

VOLUME 28 • NUMBER 1 • SPRING 2016

Studies in American Indian Literatures

EDITOR

CHADWICK ALLEN, University Of Washington

Published by the University of Nebraska Press

The editor thanks the Office of the Provost at the University of Washington for its financial support.

The book review editor thanks the Electa Quinney Institute for American Indian Education at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee for its financial support

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Studies in American Indian Literatures (SAIL ISSN 0730-3238) is the only scholarly journal in the United States that focuses exclusively on American Indian literatures. SAIL is published quarterly by the University of Nebraska Press for the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures (ASAIL). For current subscription rates, please see our website: www.nebraskapress.unl.edu.

If ordering by mail, please make checks payable to the University of Nebraska Press and send to

The University of Nebraska Press
1111 Lincoln Mall
Lincoln, NE 68588-0630
Telephone: 402-472-8536

All inquiries on subscription, change of address, advertising, and other business communications should be sent to the University of Nebraska Press.

A subscription to SAIL is a benefit of membership in ASAIL. For membership information, please contact

Jeff Berglund
PO Box 6032
Department of English
Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, AZ 86011-6032
Phone: 928-523-9237
E-mail: jeff.berglund@nau.edu

SUBMISSIONS

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.

Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the most recent edition of the *MLA Style Manual*. SAIL only accepts electronic submissions. Please submit your manuscript by e-mail as an attachment (preferably as an MS Word document).

SAIL observes a "blind reading" policy, so please do not include an author name

on the title page or first page or anywhere else in the article. With your submission do include your postal and e-mail addresses along with your phone number. All submissions are read by outside reviewers. Submissions should be sent directly to Chadwick Allen at sailit@uw.edu.

For detailed information on *SAIL*'s editorial policy for special issues, please consult the title's submission guidelines on the Journals side of www.nebraskapress.unl.edu.

SAIL BOOK REVIEW POLICY

SAIL publishes reviews of a wide range of books and other publications related to Native American and Indigenous literary studies. The *SAIL* Book Review Editor solicits reviews by scholars, community members, and advanced graduate students in the field, but also welcomes queries from scholars, community members, and advanced graduate students interested in reviewing in a particular area or in reviewing a particular publication. Although *SAIL* typically publishes only a single review of a given work, the Book Review Editor will consider publishing additional reviews of the same work when multiple perspectives are available and will enhance the scholarly conversation. Reviews undergo copyediting to ensure they meet professional, style, and publishing standards for the journal and for University of Nebraska Press, but the accuracy of reviews and the evaluations and opinions expressed therein are the responsibility of the reviewer. The journal and its parent association, ASAIL, do not necessarily endorse the evaluations or opinions of reviewers.

Copyright © 2016 University of Nebraska Press

All rights reserved

Manufactured in the United States of America

If you would like to reprint material from *SAIL*, please query for permission using our online form, located under the Journals menu heading on www.nebraskapress.unl.edu.

SAIL is available online through Project Muse at <http://muse.jhu.edu> and through JSTOR at <http://www.jstor.org>.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Anthropological Index*, *Arts & Humanities Citation Index*, *Bibliography of Native North Americans*, *Current Abstracts*, *Current Contents/Arts & Humanities*, *IBR: International Bibliography of Book Reviews*, *IBZ: International Bibliography of Periodical Literature*, *MLA International Bibliography*, and *TOC Premier*.

Cover photo courtesy of Bonita Bent-Nelson, copyright © 2003. Cover and interior design by Kimberly Hermesen.

