school is a haven for her and is more appealing than a return home.

Our one other glimpse of Lulu's boarding school experiences comes from the *Love Medicine* chapter "The Plunge of the Brave," where Nector Kashpaw relates, "At the boarding school, as children, I treated [Lulu] like my sister and shared out peanut-butter-syrup sandwiches on the bus to stop her crying. I let her tag with me to town. At the movies I bought her licorice" (121). Lulu's crying can be stopped with candy, suggesting that it is not a reflection of some deeper trauma. The mention of licorice and movies in town seems almost idyllic—far more so than one could expect from most boarding school experiences in the pre-reform era.

In *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, we find out

more about Lulu's experiences at boarding school. Her most difficult experience comes at the hands of other students, who push her into a hole she cannot climb out of (245); as a result, she misses a trip to the circus "that the whole school was taking" (246). She becomes a trouble-maker only at the end of her first year, when she is told that she cannot go home for the summer; Lulu goes home anyway, earning her the reputation of being a runaway. After days of scrubbing the school sidewalks, however, she tells the matron, "*You don't have to punish me anymore because I learnt my lesson and I won't run away again*" (250, emphasis in original). In response, the matron immediately burns the clothing that marks Lulu as a runaway, and Lulu settles in to the school, where she is allowed to bead her own makazinan and make herself a traditional dress out of deer hide (251). This would have been quite unusual for the time, since government schools actively discouraged any "Indian" attire or speech. It is plausible, of course, that Lulu does represent the exception to the rule, but that fact is something that teachers of Erdrich's novels should be aware of. The boarding schools prior to 1928 were no havens of safety; the high mortality rates, systematic malnutrition, and physical labor and abuse made certain that, if they represented security, it was a tenuous and relative security at best. Lulu's near-idyllic experiences may be an exception to the boarding school environment at the time, but even so, the fact that Nanapush calls the school "safe" (not even "safer") is problematic. Moreover, this is a pattern that repeats itself in several other novels.

There are a number of other characters throughout Erdrich's fiction who attend boarding schools. In *Love Medicine*, we learn from Albertine that Margaret hid one of her twins from the government agents but had allowed them to take the other one:

She had let the government put Nector in school but hidden Eli, the one she couldn't part with, in the root cellar dug beneath her floor. In that way she gained a son on either side of the line. Nector came home from boarding school knowing white reading and writing, while Eli knew the woods. Now, these many years later, hard to tell why or how, my great-uncle Eli was still sharp, while Grandpa's mind had left us, gone wary and wild. (19).

It is interesting to note the phrasing that Margaret had "let" the government take her son. This suggests that the power, to some degree at

least, rested with Margaret and not the government. Rather than being overcome, as even her own mother eventually was, by the overwhelming government power, Margaret can outwit the government.

We revisit this issue in *Tracks*, where we learn that even as a child, Nector was inclined toward the kind of learning and acculturation the boarding schools represented: unlike his brother Eli, Nector applies for allotment land and registers himself, “and also learned to write while he was no more than a child. . . . Nector wrote letters after five winters, each word formed as perfectly as the nuns shaped theirs” (39). (It is implied that he teaches himself to write before being taken.) By contrast, “Eli hid from authorities, never saw the inside of a classroom” (40). These details again emphasize the notion that Nector’s attendance at the boarding school was a choice rather than something forced upon him and his family.

Love Medicine does imply a correlation between the aging Nector’s dementia and his boarding school attendance, suggesting that although the boarding school led him to success in the short term, in the long term his boarding school attendance robbed Nector of his own identity and selfhood. *Tracks*, however, offers another possible reason for Nector’s dementia when Fleur calls on him to take her place when she drowns (213), but the novels make no connection between the events. Interestingly, Peter G. Beidler and Gay Barton’s *A Reader’s Guide to the Novels of Louise Erdrich* indicates here, too, that schools were a safe haven: “[Fleur] curses Nector. To protect him, Margaret sends Nector off to a government boarding school” (273).

Boarding schools show up more peripherally in several of Erdrich’s other novels. As mentioned earlier, in *The Plague of Doves* the narrator’s sister flees to the government boarding school because her family life is unbearable. In *The Painted Drum*, we see a more complex picture. Early on, following the story (and narration) of Faye Travers, we learn that Faye’s grandmother was

taken east and enrolled at Carlisle Indian School, in Pennsylvania. There, she learned to sew intricately, to add and subtract, to do laundry, scrub a floor clean. . . . Carlisle Institute was also where she fell in love, or come to know her husband. (30)

Readers might also infer that the grandmother’s emotional coldness is a product of her experiences at Carlisle. Faye’s grandmother stayed

in the east, and her story from the perspective of Bernard Shaawano, descended from members of her family that stayed on the reservation, is brief—she is “connected to an old branch of the Pillagers . . . [and] escaped the sicknesses here by going to that eastern school, Carlisle, where they took so many of us at one time” (102). Here again, the boarding school figures as a safe location, a place to escape illness.

Later in the book, however, we find a different kind of boarding school experience. We are introduced to Seraphine, who, in addition to being related to the main characters, is a social worker. Morris tells Ira that Seraphine bears “war wounds” from the war “that was conducted on us where they took our children prisoner,” making clear that he means the boarding schools (236). Regarding the scar on Seraphine’s face, Deborah L. Madsen notes: “Not simply her defining feature, the scar replaces her name as that which constitutes and motivates the character” (38). It is a reminder of her time there, of the day she “forgot [that her language was forbidden] or rebelled, and began to speak her own language and would not stop. . . . In [the matron’s] hand was a thick needle for sewing together upholstery. . . . The needle ripped across the girl’s face, and although the doctor who sewed the wound together was sensitive and careful, the scar of speaking her language remained across her lips all of her life” (251). This portrayal of the boarding school is in stark contrast to Faye’s grandmother’s story. The fact that Seraphine is a social worker tasked with determining whether Ira is fit to care for her children makes the boarding school experience even more significant, as she is now trying to hold together the very kinds of families the boarding schools tore apart. With her commitment to Anishinaabe traditions and her work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Seraphine is “mediating between the tribal community and the federal government” (Madsen 39), and represents not only the cultural competence but also the pain that can emerge from the boarding schools.

Seraphine represents a significant move in Erdrich’s fiction, toward a more complete portrayal of the effects of boarding schools on individuals as well as communities, and this is continued in *The Round House*, which won the National Book Award in 2012. The narrator’s mother, Geraldine Coutts, attended boarding school, and it is clear she was scarred by the experience. The narrator, a teenage boy, tells us: “We all knew that my mother had stopped going to church after she returned from boarding school. She never said why” (76). This briefly, but effec-

tively, suggests her emotional trauma. Meanwhile, Geraldine's best friend from school, LaRose, "was always there and not there. Even when she looked right at you and spoke, it seemed her thoughts were elsewhere, elusive" (172). LaRose's absent presence is an intriguing representation of boarding school experience. It suggests that the effects of boarding schools are perhaps impossible to pin down, and they exist as much in the silence that surrounds them as in what is spoken.

Erdrich's characters emphasize the centrality of the land, and land loss, to the tribe; it is what forms the central trauma of many of her novels. The loss or abandonment of children is another central theme, but it is largely represented as individual, not systemic. Children are frequently abandoned by their parents, often by a choice the parents make—even when the parents die in *Shadow Tag*, it appears that they were making a choice to do so. The trauma is there, but the systemic nature of it is erased. The fact that so many Native children were lost to their families not because they were abandoned but because they were taken by the government and missionaries is nearly absent in Erdrich's early fiction, though we see it at least sporadically present in her later prose. In *Four Souls*, Margaret tells Fleur the importance of mourning: "Mourn your dead properly so you can live properly" (205). Though her poetry and later fiction offer some possibility, in Erdrich's early fiction the forced and systematic removal of children remains a loss that cannot yet be mourned properly.

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The View from Crow Hill

An Interview with Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel

MANDY SUHR-SYTSMA

If you attended the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) symposium in 2012, you know Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel (formerly Melissa Jayne Fawcett) as the author of *The Lasting of the Mohegans: The Story of the Wolf People* (1995). NAISA was held that year at the Mohegan Sun Resort and Casino on the Mohegan Tribe's reservation in Uncasville, Connecticut, and all attendees received a copy of Zobel's book in their conference folder. Her first book, *The Lasting of the Mohegans* demonstrates the multifaceted interests and talents—as historian, anthropologist, educator, medicine person, and storyteller—that Zobel has continued cultivating in the decades since the book (or, more accurately, a longer manuscript version of it) won the inaugural Wordcraft Writers' Circle First Book Award for Non-Fiction in 1992. Some of the same research that went into *The Lasting of the Mohegans* and Zobel's other historical monograph, *Medicine Trail: The Life and Lessons of Gladys Tantaquidgeon* (2000), was also crucial to the tribe's long and ultimately successful struggle for federal recognition. (They achieved federal recognition in 1994.) At the Tantaquidgeon Indian Museum and at schools across the region, Zobel has taught thousands of people Mohegan history, culture, and stories. Today, she serves as tribal historian, medicine woman, and executive director of cultural and community programs for the Mohegan Nation.

While conducting original scholarly research and serving her community in a variety of significant leadership roles, Zobel has also managed to find the time to embark on a serious career as a fiction author, writing between the hours of one and five a.m. She has published two novels and has a new trilogy in the works. Her first novel, *Oracles* (2004), is set in the future on the Yantuck Indian Reservation, a lightly fictionalized version

of the Mohegan reservation. Its protagonist is a young medicine-woman-in-training who joins her elders in resisting “the New Light Corporation,” a New Age-like movement that dominates the media and the economy as well as the spirituality of the novel’s sort-of-post-apocalyptic, sort-of-sci-fi world. While *Oracles* takes us into the future, Zobel’s second novel, *Fire Hollow* (2010), takes us back in time to the nineteenth century. Inspired by a real-life murder mystery, the book is focalized through a young “Yantuck” (again, read Mohegan) man who looks to Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* as well as Yantuck stories and artifacts as he attempts to process the murder and its repercussions. Having completed an MFA at Fairfield University in 2012, Zobel is now at work on a young adult trilogy. The first novel in the series, *Wabanaki Blues*, is being published by Poisoned Pencil Press in June 2015. A contemporary coming of age story/romance/murder mystery/thriller, *Wabanaki Blues* reflects Zobel’s first attempt to write fiction set in the present and off the reservation. The novel’s protagonist is a teenage Mohegan/Abenaki musician whose professor parents force her to spend a summer away from her Hartford home in the remote Vermont woods with her quirky grandfather.

On a warm day in June 2013, I sat down with Zobel to talk about her writing. We met in the beautiful new Mohegan Tribal Government Building that sits atop Crow Hill, just across a small gorge from Mohegan Sun in southeastern Connecticut. The bright and airy building, carefully designed to resemble a series of long houses and to offer sweeping views of the Thames River, is “an enormous transformation,” Zobel says, from the Mohegans’ first tribal office, a small room in a “very rundown” apartment. Before turning on the microphone, Zobel and I talked about the fall 2012 *SAIL* special issue on Indigenous New England and our shared excitement about it and other recent work on the region, especially scholarship by folks like Lisa Brooks and Christine DeLucia that dynamically maps Native presence, movement, and networks in the Northeast.

While Zobel’s novels do not fall neatly into generic categories, they all focus significantly on the region of New England. Throughout our interview, as in her novels, readers will clearly sense Zobel’s determination to tell stories of Native New England for American Indians in the Northeast and for everyone else, too. Whether she is imagining the endurance of the Mohegan people in a future New England in *Oracles*, filling in a gap in Indigenous history in the region in *Fire Hollow*, or

chronicling the deep significance of Northeast Indian stories and places for contemporary young people in *Wabanaki Blues*, the region of New England appears as a central character throughout Zobel's work. Like the scholarship she admires, Zobel's novels map the Indigenous Northeast. Her literary mapping freshly illuminates the past, present, and future presence of Native people in this place. The Wolf People have "lasted" a long time. Zobel's writing proves that they never left, they are not going anywhere, and they have a lot to teach the rest of us, including about this region that they call home.

COOPERATION WITHOUT COMPROMISE

SUHR-SYTSMA: We're talking today on the Mohegan reservation in a new building that houses a community center as well as tribal government offices. Can you tell us a bit about this building and this place?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: The building we're in right now is at the top of a place called Crow Hill, which is north of Fort Shantok, a sacred place on the Mohegan reservation. This high point of land overlooks the Thames River, and the building has been carefully designed so that we have a view of the river that leads all the way north to Norwich and south to New London. Because it focuses so strongly on the river, it has raised new conversations about our relationship to the river. We've had a lot more projects lately on things like dugout canoes and the maritime adventures of our ancestors. If you've seen our Mohegan Sun Casino, you know that we like to play with designs and architecture. They help lead us into new ways of thinking.

SUHR-SYTSMA: You may be thinking in new ways, but you're doing so in an old place with a long history. What has your personal history in this region been like?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: I grew up in the old Mohegan area of Uncasville. As a small child, I lived on Occum Lane, where Samson Occum grew up, and later on Fitch Hill Road, named after one of our tribe's overseers.¹ When I traveled, I used to tell people that Mohegan was "near Mystic" because no one outside of Uncasville had ever heard of it. After our casino was built, my friends and family and I were thrilled that we could

say we came from Uncasville, and people would actually know where it was! The transformation has really been somewhat of a miracle. There was nowhere to buy an article of clothing in town when I was growing up, hardly anywhere to go out to eat. Uncasville was a very small place. The big cities of Norwich and New London bookended us on either side. We were just the Indian territory somewhere in between, for many years. Until my mother's lifetime, there were mostly only Indians here.

SUHR-SYTSMA: I love that you just said "there were mostly only Indians here." You've devoted much of your life to documenting the ongoing presence of Mohegan people in this area in contrast with the popular myth, perpetuated by the likes of James Fenimore Cooper, that Mohegans and other American Indians in this region went extinct a long time ago. You write in *The Lasting of the Mohegans* and in *Medicine Trail* about some important Mohegan figures *after* the time of Uncas. You just mentioned Samson Occom, who I know has been an inspiration for you. Like Occom did, you often address non-Natives and non-Mohegans as well as fellow Mohegans in your work as a historian and educator with the tribe as well as in your fiction. How do other Mohegans influence you as you wear these many hats?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: As Mohegans, we have an extraordinary legacy in Occom's eighteenth-century work. But his success stems from the philosophy of our seventeenth-century leader, Chief Uncas. He created a relationship with the outside community that we believe bonded us permanently into good relations with our non-Indian neighbors. Uncas bound us to cooperate without compromising. We take this promise very seriously. We believe that this approach helped us survive the colonial era, but we also see it as a positive force for good in the world. Everything we do, we look at in two ways: How does it help the people within, and how does it help the people without? Many times, you can't do both. On some issues, you can't stand in the middle; you have to stand firmly as an Indian. But if you focus on something like education, you can very often serve both communities.

The legacy of Gladys and Harold Tantaquidgeon, who founded Tantaquidgeon Indian museum, was one of education. They received awards as educators, and their favorite saying was "You can't hate someone you know a lot about." I was raised by them, listened to them, saw their suc-

cess, witnessed the way in which they were admired and respected, not only by their own community but also by the surrounding community of non-Indian people. This seemed like a good path to aspire to, albeit one in which I haven't always succeeded.

Thinking of Uncas and this question of how to facilitate educational cooperation without compromise, my mentor Gladys Tantaquidgeon taught me that the most important thing when addressing disagreements or misunderstandings is to try and figure out where the disconnect lies. This applies, I think, whether you're writing history or literature or communicating with people. Sometimes you find some common ground. Other times, you can find a place where perhaps you still disagree but you understand clearly why you disagree. This idea of cooperation *without* compromise is really the driving force, not just for myself, but I think for all Mohegans.

SUHR-SYTSMA: Your first novel, *Oracles*, seems, to me, very invested in this Mohegan idea of "cooperation without compromise." It depicts Mohegan (or "Yantuck") characters who cooperate—for good and for ill—with people from the New Age-like movement/corporation that dominates the world you create in the novel. How did you come to write *Oracles*, and what were you trying to get across with that novel?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: Yes, cooperation without compromise is a big issue in *Oracles*. The novel's other focus is the survival of tradition in the casino age. The novel came out just after our casino was built, and how the casino would affect us was a big point of discussion within the tribe. Will we be the same people? Will everything change? Will life be so different for our children? Right before we opened the casino, I was so upset about this issue that I went to talk to Gladys. In her usual understated fashion, she said, "Well, we'll see how it goes." So that's what I tried to do, just "see how it would go," and it went okay. The essence of who we were didn't change. I wrote a book about a future in which the casino isn't around anymore, but the tribe remains whole. I wanted the children who grew up with the casino in Mohegan and outsiders to realize that we were the same people before the casino, and we'll be the same people after. It's just a blip on the radar of our history. So that was my focal point, treating the future as part of the past, as part of a continuum, where there is change, but it doesn't affect your essence.

Part of that essence, of course, is cooperation without compromise. There are characters in *Oracles* who are composites of real people and situations. Their situations constitute cautionary tales. In Mohegan we have a lot of great cautionary tales. We have this story of Chahnameed, a man whose abused wife wound up eventually defeating him by turning the hair on her head into a spear and sending him to his death at the bottom of a lake.² Like this story of Chahnameed, *Oracles* is a cautionary tale for *anyone*, Indian people and non-Indian people. I wanted to bring attention to what I saw as some of the limits and dangers of New Age thinking: the consequences that can result when people meddle in spiritual practices that they don't really understand or when they water down Native cultural practices to the point where there isn't any integrity.

SUHR-SYTSMA: Yes, I think the book shows how Native as well as non-Native people can face very dire consequences if they aren't rooted in specific traditions and places even as they may, to some degree, positively engage the traditions of other places.

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: Yes, the book begs for caution. Failing to follow its suggestions doesn't necessitate tragedy. It's just meant to be a guideline.

SUHR-SYTSMA: What kind of responses have you gotten to *Oracles*?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: When it first came out, some people within my tribe were very unhappy because I had destroyed our casino in a book when it had just been built. It seemed to them a very negative thing to do even if it happened far in the future. I also got flak from some tribal members just for writing fiction. No one had written fiction about Mohegan before, and the idea that I was writing things that weren't literally true disturbed many people. Some tribal communities were accustomed to people writing literature, but ours was not. So, everything was scrutinized through the lens of nonfiction, and that took some getting used to. Fortunately, now there are quite a few people writing fiction in the community. Within the next year, we'll see two new fiction books by Mohegan writers, a short story collection by Stephanie Fielding and a children's book by Sister Bette-Jean Coderre. *Dawnland Voices: An Anthology of Indigenous Writing from New England* is also coming out

from University of Nebraska Press, and it includes a Mohegan section with still more fiction by Mohegan tribal members. It would appear that fiction writing is not an issue at Mohegan anymore.³

LITERATURE IS A HAVEN

SUHR-SYTMSA: I'm curious about why you and these other Mohegans have turned to fiction. I know that Gladys and Harold Tantaquidgeon along with other elders in the community were always telling you traditional Mohegan stories as you were growing up. Was it hearing those stories that led you to want to write fiction, or did other experiences lead you there?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: I wrote fiction for the very first time in the form of a novel. I had never even written a short story before that! But I began writing fiction with my novel *Oracles* because I was a bit frustrated as a historian and very frustrated as an anthropologist. With both of those disciplines, I ran into serious cultural roadblocks. I'll give you an example. I was speaking to a local high school once about Mohegan history, and I shared some of our stories about giants and little people as part of our history. A gentleman from the audience came up to me afterwards and said, "You were doing just fine until you got to the giants and little people, and then you lost me." So, I thought to myself, in anthropology these great beings are trivialized as folk entities. In history they're dismissed as lies. If I can't talk about them as real, then I'm going to have to write literature. In literature, these sorts of beliefs remain true and alive. They help form a character, the way someone thinks, the way society moves. So literature is a haven for me. It is the place where I'm allowed to talk about dreams and visions, and those things can be accepted as part of the whole true story.

SUHR-SYTMSA: Because your first novel, *Oracles*, has futuristic elements—like routine intergalactic travel and smell-emitting televisions—as well as giants and little people, some have characterized it as magical realism. We've talked on other occasions about how you think writing often problematically gets labeled as magical realism when it doesn't align with dominant perspectives on reality. At the same time, I know we're both excited about the recent burst of Native-authored speculative

fiction.⁴ Do you think of *Oracles* and your other novels as speculative fiction, magical realism, neither, both?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: People may well see aspects of my stories as supernatural or extraordinary. This may make my writing speculative fiction or magical realism or even fantasy sometimes. What matters more to me than these generic categories is that I simply cannot tell a story without dreams and visions and giants and little people; they make my writing a representation of how one Mohegan person who was raised traditionally sees the world. They are a form of truth, and without them I wouldn't be giving a fair representation of, in the case of *Oracles*, the life of a New England Indian woman growing up or, in the case of *Fire Hollow*, of a New England Indian man growing up or, in the case of *Wabanaki Blues*, of an urban Native American woman growing up. Those people are all people who I know in various shapes and forms in my life, and their experiences are shaped by things that might be somewhat different than other people's experiences, but I'm trying to the best of my ability to create characters that are whole.