GENERAL EDITOR

Chadwick Allen

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

Margaret Noodin

EDITORIAL BOARD

Lisa Brooks, Jodi Byrd, Robin Riley Fast, Susan Gardner, Patrice Hollrah,
Molly McGlennen, Kenneth Roemer, Christopher Teuton, and Jace Weaver

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Lydia Heberling

BOOK REVIEW ASSISTANT

Bryce Stevenson

EDITORS EMERITUS

James H. Cox, Helen Jaskoski, Daniel Heath Justice, Karl Kroeber,
Robert M. Nelson, Malea Powell, John Purdy, and Rodney Simard

CONTENTS

vii From the Editor

ARTICLES

- 1 Pan-Maya and “Trans-Indigenous”: The Living Voice of the
Chilam Balam in Victor Montejo and Leslie Marmon Silko

PAUL WORLEY

- 21 I Remember You: Postironic Belief and Settler Colonialism in
Stephen Graham Jones’s *Ledfeather*

JOSEPH GAUDET

- 45 Not Primitive Enough to Be Considered Modern: Ethnographers,
Editors, and the Indigenous Poets of the *American Indian Magazine*

MICHAEL TAYLOR

WRITER’S ESSAY

- 73 Prisoners of History: Pocahontas, Mary Jemison, and the
Poetics of an American Myth

KARENNE WOOD

POEMS

- 83 Amonute, 1617

KARENNE WOOD

- 86 De-he-wä-mis

KARENNE WOOD

BOOK REVIEW

- 88 James H. Cox. *The Red Land to the South: American Indian Writers and Indigenous Mexico*

JACE WEAVER

FROM THE EDITOR

Scope and Range

This first issue of volume 28 demonstrates the vitality of contemporary Native American and Indigenous literary studies: the wide scope of current scholarly and creative research in the field, the broad range of current critical methodologies. In the opening essay, Paul Worley combines transhemispheric approaches to the study of Native American literatures with a focused attention to Indigenous aesthetics. Through a nuanced investigation of how contemporary Indigenous American writers as diverse as Victor Montejo from Guatemala and Leslie Silko from the United States recirculate the Yucatec Maya prophetic books of the Chilam Balam, Worley constructs a compelling argument for reading beyond the potential of the Mayan texts to serve as thematic inspiration to consider how Montejo's and Silko's works actually reperform versions of the books' ancient prophecies. Next, Joseph Gaudet interrogates the increasingly pervasive critical lens of settler colonial studies through a close reading of Stephen Graham Jones's 2008 novel *Ledfeather*. Highlighting the novel's "postironic" response to the debilitating fatalism typical of orthodox scholarly approaches to settler colonialisms, Gaudet argues that Jones pushes beyond merely diagnosing the ills of the settler present to actually imagining a potential Indigenous cure for the future. Michael Taylor then directs our attention to the vital critical project of recovering and more accurately contextualizing Native American texts produced during earlier eras. Taylor focuses specifically on the modernist period of the early twentieth century, which, until quite recently, has been viewed by most scholars of the era as lacking aesthetically or politically significant Indigenous voices. In his analysis of the understudied poetry of Arthur C. Parker, E. Pauline Johnson, and Zitkala-Ša, as well as of the understudied publishing platform of the *American Indian Magazine*,

Taylor reinserts Indigenous writers and Indigenous venues into modernism's archive and questions many of the basic tenets of modernism's standard critical conversation on the Indigenous. Finally, Monacan poet Karenne Wood offers insight into the processes of archival research and historical analysis that inform her contemporary creative practice. Her writer's essay is followed by a set of poems in which Wood (re)imagines the personas of significant (Native) American women from the historical past, Pocahontas and Mary Jemisen, in order to better understand how these complex figures continue to haunt understandings of Indigenous women in the present.

Chadwick Allen

Pan-Maya and “Trans-Indigenous”