FRESHNESS IS CRITICAL

SUHR-SYTSMA: Yes, and experiences with things like visions, dreams, giants, and little people are part of what make your characters whole. While *Oracles* imagines these kinds of holistic characters into the future, your second novel, *Fire Hollow*, takes us back into the past. What was the impetus for that book?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: It's a nineteenth-century murder mystery, based on a true story, about a non-Indian school teacher who was murdered on the reservation. My great-grandfather, John Tantaquidgeon, was the victim's ward. After the school teacher died, my great-grandfather was returned to his grandparents to be raised by them because his parents had died years earlier. It's an important story to me because John, in having then been raised by his grandparents, learned a number of extraordinary traditional skills, such as basket making and wood carving, and everything about the woods. He founded our tribe's museum, which is the oldest Indian-owned and -operated museum in North America: Tantaquidgeon Indian Museum. Therefore the hap-

penstance of this murdered schoolmaster was fortuitous for my great-grandfather and our tribe, although certainly not for the schoolmaster. The fact that the schoolmaster's death remained unsolved intrigued me. There's also very little recorded about the Mohegan Tribe in this period, so I try to incorporate a certain historical veracity in the setting and in the characters' behaviors, hoping people can learn a little more about Mohegan.

SUHR-SYTSMA: In *Fire Hollow*, you also draw on the Dracula tradition. I think that relates to our conversation about magical realism and speculative fiction because the main character in *Fire Hollow* is reading *Dracula* and . . .

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: . . . thinks it's real!

SUHR-SYTSMA: Yes, he thinks it's real because of his experience as a Mohegan—or “Yantuck”—person. So why did you draw on the *Dracula* story? What were you trying to do there?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: Bram Stoker's *Dracula* came to America about the same time as my story begins, and it was obviously a very popular novel. Mohegans were already literate, so it was a logical assumption that this book would have been read by us. It also struck me that because *Dracula* draws on European folklore, it was something that an Indian would find interesting. They would naturally wonder: What is the folklore of these people who came over here? What are their monsters? What are the things that keep them up at night and scare them or make them happy? Is this Dracula their Chahnameed or Windigo? The Dracula character would surely inspire reaction and wonder from a young man trying to understand the beliefs and actions of these Europeans who had come into his world. This thinking could also, of course, send him down some pretty erroneous pathways. So, it was fun to play with, just thinking about what parts of the *Dracula* story he might believe and what parts he might not believe. I was also exploring ways that the universe in Stoker's *Dracula* might intersect with Northeast Indian Indigenous understandings of the universe, and I did find some intersections. So, I was conducting my own investigation of the *Dracula* story alongside the young man in my book.

SUHR-SYTSMA: I think it's great how in both *Oracles* and *Fire Hollow*, you have characters who deeply engage traditions, stories, and technologies from other societies in ways that are very much rooted in their specific Indigenous perspectives. That's so refreshing to read in literature when so much mainstream literature just appropriates Native histories and Native stories, often in grossly overgeneralizing ways. In *Fire Hollow*, by contrast, we have this character who is so integrally a part of his Indigenous community and who also engages this very specific narrative, the *Dracula* narrative, in a very detailed way. I think this opens some fresh possibilities.

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: Freshness is critical. My mother inspired another really fresh thing I was trying to do in *Fire Hollow*. I was talking to her about a minister character, and she said, "You know, in Indian stories the ministers are usually bad; they're usually forcing children to either take on a religion they don't like or putting them in a boarding school or something. What if the minister is actually a good character?" And so I did that. I thought, What if he has a positive presence? Let's not give him a stereotype. Let's try to give him a little more dimensionality. That was a good exercise, to try and work on my own stereotypes rather than just trying to work on other people's stereotypes of Indians. Of course, as Indians, we've been forced to work on our own stereotypes of non-Indians more than others have been forced to confront their stereotypes of us, generally. But it's still necessary for us to make the effort.

WRITING NATIVE NEW ENGLAND

SUHR-SYTSMA: You've written three novels now, along with several historical texts. What is your writing process like? How do you approach a project, and how has that process changed over the years?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: Stereotypically, historians and anthropologists and writers of literature have very different processes. As a historian, you're looking at an issue in history that hasn't been fully explored. In anthropology, you're trying to understand why one culture sees something one way while another culture sees it another way. But in literature, you're trying to write a plot. You need to have a story. For instance, you can't say, "I really want to get across my opinion on Indian mascots."

You can have that issue in your story, but that can't be the only thing your story is about. When I was first writing literature, I tended to be so caught up in the kinds of topics I was familiar with from anthropology and history that the story came after the issues. Now the story comes first. The issues fall into place from there. That has been a great revelation for me, to find that plot is something I can conquer. When Joe Bruchac read and reviewed my first novel he said, "Oh, it's good, but like all Indian books, it has no plot." I was a little traumatized by that and decided I had to work harder on plot formation. That's why I got an MFA.

SUHR-SYTSMA: I know Joseph Bruchac has been an important mentor and influence for you. How did that relationship get started, and where has it gone?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: Joe was a friend of my Aunt Gladys and Uncle Chief Harold Tantaquidgeon. He used to visit us at our family's museum. He was also involved in some of the work of local Indian organizations with my family. I came to know him gradually growing up. Then I started to read some of his work because he was really one of the only people writing about Northeast Indians. When I began writing as a historian, he read my work and gave me input. He encouraged me constantly, sometimes taunting me, pushing me along the way. He's always been that sort of supportive mentor.

The first book that I wrote, *The Lasting of the Mohegans*, has never been published in its original full-length form. It was written for a contest that Joe put on for the Wordcraft Writers' Circle in Norman, Oklahoma, back in 1992. The strangest thing about that event was that some of the older Indian writers actually came up to me at the awards ceremony and asked if they could touch me because they didn't believe that any Mohegans were still alive. That was a very very powerful experience. Being introduced to these other Native writers was also inspiring for me, because I literally hadn't met any other Native writers. This gathering was extremely affirming for all of us. We still have the pictures, and I still read all these writers today. I also brought a couple of Indian students to the gathering, one from our tribe and one from Pequot. Both were aspiring young writers, and both have since become important contributors to their communities.

Over the years, I brought my children to visit Joe and his late wife

Carol at their home. He let them peruse his room full of books. They loved that. Then when my daughters went to college and graduate school, they corresponded with Joe and interviewed him for their research. He's a long-time family friend and great human being and someone who isn't just a literary figure. He's also a great activist and leader in Native American affairs and now also a tremendous linguist for his community. That might be his great legacy.

Joe's a storyteller, songwriter, signer, and poet—a good poet in Abenaki, now, as well as English. He has a lot of balance to his ability. I would like to be unbounded as well. I'd like to write on different topics and in different ways. A lot of Native American writers are like that. It's part of our desire to communicate and tell stories in as many ways as we possibly can.

SUHR-SYTSMA: Your most recent way of telling stories is through a young adult novel about a present-day Mohegan/Abenaki girl from Hartford. How did you come to this book?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: The book, *Wabanaki Blues*, is part of a YA trilogy. It's the story of a young Mohegan and Abenaki girl named Mona Lisa LaPierre. The reason I wanted to do a trilogy—I do things in threes a lot—is because I can focus on past, present, and future and examine different aspects of one topic. I'm also finding now that one book just can't get at everything! This is typical of most writers; as you go along, books either get longer or turn into book series. I also like how a trilogy allows me to write intergenerationally. I'm really enjoying this opportunity to explore important connections among generations.

SUHR-SYTSMA: Yes, I've seen an emphasis on intergenerational relationships throughout your work, and I look forward to seeing where that goes in the trilogy. To come back to *Wabanaki Blues*, you said earlier that you now try to start with plot. So, what was the premise for the plot with *Wabanaki Blues*, and where has that taken you?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: Most books have a *murder*. So too, with *Wabanaki Blues*, I have a murder. Just about anything that's enjoyable has a murder in it somewhere. Even in an innocuous romance, you'll often find a murder mixed in there someplace. I love murder mysteries,

and my secret guilty pleasure is Scandinavian murder mysteries. They've become much more popular lately, but I'll watch them in Danish. I'll get them translated. I'll watch them dubbed. I'll watch them anyway they can possibly come because I find murder mysteries fascinating. So, I wanted to work on a murder mystery. I don't know if we get more interested in this as we get older or what, but murder is just a delight. It is probably the most fun you can have with your mind. Murder, first of all, is central to the plot of *Wabanaki Blues*.

I also wanted to write something about a contemporary young adult Indian because I hadn't done it yet, and I wanted to write about a person who wasn't as connected with their community as I was, something for the kids who didn't grow up on the reservation. I thought it was important to speak to them because their experience is just as legitimate, but it's different. That was a strong impetus for me in writing the story. I also wanted my protagonist to be involved in the arts. I was in a band when I was young, and I wrote music and lyrics, so writing about a musician was something I knew I could do. There are also quite a few members in our tribe who are young musicians. The story fell into place from there.

It's the funniest story I've ever written. I love how, when people are laughing, you can talk to them about anything. Humor makes it easier for people to talk about things that are hard to talk about. With my protagonist in *Wabanaki Blues*, as with all young adults, there are a lot of things that are hard to talk about, so a little humor goes a long way.

SUHR-SYTSMA: *Oracles* and *Fire Hollow* certainly have appeal for young adults, but unlike with those books, you've decided to explicitly target young adult readers with *Wabanaki Blues*. What led you to that choice? Was it the desire to reach some of those young Mohegan readers you were thinking about?

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: The main reason I decided to target young adult readers was the paucity of literature for young adult readers in Native New England. We just talked about Joe Bruchac. He's done it, but there are very few others who've done it. Folks like Cynthia Smith write YA very well, but she's not of this region. This region has its own really cool, quirky, strange, and odd traditions. Of course, there are all sorts of problems with the artificial construct of "New England." The term "New England" is not our construct. Better to look at the tribes around the

Connecticut River. Yet I still grew up understanding this region as New England. I just take an expansive view. For instance, the Shinnecock live on Long Island, which is not technically New England, but they speak the same language that we do, and we're really connected with them, so I wave them in.

People need help reexamining what it's like to be a New England Indian *now*, compared to all the inaccurate old stories, or lack of stories, about what's happened to us in the last few hundred years. *Wabanaki Blues* focuses on a traditional regional story about bears that speaks to changes in our planet and our universe. It seemed to be a good time to tell this story.

SUHR-SYTSMA: I agree. It's a good time for that traditional story, and it's a good time for this novel. I've read the manuscript, and I think the book is going to have a big impact. It's also great that Native young people in the Northeast are going to have another writer representing *their* reality. You mentioned the *Dawnland Voices* anthology earlier. It looks like more and more American Indian writers are emerging in this region. What an exciting time.

TANTAQUIDGEON ZOBEL: It's like a dream come true for me to have literary colleagues in Native New England. I can't imagine what it was like for our ancestors, someone like Samson Occom, who was this great Mohegan scholar and community leader as well as a writer. He must have been somewhat lonely because there just weren't that many other people doing what he was doing. I admire such people enormously, someone like Joe Bruchac, who held the fort for so many of us for so long. It's a lot easier when there are a lot of people doing something. Some people see that as competitive, but I see it as just the opposite. I see it as energizing.

NOTES

1. Samson Occom is the well-known eighteenth-century Mohegan minister, political leader, and author about whom two articles appeared in the fall 2012 *SAIL* special issue on Indigenous New England. For a thorough introduction to Occom's work, see *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan: Literature and Leadership in Eighteenth-Century Native America* edited by Joanna Brooks.

The difference in spelling between "Occum lane" and "Samson Occom" is not an

error. As Zobel explained in her paper on this topic at the 2012 Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) meeting, in consistently spelling the family name “Occon” rather than “Occum,” Samson Occum deviated from others in his family, including his sister Lucy Occum Tantaquidgeon, Zobel’s sixth great grandmother and an influential leader in the Mohegan nation. In her NAISA paper, Zobel proactively suggested that Samson Occum’s embrace of the “om” spelling was related to his Christian theological commitments; there is no “um” sound in the Hebrew language, which Occum likely understood as the language of the Judeo-Christian God he served. In contrast, there is no “om” sound in the Mohegan language, accounting for the “um” spelling that Lucy Occum and many other family members have used before and after Samson Occum’s time. The Mohegan-language-influenced “um” spelling also persists in place names including the town of Occum, Connecticut, as well as Occum Lane.

2. In *Medicine Trails*, Zobel discusses and includes a transcription of Fidelia Fielding’s version of this “Tale of Chahnameed” as recorded by the anthropologist Frank Speck in 1903 (*Medicine Trails* 48–51). Russell G. Handsman also discussed Chahnameed in relationship to Mohegan women in his essay “Chahnameed and a Mohegan Woman’s Mortars.”

3. All three of the books that Zobel mentions here have been published since the time of the interview. Stephanie Fielding’s short story collection *Seven Cities and Other Journeys* appeared in May of 2014 from Bowman Books. Bette-Jean Coderre’s children’s book *Teddy’s Tail: The Wit and Wisdom of an F.O.T. (Fat Orange Tabby)* was self-published through CreateSpace in June of 2014. *Dawnland Voices*, edited by Siobhan Senier, came out from the University of Nebraska Press in September of 2014. The Mohegan section includes a fictional short story called “The Window” by Zobel herself along with selections from nine other living authors.

4. The expansive 2012 anthology of Indigenous science fiction, Grace L. Dillon’s *Walking the Clouds*—reviewed by Amy Gore in the Winter 2013 issue of *SAIL*—demonstrates the pervasiveness of this speculative turn.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Thomas King. *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native Americans in North America*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2013. ISBN 978-0-8166-8976-7. 272 pp.

Thomas King. *One Good Story, That One*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2013. ISBN 978-0-8166-8978-1. 147 pp.

Joshua T. Anderson, *Ohio State University*

In *The Inconvenient Indian*, award-winning novelist, short story writer, radio show host (*Dead Dog Café*), and photographer Thomas King (Cherokee) presents Indigenous North American history with his trademark brands of wit and political bite, telling stories and recovering histories from both sides of the US-Canadian border, where the *truth* is often *inconvenient*. Through his unconventional account, King deftly oscillates between the past and the present, destabilizing agreed-upon histories while simultaneously bringing about a sense of urgency to ongoing concerns such as dams, toxic waste dumps, the Alberta Tar Sands, and other threats to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous land bases. His nonlinear accumulation and juxtaposition of archival and pop culture evidence leads King to offer his readers something of a disclaimer: “[T]here’s a great deal in *The Inconvenient Indian* that *is* history. I’m just not the historian you had in mind” (xi). Bending and blurring the genres of history, creative nonfiction, and storytelling, King traces and critiques settler-colonial history from Columbus to Custer to Collier to contemporary concerns, as well as Native North American stereotypes imagined and reinforced on the sets of classic western films, in the pages of “historical” frontier romances by John Smith, James Fenimore Cooper, and Buffalo Bill Cody, and in consumer products such as the Land

O' Lakes Indian princess, American Spirit cigarettes, and the Washington Redskins. And with chapter titles such as "Forget Columbus" (chapter 1) and, later, "Forget about It" (chapter 7)—which calls on readers to momentarily forget about all of North American Indigenous history prior to 1985—much of King's unconventional methodology brings critical attention to the processes of strategic and imaginative forgetting and remembering, processes that have, for centuries, been applied to canonize limiting fictions into the "official" historical record, but that can also be used to reimagine settler colonialism from Indigenous perspectives.

Admitting in the introduction that he is more comfortable with the truth of stories than he is with writing capital-H *History*, King explains: "[W]riting a novel is buttering warm toast, while writing a history is herding porcupines with your elbows" (xii). This struggle with the historical record is perhaps the underlying thesis of King's work: rather than conforming to conventions of "history," King calls attention to the processes by which stories about the past become *History*, offering imaginative examples for testing, challenging, and complicating how such stories produce and reinforce the categories ascribed to Indians in pop culture—"blood thirsty savages, noble savages, and dying Indians" (chapter 2: "The End of the Trail")—and in real life—"Live, Dead, and Legal Indians" (chapter 3: "Too Heavy to Lift"). Throughout his sweeping, fast-paced account, King puts necessary pressure on these categories, drawing upon a remarkable range of topics and archives to bring attention to the ways that political and legal history construct and maintain the image of "Dead Indians," or the familiar image of the temporally, politically, and culturally static Native, as well as the "Legal Indian," which connotes both a product and a process of legislation aimed at answering the "Indian question," often with an end goal of legislating Indigenous identity out of existence. King then puts "Legal" and "Dead" Indians in tension with the *inconvenient* "Live Indians," or those still-living, still-present, still-changing Indigenous peoples and communities that are much less *convenient* to the versions of history that North American settler colonialism wants to tell. Through this process of reimagining and reclaiming, *The Inconvenient Indian* makes its greatest contribution, as King builds toward a reversal of the "Indian question," productively turning it back on settler colonialism, asking not "what do Indians want" (chapter 7: "What Do Indians Want?"), but rather, "what do Whites want?" (216). The answer, he explains, remains relatively sim-

ple: “Land” (216); however, as King’s work makes clear, the stories that divert and disguise, justify and ordain the systemic practices of land theft, resource exploitation, and Indigenous removal are anything but simple, requiring us to be more critical of the stories we are expected to remember and all those we are called to forget.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that in the same year that King’s *The Inconvenient Indian* (2013) was released, the University of Minnesota Press also re-released a collection of King’s short stories—*One Good Story, That One* (originally published in Canada in 1993)—a work that presents a slew of Native American and First Nations characters who are often wildly *inconvenient*. Although the re-release includes no new material, no introduction, author’s note, or preface, and no significant “twenty-year” anniversary repackaging or acknowledgment, it remains a valuable collection of stories that should now be more accessible in the United States. Furthermore, its themes and characterizations are as timely and significant today as they were in 1993, and, it may even offer something of a companion piece to *The Inconvenient Indian*, one that can provide readers greater insights into the relationships among “Live, Dead, and Legal Indians.” For instance, there are the inconvenient “Live” and “Legal” Indians in the much-anthologized “Borders”—an empowering and humorous story told from the perspective of a teenage boy as he and his mother attempt to cross the border from Canada to the United States on their way to visit Laetitia, the boy’s sister, in Salt Lake City, Utah. They become *inconvenient* when the boy’s mother refuses to produce documentation for US or Canadian citizenship and, instead, repeatedly insists that she and her son are “Blackfoot,” leading to a several-day stalemate with the courteous, then impatient, then stymied border patrols (7). This challenge to the Forty-Ninth Parallel is a recurring theme in King’s work, one that he takes up most thoroughly in his novel *Truth and Bright Water* (1999) in which several Indigenous characters engage in the dangerous occupation of transborder smuggling of toxic waste, an occupation passed down from fathers to sons. Similarly, in “Trap Lines,” King takes up the themes of inherited masculinity and strained relationships between Native fathers and sons, as the narrator is haunted by the memory of his father, a man who “remained a mystery until his death” (36). Now, at forty-six, the narrator is troubled by the sneaking realization that he shares his father’s habit of isolating himself, continuing a cycle of emotional distance that he hopes

not to pass down to his eighteen-year-old son, Christopher. The story centers on the narrator's quiet struggle to recall memories of his father that might help to salvage a relationship with his son. As one of the most powerful and emotionally driven stories in the collection, "Trap Lines" presents King's skillful weaving of language and memory, masculinity and deferred love; it is a story in which the traps for catching beavers—one of the only pastimes shared between the narrator and his father—are insufficient when attempting to snare and catch forgotten memories and unfinished stories.