The Living Voice of the Chilam Balam in
Victor Montejo and Leslie Marmon Silko

PAUL WORLEY

One of the foremost challenges that indigenous literatures present to nonindigenous readers and critics is, quite simply, the category of literature itself. Insofar as the Western literary histories and verbal aesthetic practices “literature” denotes are by no means universal, the application of the term “literature” all too frequently precludes an approach that recognizes non-Western and indigenous verbal arts as things-in-themselves in favor of analyses that correspond to preexisting notions of literariness and what constitutes literature. For example, while some scholars begrudgingly and in many cases problematically explore the relationships of indigenous oral traditions to indigenous written works, Chadwick Allen observes that scant attention has been paid to the complex interrelation between indigenous verbal arts and works in media such as wood, textiles, and painting (xxii). Along these lines, Muskogee Creek / Cherokee Craig S. Womack argues that even theoretical movements like postcolonialism have tended to overlook basic questions such as “How do Indians view Indians?” in favor of endlessly interrogating colonial constructions of indigenous peoples and non-Western others (13). That is, in their criticism many scholars tend to eschew examining texts, and non-Western texts in particular, by these “others” in favor of ever more sophisticated ways of reading the canon, a phenomenon that, despite its liberal, antiracist underpinnings, reproduces white privilege. Given that “Cherokee wampum belts were made as texts” (Cushman 117), that “Truly tales [among the Iroquois] were (and are) often told with the aid of a wampum belt” (Mann 30), and that “Native Americans of North America have been keeping birch-bark scrolls for centuries” (Parins 9), this lack of attention to non-Western texts and textualities becomes all the more glaring. Of particular note with regard to this ar-

ticle, the Kaqchikel Maya scholar Irma Otzoy describes Maya textiles as “provid[ing] the world with a text to be read” (147), and Q’anjob’al Maya novelist and poet Gaspar Pedro González describes writing (in his text *tz’ib’*) as encompassing everything from painted codices to stone monuments and textiles (34–37). By turning the tables and recognizing non-Western writing systems and non-Western textualities, one begins to understand both the role of literary scholarship within European imperialism and the consequences, noted by Birgit Brander Rasmussen, of scholars’ continued insistence upon basing the field of literature on notions of alphabetic literacy (3). In her words, Native American and indigenous “forms of recording knowledge and narrative” are quite literally “defin[ed] . . . out of existence” (3).

In this spirit, in the present article I seek to move beyond the typical constraints of Western literature and Western literary criticism through an analysis of the presence of the Yucatec Maya prophetic books of the Chilam Balam, or “Jaguar Prophet,” in two works by non-Yucatec indigenous authors, *Oxlanh b’aqtun* (2003) by the Jakalte Maya writer Victor Montejo and *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) by the Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko. Using the books of the Chilam Balam and the performatic tradition they embody as my point of departure, I argue that each author’s work constitutes a reperformance of the books in keeping with broader Yucatec Maya traditions and that each text therefore constitutes a contemporary book of the Chilam Balam. Through their individual uses of an indigenous tradition that originates from beyond their respective author’s particular ethnic group, each work plays a role in the transnational, interethnic consciousness raising that scholars note has characterized many indigenous movements in the Americas during the past few decades (Adamson, “¡Todos!”; Huhndorf). Arising from this performatic tradition and articulating broader “trans-Indigenous” and interethnic ethnic affiliations, Montejo’s and Silko’s texts situate their prophecies within the context of previous things prophesied and realized, a move that decenters colonial histories and explodes Western literary categories in its insistence upon continuities of indigenous thought and the ultimate vitality of indigenous ways of knowing for indigenous and nonindigenous readers alike.¹

READING PERFORMATIC TEXTS:
THE PERFORMATIC TRADITION OF THE
BOOKS OF THE CHILAM BALAM

I realize that many readers are likely unfamiliar with the Yucatec Maya books of the Chilam Balam, as well as with what I am referring to when I say that these can be considered as individual and particular manifestations of a Yucatec Maya performatic tradition. Given this situation, a few words on the Chilam Balam, the books that he is said to have "authored," and the performatic tradition that these works reflect are in order.