While "Borders" and "Trap Lines" focus on contemporary familial relationships of "Live" Indians, challenging literal borders as well as the borders of memory, several other stories in the collection challenge the boundaries between "Live" and "Dead" Indians. For instance, the story "How Corporal Coyote Sterling Saved Blossom, Alberta, and Most of the Rest of the World as Well" offers something of a magic realist murder mystery in which Corporal Colin "Coyote" Sterling is called upon to investigate a six-person homicide. However, when he arrives at the crime scene, he finds that the six Indians said to be killed are still breathing; one, in fact, is still singing. Similar to the mystery of the singing Indians in "Totem," King tells the story of Walter Hooton, director of the Alberta Art Gallery and Prairie Museum, and Beebe Hill, the museum receptionist, who discover a mysterious totem pole that sounds as if it is "gargling" or "chuckling" or "singing" in the corner of the museum (14, 17). The story centers on Hooton's attempts to remove and silence the totem pole and to restore order to the museum, making it rife for discussions about NAGPRA and the fraught relationships among museums, Indigenous peoples, and culturally significant objects. Meanwhile, in "A Seat in the Garden," Joe Hovaugh (a play on the Judeo-Christian word for God: "Jehovah") and Red Mathews, Joe's friend, encounter a spectral Native Man in a corn field, who offers the prophetic line: "If you build it, they will come" (85).¹ Although aware of the allusion to the Kevin Costner film *Field of Dreams* (1989), Joe insists that it "Wasn't a movie, Red . . . It was a real Indian. He was just standing there in the corn" (86). As the visits from the "big Indian" recur, Red and Joe take turns noting various stars of the filmic western that the ghostly Native man resembles, including Jeff Chandler, a Jewish American actor best known for playing Cochise in *Broken Arrow* (1950); Ed Ames, a Jewish American actor and singer/songwriter of the band the Ames Brothers, who played

the Native “Mingo” in the 1960s television series *Daniel Boone* and Chief Bromden in the Broadway production of *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1963); Sal Mineo, a Sicilian American actor who appeared in *Rebel without a Cause* (1955) and who also played White Bull in *Tonka* (1958); and Victor Mature, an Italian American actor who played Crazy Horse in *Chief Crazy Horse* (1955). In each of these stories, then, King blurs the lines between “Live” and “Dead” Indians, as characters and culturally significant objects step out of the specimen boxes of the past and awake from the formaldehyde dreams of settler colonialism, finding subtle and significant ways to challenge the expectations set by classic western films, museums, and history books.

In addition to *inconvenient* characters, *One Good Story, That One* also includes a number of *inconvenient* stories, particularly those that reimagine Native and settler-colonial histories. For instance, in the title story, “One Good Story, That One,” King converts the creation story in Genesis to the oral tradition, depicting characters “Ah-damn” (a white man) and “Evening” (a Native woman) with imaginative and ironic humor, blending Native language with English for place-names, and equating God’s bad temper to that of a white man of the narrator’s acquaintance, Harley James, a man who is “always shouting. Always with pulled-down mean look” who “drives his truck to town. Gets drunk. . . . come home, that one, beat his wife” (7). And, by the end of this trickster-like retelling, the narrator, like the reader, is left to “clean up all the coyote tracks on the floor” (10). Later, in “A Coyote Columbus Story,” Coyote returns to retell the story of American “discovery” and its celebrated “discoverer,” Christopher Columbus. The narrator warns that this story will be “bent,” full of “Coyote tails” and “scraggy Coyote fur,” as it recasts Columbus as a product of Old Coyote’s dreams, one she wishes she could call back, but “once you think things like that, you can’t take them back” (123, 128). In these and other stories, such as “Joe the Painter and the Deer Island Massacre” and “The One about Coyote Going West,” King adorns agreed-upon histories in coyote fur, swats the capital-T *Truth* with a coyote tail, and challenges readers to locate the scattered truths in the creases between fact and fiction, where both are bent.

In the end, what is clear from both texts is that, for King, history is most vivid, most alive in stories. While some King scholars, myself included, will be somewhat disappointed to find that the twenty-year-re-

release of the short story collection does not include a preface, author's note, or introduction, the stories it does contain, and the wit, imagination, humor, and thoughtfulness each story conveys, make it a valuable contribution to any Native literary scholar's library or Native literature syllabus. Furthermore, if read as a companion piece to *The Inconvenient Indian*, readers may better understand King's historical methodology by engaging with the "inconvenient Indians" that occupy the worlds of his literary/artistic vision. In fact, readers might take their cue for reading *The Inconvenient Indian* from the title pages of each story in *One Good Story, That One*, which depict black-and-white images of a coyote howling with its backward-facing shadow as a reversed, mirror-image that is in keeping with King's emphasis on the truth of stories being reflected and refracted off of surfaces, like shadows on the rock, or sunlight on bright water. Similarly, in King's historical account, the author helps us navigate through these mirrors and mirages and engage difficult topics—such as treaty rights, Indigenous legal identification, police and military brutality, Indian removals, massacres, and federal laws of assimilation and termination—all while diligently seeking "the funny bit in the historical record, the ironic slant, the chuckle, something to make a dull subject interesting, something to make a boring discussion lively" (*Inconvenient Indian* 81). By doing so, King, more often than not, sheds new light on the thorny issues of sovereignty, land, and laws in North American/Indigenous relations, making conversations about land and water rights, Hollywood stereotypes, and legality more accessible, and in many ways more urgent to a wider audience. In short, for readers, King's engaging and entertaining account presents the challenge, not so much of "herding porcupines with their elbows," but of traversing through the historical house of mirrors and locating meaning in the reflections and refractions, the oddities and the absurdities, of federal policy. And, by exposing the fictions in the historical record, and contemplating the "truths" that linger in the gaps and absences of historical archives, King blurs the lines between fiction and history, truth and story—he may not be the "historian we had in mind," but perhaps he is the one we need.

NOTE

1. The character names "Joe Hovaugh" and "Ah-damn" also appear in King's critically acclaimed novel *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993).

Joseph Boyden. *The Orenda*. New York: Knopf, 2014.

ISBN: 978-0345806451. 440 pp.

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In the closing lines of *The Orenda*, Joseph Boyden waxes poetic, offering in the book's final, stripped-down words perhaps its central idea: "the past and the future are present" (435). Among other things, *The Orenda* is a novel about history, about the resonance of history into the present, and how that resonance will shape our futures. But the book is also about the resonance of Boyden's own childhood experiences. In a recent interview with the *Toronto Star*, he tells us that *The Orenda* is a book he had wanted to write for "many, many years" and draws inspiration from his early memories of family vacations in the beautiful Georgian Bay region, where, as a child, he imagined the now vanished world of the Wendat, or Huron, people who once lived in the region's deep forests and along its rugged shorelines.¹ Like many other children growing up in the Great Lakes region, I too had similar summer experiences in Georgian Bay: camping, hiking, and canoeing in the Bruce Peninsula, feeling the same rush of historical imagination. Indians and Indian pasts have a special hold on the imagination of children—"playing Indian," as Vine Deloria Jr. has argued, seems to unlock a universal desire, emerging in our earliest days, for some form of authenticity and freedom we associate with indigeniety.

But in *The Orenda*, Boyden—himself part Anishinaabe—does not aim to re-create some romanticized Indian past, the home of proverbial "noble savages." Instead, he sees his work as exploring, albeit through the guise of literature, the complexity of the region's Indian history. Appropriately, then, *The Orenda* is set, not in a fictionally pristine pre-Columbian world, but during what scholars refer to as "The Iroquois Wars" of the mid-seventeenth century—a series of brutal conflicts between the peoples of the eastern Great Lakes region brought on by waves of European epidemics that pitted their villages against each other in struggles over adoptive war captives and access to European trade goods, above all what the Wendat referred to as the "shining wood": European firearms that provided deadly advantages in a dangerous and changing world. In an effort to humanize these immense conflicts, Boyden structures the narration of *The Orenda* around the shifting first-person perspectives of his three main characters: Bird, an aging Wendat

war chief brooding over the loss of his family to a Haudenosaunee war party; Snow Falls, a Haudenosaunee girl whom Bird takes captive after killing her own family in revenge; and Christophe, a Jesuit priest sent into their midst hoping to convert the Wendat people to Catholicism. Following the inner lives of these three characters amid the growing violence, the novel culminates in the destruction of Wendake (the Wendat homeland) by the Haudenosaunee, the tragic death of Snow Falls, and Christophe's own excruciating demise following ritual tortures inflicted upon him by Haudenosaunee captors.

Violence, then, is a central theme of the work and has drawn pointed criticism from Native activists and academics alike. In a CBC News editorial, Haydn King, for instance, charged that the brutality depicted in *The Orenda* is "excessive" and that Boyden relies upon "old tropes" of Indian "savagery" to create nothing less than a "moral alibi" for the forces of colonialism that eventually remade the continent.² King's misgivings are not without cause. From the first encounters of Europeans with the Americas, literary images of intrinsically violent Indians have accompanied the opposite tropes of "noble savagery" and played an important role in justifying the destruction and dispossession of Native peoples—from the *encomienda* system of fifteenth-century New Spain to the Indian boarding schools of twentieth-century Canada. Boyden, then, is deliberately opening a very old wound, and one that seems to be reopened frequently in popular culture. Even less ardent critics than King have opined that the violence depicted in *The Orenda* borders upon sensationalism and raises troubling questions about the perpetuation of stereotypes within even our most sophisticated forms of cultural expression.

The question thus remains, however: how "excessive" is Boyden's fictional portrayal of the violence of the Iroquois Wars? Of course, scholars will never be able to arrive at definitive answers (particularly given the problematic nature of Eurocentric archival sources), but even by scratching the surface of the archaeological and ethnohistorical literature on the topic, it's evident that King's easy condemnation of Boyden's work is itself "excessive." Though spanning only a decade within the long history of Indian peoples in the region, scholars have broadly concluded that these conflicts were responses to unprecedented crises within Indian communities, that these crises led to the amplification of traditional warrior cultures, and that they were undoubtedly devastating to the peoples of the region, resulting in the deaths and dislocation of thousands, if not tens

of thousands, of individuals. This much can't reasonably be denied, but given the painful legacy of colonialism and its racial ideologies in both the United States and Canada, Indian warfare remains a sensitive topic—one used far too long as anti-Indian propaganda to be brought into the modern realm of scholarship or fiction without generating strong opinions. Simply drawing the now conventional comparison to a simultaneously “barbaric” seventeenth-century Europe of sacked villages and witch burnings doesn't seem to balance the scales.

Approaching *The Orenda* as a historian, then, involves experiencing a deep ambivalence. Do such harrowing fictional accounts aid us in arriving at some core truths about the traumas experienced during the period? Or are they simply literary distortions that generate familiar political controversy, distracting us from seeking more sober answers in archives or at dig sites that can move the conversation forward? Finally, is there some useful middle ground between the realms of “fact” and “fiction”? With these questions in mind, it seems that the problem with *The Orenda* is not that it dwells upon Indian violence, but rather that Boyden did too little work in the library to reach such a useful state of compromise. Despite claiming the dual role of novelist and historian, he doesn't seem to have sufficiently mobilized either the available primary material or the vast amounts of scholarship mentioned above to endow his characters with the complexity and verisimilitude present in the type of historical fiction he intended to write.

There are certainly moments when Boyden's research allows him to immerse us in another place and time, but he ultimately has difficulty living up to the ambitious task he set before himself: re-creating a world of seismic historical transformation through the first-person perspectives of his three very different primary characters who lived over three hundred years ago. Too often the internal monologues of these figures—particularly the Wendat war chief, Bird—seem simplistic, marred by modern colloquialisms and utilitarian thinking, and unreflective of the rich historical cultures from which they emerged. While Boyden hoped that *The Orenda* would offer a counterpart to the alleged Eurocentrism of Brian Moore's similar 1984 novel *Black Robe* (adapted for film in 1991), his own interpretations of the period as viewed through Native eyes seem less historically grounded. Unfortunately, the narrative voices he created don't quite act as windows into the past, failing to convey the layered, communal politics of the Wendat and Haudenosaunee peo-

ples grappling with unprecedented challenges; the nuanced protocols of diplomacy and war between villages that began to warp and break down under pressure; and perhaps most importantly, the profound spiritual understandings that these people brought to the conflicts with their enemies that were escalating out of control—including the ritualized tortures they practiced, and that Boyden highlights throughout the book. In the end, the dust jacket rhetoric of “stupendous Iroquois wrath” and Huron “annihilation” crafted to draw in readers isn’t satisfactorily elaborated upon between the front and back covers.

Because *The Orenda* grapples with such heavily politicized historical themes, we simply cannot judge it strictly as literature without considering the claims it makes on the past, present, and future. While the critiques of Haydn King are overwrought—calling Boyden a moral apologist for colonialism is, at the very least, unfair—some readers of *The Orenda* may indeed draw the types of conclusions from his lurid scenes that Indigenous activists have a right to object to, and to object to passionately. For interested readers, then, it is still far better to consult the extensive scholarly literature on the Iroquois Wars—itself the province of some captivating writing. After all, as most specialists in the field would likely agree, a well-researched past needs no dramatic embellishment, and the seventeenth-century Great Lakes region is a prime example. Read *The Orenda* if you will, but certainly read on when you’ve finished in order to gain a deeper, and perhaps even more vivid, understanding of these important historical issues.

NOTES

1. Andrea Gordon, “Joseph Boyden on *The Orenda*, His Latest Giller-Nominated Novel,” *Toronto Star*, 17 Sept. 2013, http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/2013/09/17/joseph_boyden_on_the_orenda_his_latest_gillernominated_novel_interview.html.

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Siobhan Senier, ed. *Dawnland Voices: An Anthology of Indigenous Writing from New England*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2014.

ISBN 978-0-8032-4686-7. 690 pp.

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It is difficult to fit into the short space of a book review the magnitude of what *Dawnland Voices* is and does for American Indian literature and history. This anthology is organized into ten sections, chronicling the ten Nations indigenous to what is now referred to as New England—Mi'Kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Abenaki, Nipmuc, Wampanoag, Narragansett, Mohegan, and Schaghticoke. These ten, interrelated sections write and *right* cartographies and histories beginning as early as 1640 and include contemporary pieces from writers as young as ten. Each section contains no less than seven and as many as twenty-six authors, spanning three centuries. The introductions to each section alone give the reader a wealth of details regarding Native peoples to this area.

As well as writing histories, this significant volume is informative regarding contemporary decolonization work. Some of the pieces directly address decolonization, while others more implicitly so. The multiplicity of contributors includes scholars, prolific writers, chiefs (some of whom are women), community leaders, members of military families, petitioners, award-winning authors, students, authors from the same family, artists, and musicians. *Dawnland Voices* provides a space for many first-time writers, as well as hauntingly beautiful pieces from their ancestors. The collection cracks open the category of literature, the first work being the magnificent piece of beadwork adorning the cover, as well as a wampum reading, a pictograph and its descriptive narrative, recipes, short stories, poetry, petitions, calls to action, and letters to colonial leaders. *Dawnland Voices* eloquently asserts itself into the frustrating tenet that there just aren't any Native authors from New England. One wonders how this tenet could be possible, given the sheer number of authors in this volume, but then is reminded of the sophisticated forms of erasure that are described by the authors themselves.

Dawnland Voices does many things, one of which is to center Indigenous concepts of time and disrupt the linearity and forgetful nature of settler-colonial time. Taken together, the pieces in *Dawnland Voices* enact narratives that exist in the past and the present and that shape

the future. Juana Perley (Maliseet), introducing her grandfather Henry Red Eagle's short story, *The Red Man's Burden*, speaks of "the frustrations and difficulties that many Native Americans faced then as well as today" (114). Authors write in a tense that seems lacking in the English language, only remotely captured in the phrase "continue to." This collection of authors speaks intergenerationally onto the land and landscape, describing how multiple generations have learned from the land for numerous generations, knowledge that will carry into the future.

Often the reader encounters complex perspectives on life, love, and loss. In *Clay Pots and Bones*, Lindsay Marshall (Mi'Kmaq) writes a lamentation, asking to know why the changes took place, making familiar land foreign. Larry Spotted Crow Man (Nipmuk), from his first book, *Tales from the Whispering Basket*, identifies self and community in the face of a history of colonial literature that defines Indigenous peoples: "One thing about Indian people is that they know how to have a good time and laugh, even when life is at its toughest" (419). Spotted Crow Man then describes how the abundance of surrounding Nipmuk storage baskets, medicinals, and aromas of food are interrupted by the colonizing knock at the door that could mean (has meant) children or land, stolen.

There are many reclamations of land and landscape, reclamations of cartographies that throw into tumult US and Canadian settler-state maps. Authors enact memory, describing the relationships contained in Native names for places such as Meductic, Molian (Montreal), Pithiganitegw (River Nicolet), Kubek (Quebec), and Koattegaw (Pine River). Trudie Lamb Richmond (Schaghticoke), in *Why Does the Past Matter? Eunice Mauwee's Resistance Was Our Path to Survival*, challenges the inaccuracies present in settler colonial historical accounts of the Housatonic River:

Most did not recognize the importance of how these communities in the Housatonic River Valley were all related. . . . These communities all had a strong partnership with the land and their cycle of subsistence was regulated by generations of spiritual tradition. (649)

The importance of language revitalization becomes abundantly clear in so many of the writings in this volume.

Suzanne S. Rancourt (Abenaki), in *Take From My Hair—Memories of Change*, (originally published in *Billboard in the Clouds*, Northwestern

University Press, 2004) mourns for language and land and speaks her ancestors onto the page:

i strain to hear my language
among the leathery leaves
among the trees and trails that
my grandmothers and grandfathers walked. (345)

Dr. Andrea Bear Nicholas (Maliseet) historicizes what so many of the authors throughout *Dawnland Voices* lament—linguicide—and writes a compelling argument for language immersion education for children.

This collection of authors works together to write decolonization strategies and celebrations in tandem with lamentations and mourning. A collaboration of Narragansett writers, in *The Pursuit of Happiness*, documents *Wunnigin Nuwadchanumunuwut Kuttoowonkongashut* (Happiness in our own words), stating, “The Nahahiganseck language holds the key to our self-preservation, to our happiness” (549). The collaborators describe how younger generations are acting as docents at the Tomaquag Indian Memorial Museum, drumming, singing, dancing, displaying artwork and scholarship. Young Mohegan writer Madeline Fielding Sayet offers a humorous, heartwarming account of the internal tension involved in coming home to your heritage after being far away in settler colonial spaces in *When the Whippoorwill Calls*.

These are themes that this reader pulled out during a first reading. However, *Dawnland Voices* invokes a relationship and asks to be read again and again. As a living, breathing collection, it recognizes its limits as an anthology and invites readers to join in the conversation, integrating what is within and outside of the covers of this volume. The websites indigenousnewengland.com and goodreads.com are spaces for collaborative bibliography, an exhibit for further texts, networking, and, according to editor Siobhan Senier’s introduction, “where readers, students, tribal community members, and authors can ‘speak back’ to the literature” (13). This invitation opens up what could be confined within the cover of this anthology, breaking open the rules of canonizing and anthologizing themselves, a rebellion against its own canonization. Where colonization continually threatens to foreclose upon, these decolonizing voices disrupt the narrative of the past-tense Indian.

This is an impressive collection, useful to anyone interested in literature and history, and especially useful for educators who teach anything in regard to New England.

David Treuer. *Prudence: A Novel*. New York: Riverhead, 2015.

ISBN: 978-1-59463-308-9. 272 pp.

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In his latest novel, David Treuer mixes history, struggle, young love, war, and adventure to produce a narrative that is at once engrossing and tragic. Treuer, who grew up on the Leech Lake Reservation in Minnesota, is a member of the Ojibwe tribe. He is the author of the novels *Little*, *The Hiawatha*, *The Translation of Dr. Apelles*, and *Rez Life* as well as a collection of critical essays on Native American language and literature, *Native American Literature: A User's Manual*. His latest novel, *Prudence*, published in February 2015 by Riverhead Books, expands upon the work he has completed thus far in his oeuvre.

The novel opens, "Everyone remembers that day in August 1952 when the Jew arrived on the reservation." While the Indians would discuss his arrival and departure in later years, the day was memorable for another reason altogether: a maid had found the body of Prudence, "Prudy," an Indian girl living in an apartment above the Wigwam Bar. We move back in time, to 1942 and then meet Emma Washburn, the owner of the Pines, a resort located just outside the reservation. Emma and her surly husband Jonathan, who both live in Chicago most of the year, are awaiting the arrival of their son, Frankie, from Princeton. Frankie has just graduated and, in two weeks, will be joining the air force to "do his part" in the war against the Germans.

On his arrival Frankie learns of an escaped German prisoner of war from the POW camp also located just outside the reservation, across a river from the Pines resort. In the hopes of "get[ing] a German before [he] even leaves the States," Frankie urges his friends Billy, Ernie, Dave, and the Indian caretaker of the Pines, Felix, to go on a hunt for the POW (44). During the hunt the group splits, and Billy and Frankie go off on their own. Through the heart-wrenching prose of Treuer, we learn that Billy, an Indian from the nearby reservation, and Frankie have a young romance that thrives on these summers spent together hunting, fishing, and sneaking quiet time alone in empty cabins at the Pines. In this moment of solitude during the hunt Billy and Frankie share a kiss that is interrupted by other members of the hunting party, which frightens Frankie. He goes ahead of the group, followed closely by Billy and, at the sound of rustling in nearby bushes, fires blindly, thinking that he has

caught the German POW. The consequences of that kiss and the following gunshot affect all of the characters in this novel for the rest of their lives.