Although colonial writers are often at odds as to whether there even existed a historical personage referred to as the Chilam Balam, "Jaguar Priest" or "Jaguar Prophet" in English, at the very least several colonial sources detail a Maya belief that there was a priest by this name who prophesied the coming of the Spaniards and their religion to Yucatán. For example, in an oft-cited passage from his *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* (1566), the Franciscan friar Diego de Landa claims that the "señales y profecías" (signs and prophecies) seen by denizens of the Aztec Empire had a corollary in Yucatán, where

un indio llamado Ah Cambal, de oficio *chilan*, que es el que tiene a su cargo dar las respuestas del Demonio, les dijo públicamente que presto serían señoreados por gente extranjera, y les predicarían un dios y la virtud de un palo que en su lengua llamó *vahomche*, que quiere decir palo enhiesto de gran virtud contra los demonios. (101, emphasis in the original)

an Indian named Ah Cambal, by trade a *chilan*, that is, the one whose charge it is to make known the Devil's will, told them publicly that soon they would be ruled by a foreign people, and these would preach to them about a god and the virtues of a rod that in their language is called *vahomche*, which means an upright stick of great use against demons.

Its Eurocentrism aside, Landa's mention of the figure of the Chilam Balam a scant twenty-five years after the official "conquest" of the Yucatán Peninsula in 1541 demonstrates how quickly a belief in the Chilam Balam's existence and his prophecies arose. It also shows how Maya prophecy, like the prophetic traditions of the Aztecs, became a site of negotiation and contention between colonial officialdom and indige-

nous peoples. On the one hand, Landa's taking this story at face value is inseparable from the work of his Franciscan brethren in central Mexico, where missionary zeal led these men of God to spread rumors of portents and omens concerning the Spaniards' arrival "to further promote the idea that the Conquest was providential" (Restall, *Seven* 114). At the same time, it cannot be ignored that such a narrative of a Maya prophet and Maya prophecies fulfilled would have held incredible appeal to Maya seeking "to make sense of the Conquest by reinterpreting the pre-Conquest past" (Restall, *Maya* 148).

Composed in Yucatec Maya using Latin script, the texts that came to be known collectively as the books of the Chilam Balam were "discovered" by outsiders almost three hundred years after Landa put pen to paper. Individual works are typically designated by the towns where they were discovered or written, and although there are a number of Chilam Balam texts that are said to exist, only eight of them are presently available for academic study (Barrera Vásquez and Rendón 12). Alfredo Barrera Vásquez and Silvia Rendón divide the books' content into eight categories, recognizing the presence of both indigenous and Hispanic influences in each: religious texts; historical texts; medical texts; chronological and astrological texts; astronomical texts; rituals; "literary" texts; and miscellaneous entries that fall outside of this classification (9). Reflecting the performative tradition from which the books originate, their sources are not simply glyphic texts but also dramatic renderings, songs, and recitations (Thompson 160). Several manuscripts even draw on the Bible and biblical language or Mayanize European tales such as those found in *The Arabian Nights*.² As one may imagine, the books of the Chilam Balam and other such texts constituted a "forbidden genre" under colonial rule, with "[g]roup readings [being] explicitly forbidden" (Hanks 20). Despite their forbidden nature, these works "continued to be recopied and grow in content . . . [and] display the ongoing use of Spanish-based writing as a means of reproducing an explicitly and self-consciously Maya perspective" (20).

Of importance to the present article is the fact that, as observed by Timothy Knowlton, "the Maya maestros responsible for compiling, guarding, and performing the Books of the Chilam Balam did so by drawing on a web of knowledge that had its origins in Classic Maya societies and the Postclassic Mesoamerica world system, a network that in some ways expanded as the Maya were increasingly integrated into

the Spanish colonial empire" (4–5). As Inga Clendinnen points out, the early Chilam Balam manuscripts were "deliberately gnomic" works whose elaboration within the formal rules of Maya ritual, much like the glyphic manuscripts upon which they were based, required "skilled performers" (136–37). Following Diana Taylor's proposition that scholars borrow the Spanish term *performático*, or "performatic," "to denote the adjectival form of the nondiscursive realm of performance" (6), I suggest here that the acts of "compiling, guarding, and performing the Books of the Chilam Balam" described by Knowlton above constitute what we may productively call a performatic tradition, with the books of the Chilam Balam themselves being performatic texts. Moreover, the dynamism implicit in Knowlton's description of this tradition, namely, its ability to draw on multiple strands of knowledge and knowledge production, is one of the fundamental aspects of the books themselves. Looking at the books of the Chilam Balam in this light unmoors them from Western notions of text and textuality and privileges the contexts where these books would have been performed, that is, read, interpreted, sung, revised, copied, and transcribed.