It is important at the outset to note the historical background of this novel. Treuer, a self-proclaimed World War II buff, finds historical incidents around which he bases this fictional novel. For example, in northern Minnesota there was an incidence of an escaped German POW from a camp near a reservation (Lobdell). Further, the Jew appears in this novel, which we cannot read apart from the fact that Treuer's own father, Robert Treuer, was also Jewish and a survivor of the Holocaust who later came to America and attended Yale, Antioch College, and Bemidji State University. Finally, there is an appearance of a character named Ernie, which, in speaking engagements, Treuer heavy-handedly relates to Ernest Hemingway, who also wrote about having a relationship with a Native woman named Prudence. Treuer draws upon these historical moments, stories, and references, which then play into his methodical development of *Prudence*.

Aesthetically, one of the most striking features of Treuer's text is the way in which he makes use of multiple voices, as each chapter is told from a different character's perspective. After the prologue we start with Emma's rather narrow view of the world. It is in this chapter that we are introduced to most of the main characters: Frankie; Billy, a local Indian boy; and Felix, who takes care of the Pines throughout the year. In this first chapter and again in the fourth chapter, Treuer depicts Felix as the somber, stoic, and relatively voiceless Indian man who spends his time listening and working, rather than speaking. As such, through the voices of Emma and Jonathan, Felix seems a rather flat individual without personality or history or even any real identity. However, the second chapter relates Felix's own point of view. This narrative movement, at the outset, presents a stereotyped depiction of the Native character, an issue that Treuer himself has critiqued in the work of Sherman Alexie and Louise Erdrich in his book *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual*. However, the multiple-voiced style of *Prudence* allows Felix as a character to open and become much more complex. Felix, rather than being the stereotype, becomes the veteran whose memories of the Great War still linger in his mind and who has lost more than Emma or Jonathan will ever know.

Treuer's use of polyvocality in the text shows the audience the complexity and depth of each character, which rises from their past expe-

riences and present motivations. Thus, even as the perspective of the novel continues to shift and Felix again seems like the stereotypical Indian, the reader, more than the individual carrying the narrative in any given chapter, is able to see past the judgments made against Felix's character. The reader's knowledge of the characters builds as each chapter gives a larger view into what drives these individuals and where their true loyalties lie. Each voice is composed with depth, complexity, and an effort to depict the reality of identity, be that Native or WASP identity, in midcentury America.

The multiple-voiced narrative also affects the depiction of Frankie, arguably the novel's central character. The discussion around masculinity becomes increasingly more complex as we move from Emma and Jonathan's ideas of masculinity, undeniably related to an effort to get Frankie to join the boy scouts as a young child even though he "has never been manly," into Frankie's own struggle with this concept (12). In Frankie's effort to deal with the "heavy fog of sadness that hung over his childhood," embodied in his parent's fears that "he—and by extension their lives—was not turning out as expected," Frankie relates masculinity to his position in the military. Frankie muses:

Now all that [the accident while hunting the German] was behind him—seven months, sure, but more than simply those months. He was a different man. He was now, in fact, a man. . . . His job was to drop bombs and kill people. What was a kiss in a cabin or in the woods compared to that? What was any of it—those many years at the Pines and that one terrible day they searched for the German prisoner—compared to the clear purpose to which he was now bent? (88)

Masculinity for Frankie becomes inextricably tied to violence, death, and the ability to deal with trauma. Frankie decides that his ability to work through these experiences results in a kind of masculinity that few people, especially his parents, will understand. And yet, as Frankie continually thinks about Billy, his notions of masculinity and manliness become that much more fraught.

Much like Frankie, Prudence, the title character, also remains troubled throughout the novel. She is unable to appreciate the help she receives from the caretaker Felix and continually allows men on the reservation to take advantage of her, all while operating under the delu-

sion that Frankie is madly in love with her. And yet, most of what we see from Prudence comes through the perspective of other characters. She is not given agency to tell us her own story until the very end of the novel where, in prose reminiscent of Molly's final chapter in *Ulysses*, we learn about Prudence's past and her motivations. Thus, in this last movement, the novel makes one final attempt to open up yet another central character, revealing pieces of the identity we have only been allowed to have a mediated view of thus far. This narrative strategy of gradually opening the characters, and thus the narrative, becomes the novel's central strength.

If the novel has a pitfall, it lies in the story of the Jew introduced in the prologue. He remains an absent figure until the penultimate chapter, where we finally hear about his presence on the reservation (wherein we also see an instance of name swapping, an oft-appearing trope that shows up in novels like Boyden's *Three Day Road*). The Jew's story seems quite out of place with the major narrative of the novel, even in the face of the historical backgrounds from which this particular character seems derived. The ties between the stories of the Jew and Frankie, Billy, and, later, Prudence are tenuous at best. Rather, this side story seems more an effort to bring the central catastrophe of World War II, the Holocaust, into the novel. While this is a noble cause and, on its own, would stand as a fine story, in the context of *Prudence* it does not seem to work well with the overarching narrative. This side story largely operates apart from the narrative focus of the novel, and thus its appearance is rather jarring and somewhat confusing.

Despite this one minor confusion, Treuer's novel expands on themes from his previous work—stereotypes, masculinity, war, trauma, violence against Native women, and the importance of familial relationships—creating a tale both gripping and masterful. *Prudence* defies genre boundaries, becoming at once a romance novel, a mystery, historical fiction, and, given Treuer's inspiration for many pieces of the story, nonfiction. It is a story about true love in the confusion of cultural differences and wartime sentiment. It is a story about difficulties that arise through the commingling of love and trauma.

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Every student, professor, and scholar entering my office comments on the 745-page copy of Josephine Waggoner's *Witness: A Húŋkpaŋa Historian's Strong-Heart Song of the Lakotas* resting on my desk; "Is that a dictionary or an encyclopedia?" Their inquiries are not far from the truth. Editor Emily Levine has amassed an essential text for all students, professors, scholars, and general readers interested in the history, culture, and traditions of the Oceti Sakowin Oyate, the Seven Council Fires of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota Nations. Waggoner, a *Húŋkpaŋa* Lakota woman, educated in the East at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, lived in a time when Euro-American colonizing forces increasingly encroached on the lives of the peoples living on the Northern Plains. Concerned with the increasing misinformation being recorded by Western scholars and troubled that the history, knowledge, and culture of her Oceti Sakowin people would be lost, she traveled among nations surrounding the area where she lived, interviewed tribal elders, chiefs, and other tribal members, including the women of these nations, whose voices had too often been absent in Western recordings of Oceti Sakowin cultures. Edited by Levine, with expert care and extensively researched footnotes, *Witness* collects Waggoner's two previously unpublished manuscripts; the first, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century personal and historical accounts of tribal lifeways from the people living and residing in the turbulent Oceti Sakowin landscape; and the second, sixty biographies of Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota chiefs and important figures, recorded by Waggoner based on interviews with eyewitnesses to the changing world of their peoples. *Witness* is more than what peers and students observe upon entering my office; it is more than an encyclopedic recording; it is a key text in an understanding of the Oceti Sakowin people, nation, culture, history, and lifeways; and it is a rare text recorded by a witness who spoke and wrote both Lakota and Dakota dialects and could translate them into English without losing the intended intricate meanings of the lives and times of the Oceti Sakowin Oyate.

In the 2006 introduction to the new Bison Books edition of James R.

Walker's *Lakota Myth*, edited by Elaine A. Jahner, Raymond J. DeMallie discusses the importance of Jahner's work with Walker's Lakota texts. Jahner believed that Walker importantly "foresaw new educational directions and relationships with other tribes and with non-Indians, and he wanted the following generations to understand the beliefs that made the Lakotas who they were" (ix). Waggoner's intention, Levine writes in the introduction to *Witness*, is the same: "She gives us the priceless gift of a heretofore unknown view of the Dakota/Lakota world" (xlii). Levine continues in her blog entry on the University of Nebraska Press website, arguing: "Josephine Waggoner's work is singular; there is nothing else like it. It is rich and deep, based on long-passed-down stories, eyewitness accounts, and her personal experiences. She lived this history."

DeMallie's concern in the introduction to *Lakota Myth* is with the relationships between text, translator, writer, interpreter, and editor. He argues, "By interpreting from the historical and linguistic context of the original telling, culturally specific narratives are lifted out of their local context and become a part of world literature" (xi). Levine, in collecting and editing Waggoner's manuscripts, has meticulously footnoted Waggoner's histories, lifting the "culturally specific narratives" and rightly placing them in the field of "world literature." DeMallie's praise for *Witness* in a book jacket blurb speaks as highly; "Emily Levine has meticulously examined all known collections of Waggoner's manuscripts, sometimes comparing handwritten drafts with multiple typed copies to preserve information in full. Levine's extensive notes are well chosen and informative." Levine writes in her blog entry about the ten-year editing process of Waggoner's manuscripts:

I would search out every manuscript, every scrap of writing that Waggoner ever did; it meant I would translate all of the Lakota and transcribe it in the currently accepted orthography; it meant I would carefully research every thread so that the annotative end-notes would give real context to Waggoner's work, provide necessary information, and utilize previously untapped sources. It also meant that I would gather hundreds of images—some collected by Waggoner herself—to illustrate the manuscript; many of these would be Lakota-generated drawings to accompany this Lakota-generated text.

In *Witness*, readers find both a writer, in Waggoner, who genuinely wishes to record the stories and histories of her people before they are

forgotten or subsumed by Ameroepan colonizing forces, and an editor, in Levine, who wishes to carefully bring these stories to the public in the most accurate and scholarly fashion.

Further, in DeMallie's introduction to *Lakota Myth*, he notes discussions with Jahner concerning the "absence of original Lakota versions of [traditional] stories" (ix). In the introduction to *Witness*, Levine lists the few texts published by Oceti Sakowin authors and texts edited and interpreted for Oceti Sakowin authors (xxxix–xl). Original texts in the nature of *Witness* are rare, making Waggoner's "manuscripts . . . an unprecedented addition to the field of Dakota/Lakota scholarship; they are a window onto a time and place that are in need of fresh eyes and a different perspective." Further, Waggoner's work is unique to these previously published and rare texts because it "is not a reminiscence, not a diary or a journal; she was writing a book of history with the intent of having it published" (xxxix). *Witness* is more than an ordinary remembrance; it is a book for scholars and ordinary readers alike, those concerned with a true historical account written by and told from the perspective of the Oceti Sakowin Oyote. Levine further illustrates the importance of the work in her blog entry:

Every year for decades, white historians have published books on the Lakota. As a Lakota elder once told me, "people are hungry" for this stuff. But these historians have mostly been rehashing the same information over and over. As I discuss in the introduction and afterword of the book, the amount of new material is one of the reasons I believe that Waggoner's work is of great importance. I also think she was a historian and writer of considerable talent. I believe that without her, much would be lost.

In *Witness* readers find an extremely rare account of Lakota/Dakota daily life, one written by a Lakota woman, who recorded stories from Lakota/Dakota Peoples, and edited with great care while painstakingly remaining true to the author's intent and historical accuracies from an Oceti Sakowin perspective.

Proving the importance and historical accuracy of *Witness* is for a reviewer the easier of two designs. Imagining the interpretation of information divined within *Witness*, the knowledge that can be learned, taught, studied, is the nearly impossible enterprise. Glancing through the index, readers can find the names of significant figures, traditional

stories, landscapes, conflicts, spiritual practices, and on and on, from “Acorn” to “Zintkala Sapa.” Examining the bibliography gives readers a clear perspective on the ten-year process of noting the text Levine undertook to ensure the historical accuracy of every item contained in the index. The bibliography alone in *Witness* will surely be of great interest to scholars and instructors alike. The appendixes offer lists, proffered by Waggoner, of “Chiefs Who Fought and Surrendered,” “The Keepers of the Peace Pipe Since Brought by the Buffalo Maiden,” and “Police at Sitting Bull Fight”; “Waggoner’s Bibliography,” “Winter Counts,” “Poems,” and “Lakota Land Dispossession”; each noted by Levine with the same great care that she took with the text. There are also illustrations throughout the text, some collected by Waggoner for her original manuscripts and some included by Levine. There are maps, color plates, and figures of Waggoner and her relatives, chiefs and historical figures, winter counts, and more. Each illustration is captioned, and many include endnotes by Levine.

Then there is the text. *Witness* is beautifully crafted by Levine, and Waggoner’s writing is generated with a true purpose, to create an accurate Oceti Sakowin history. Readers can sense the obligation Waggoner felt in penning her manuscripts. The battle to finally publish her work is an interesting section included within the volume where one can see the struggle to publish within the confines of a publishing industry interested in Eurocentric frontier “mythstalgia.” Waggoner is also a woman and offers a position that would not have been placed in the forefront in a patriarchal society, but that within Oceti Sakowin society offers a unique time-honored perspective. Waggoner also created a “transitional text” (DeMallie x) blending narrative oral histories with written sources. While Waggoner often cites Ameroepan sources, she reads these texts with a critical eye, recognizing the colonial perspective. Further, Waggoner, as Levine maintains, was able to create a complete historical record:

Because of her geographic setting as a Hunkpapha on the Standing Rock Reservation in the spatial center of the Seven Council Fires, Waggoner could reach back toward the east to recount the history and lives of the chiefs of the four [Dakota Nations] . . . the Yanktons and Yanktonais . . . were just across the river or on her own reservation . . . at Standing Rock and . . . [at the] Cheyenne River Reservation lived all the northern Tetons [Lakota] . . . at the

same time, she looks west to the southern Lakotas, the Oglalas and Brules. (xli–xl ii)

Waggoner was in a unique geographic position to tell the full histories of the entire Oceti Sakowin. Most importantly, Waggoner was born early enough to have experienced the life of the “free Lakota,” but late enough to be one of the first Húŋkpaŋa educated on the East Coast. She was able to tell the full history of the Oceti Sakowin from early contact with Western trappers and traders, through forced relocation to reservations, to the assimilation processes enacted by the government. With the meticulous editing of Emily Levine, Josephine Waggoner is able to give readers a history that emerges from the negotiated experience of radical cultural change. *Witness: A Húŋkpaŋa Historian’s Strong-Heart Song of the Lakotas* offers readers a look at the fundamental meaning of an individual and the collective Oceti Sakowin Oyote, the seven council fires of the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota Nations, and what these narratives can tell us about humanity. *Witness* should become required reading for students and scholars wanting to more fully understand the Oceti Sakowin society and will become what it already is, a widely referenced primary source.

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ISBN 978-0385537094. 384 pp.
- Jace Weaver, *University of Georgia*

More than a decade ago, John Purdy, former editor of *SAIL*, observed that there seemed to be only so much room for Native authors in literary criticism. The “Big Three” (Momaday, Welch, and Silko) gave way to the “big four” (add Gerald Vizenor), which gave way to the “big five” (enter Louise Erdrich), which gave way to the “big six” (plus Tom King), which finally came to be the “big seven” (include Sherman Alexie). Occasionally, by sheer force of imagination and talent, another contender mus-

cles his or her way in—think Tomson Highway, LeAnne Howe, Susan Power, and Joseph Boyden. If, however, one surveys the critical ink spilled in journal articles and conference papers since the onset of the so-called Native American Renaissance, the vast majority of it has concerned the seven writers listed above.

To a certain extent, this fact is understandable. All seven of the authors noted are popular and immensely gifted. Their works are regularly taught in literature and Native American/American Indian studies (NA/AIS) courses. With the exception of Jim Welch, who passed prematurely, all of them are still productive. Vizenor, Erdrich, and King—at least—are still at the height of their powers. Yet the narrow focus on this small group of authors, to the relative exclusion of consideration of other equally talented Native writers, has led to Native literature—once a vital wellspring of NA/AIS—being marginalized.

In the related genres of science fiction, fantasy, and horror, the field of Native candidates for recognition is inevitably much narrower than for Native lit as a whole. Vizenor's first novel, *Darkness in St. Louis Bearheart* (later republished as *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles*) is a post-apocalyptic masterpiece. One also thinks of graphic artists and writers such as Roy Boney, Joseph Erb, A. A. Carr (with his Navajo vampire novel, *Eye Killers*), and Daniel Heath Justice, who created a fantasy world around Cherokee Removal in his excellent "The Way of Thorn and Thunder" trilogy. Yet, just as Purdy noted that there only is so much room for Native writers in general, despite the quality of the work generated by these artists, in the sci-fi/horror/fantasy field, all the critical oxygen seems to have been sucked up by Blackfoot author Stephen Graham Jones.

The time has come to blow the cobwebs both off Native literary criticism generally and discussion of American Indian science fiction/horror specifically. Taking nothing away from Jones, there is a new sheriff in town. Like Boney, Erb, and Justice, he is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. His name is Daniel H. Wilson.

In 2011, Wilson, who has a PhD in robotics from Carnegie Mellon, published *Robopocalypse*, a nightmare vision of a future uprising of robots against their human masters, led by an artificial intelligence known as Archos R-14. After three years of bloody (and bloodless) combat between humans and machines, humanity vanquishes the robot army and destroys Archos R-14. At the vanguard of the victory is the

Gray Horse Army (GHA), a mixed-race fighting force of Osages, Cherokees, and non-Natives. Guiding them toward the underground lair of “Big Rob” was a “sighted” girl, Mathilda Perez, the daughter of a US congresswoman who was genetically modified and given digital eyes while interned in a labor camp run by the robots.

Robocalypse unfolds in a “found-footage” way, told from multiple perspectives in scraps assembled by Cormac Wallace, the leader of Bright Boy squad of the GHA, after the victory. Wallace provides introductions to each fragment and acts as an overarching narrator. Wilson’s technique recalls Michael Crichton’s in *The Andromeda Strain*, and he uses it to great effect.

Robogenesis, despite a title suggesting a prequel, picks up right where the first book leaves off. As with its predecessor, the story here is told by multiple narrators, but the found-footage device has been scrapped. And though Wallace remains an important character, the overarching narrator is an unknown named Arayt Shah, who it gradually dawns may be something more sinister than he first appears.

Though the war is over, all is not well. Human survivors known as “The Tribe,” led by a Mexican narco-trafficker, seem intent on destroying all remaining machines, including the “freeborn,” machines on the side of humanity, and they are also targeting those like Mathilda that were modified by the ’bots. Hank Cotton, an Osage member of the GHA, has fallen under the influence of a mysterious “spook light” and now seems intent on displacing not only Lonnie Wayne Blanton, the GHA general, but the government of the Osage Nation as well. As humans begin to reconstruct civilization, they are unquestionably shell-shocked, but there is also an ill-defined inquietude in the air. Everything seems just more off-kilter than it should—even under the extreme circumstances existing after the war.

In Native literature circles, Wilson has drawn some minor flak because, while he is Cherokee, the majority of his Native characters are Osage. Such criticism is, however, misguided. There are Cherokee characters. And even if there were not, Wilson is hardly the first Native novelist to write about a tribal nation other than his or her own. Linda Hogan wrote about the Osage Reign of Terror in *Mean Spirit*. James Welch wrote about the experiences of a Lakota with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. Even Kiowa Scott Momaday situated *House Made of Dawn* among the Pueblo. In his acknowledgments,

Wilson thanks Osage Ryan Red Corn of the 1491s for his cultural vetting.

This is a propulsive novel. The last fifty pages are especially intense. In a jacket blurb, Stephen King called *Robopocalypse* “terrific page-turning fun.” *Robogenesis* is its predecessor on steroids. Yet it is more than genre fiction. It is also a literary novel. Wilson is an elegant and refined prose stylist. Consider this single paragraph description of Cheyenne Mountain, the former headquarters of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, where the freeborn decide to make their stand: “The camp is undisturbed by cat holes or campfire or tents. No environmental modifications whatsoever. These soldiers do not require it. Chairs are for those who sit. Beds are for those who sleep. There is no campfire that will bring warmth to this army” (153).

Like all great science fiction—and make no mistake, this *is* great science fiction—*Robogenesis* is about more than technology and singularity and its results. It deals with universal ideas. Specifically, it deals with the meaning of communities, both inherited (family and tribal nation) and constructed, both volitional and those created as a result of extreme exigency. In exploring this concern, it is not only a deeply humanist novel but a profoundly Native novel, as well, regardless of the respective tribal affiliations of the characters or the author.

All good horror and science fiction ends with the possibility of another installment. *Robogenesis* is no exception. In the acknowledgments, Wilson thanks his readers and offers his hope that they will welcome turning the two novels into a trilogy. This reader, for one, certainly votes an unreserved “yes.”

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