Although many scholars recognize that "the act of transcribing the oral speeches and the painted manuscripts was an inherently colonial act" (Hill Boone, *Stories* 6), one must not ignore the fact that in at least some cases indigenous peoples attempted to adapt Latin letters to indigenous performatic traditions of reading glyphic manuscripts. Indeed, texts like the K'iche' Maya *Popol wuj* and the Yucatec Maya books of the Chilam Balam amply demonstrate that this process of adoption and adaptation did not necessarily entail the acceptance of Western notions of literacy, text, and textuality. In the case of the *Popol wuj*, Dennis Tedlock observes that the manuscript abounds with moments where the narrative voices "seem to be describing pictures" in a codex (28). He goes on to conclude that the scribes who produced the *Popol wuj* did not "transpose the ancient Popol Vuh directly, on a glyph-by-glyph basis," but rather "quote what readers of the ancient book would say when they gave long performances" (Tedlock 29–30). Similar moments can be found in the Chilam Balam of Chumayel when, for example, the narrative voices declare, "He aquí que hambres, epidemias, y pestes vienen con espantoso caminar, en fila en el camino, y una sustituye a la otra" 'Here are the famines, epidemics, and plagues that come fearfully walking, one after the other, one following the other' (*Libro* 170). Along these

lines, it should be noted that the Chumayel book does indeed include a number of pictures.³ I would argue that reading these and other such passages as simple text constitutes an act of colonization insofar as it ignores the fact that the Maya hieroglyphic system from which at least parts of the books are derived consisted of images and text that “are closely tied to each other in providing the full meaning of the sculptural or painted effort” (Hill Boone, “Introduction” 20). Describing the writing systems of central Mexico, Gordon Brotherston finds that codices so lend themselves “to embedded data and multiple reading” that “[t]he complexity of the statement that is made as a result . . . so far exceeds the limits of verbal language as to render transcription an unending task” (*Book* 59–60). In the passages cited above, the moments recorded are precisely those in which a priest explicates these connections, traces of the “skilled performers” described by Clendinnen.

In other words, when we discuss the *Popol wuj* or the books of the Chilam Balam we are describing particular instances of transcribed performance, instances that, in turn, are not necessarily meant to be read as static, Western-style texts but interpreted (i.e., performed) according to another set of norms, if not also reperformed at a later date. As a result, when simply reading these works we subject them to a kind of epistemic violence that insists upon their incorporation into Western constructions of the literary and literariness. If one considers the books of the Chilam Balam as performatic texts, that is, texts that exceed the realm of discourse in referring back to their status as performance and the text as the transcription of a performance that is to be reperformed, one better understands the significant overlap and differences that exist across the eight extant Chilam Balam texts. In addition, such a consideration opens up the possibility of examining contemporary iterations of these works as constituting reperformances of the books of the Chilam Balam as opposed to being Western-style instances of intertextuality. What follows is my attempt to read Victor Montejo’s *Oxlanh b’aqtun* and Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* within this vein.

THE CHILAM BALAM AND A TRANSNATIONAL PAN-MAYA MOVEMENT: MONTEJO’S *Oxlanh b’aqtun*

As with the better-known *Popol wuj*, the books of the Chilam Balam occupy a place of particular interest within many contemporary Maya

literary movements and have served as a source of inspiration for diverse works of drama, narrative, and poetry.⁴ Here I've chosen to analyze Victor Montejo's 2003 *Oxlahn b'aqtun: Recordando al sacerdote jaguar (Chilam Balam) en el portón del nuevo milenio* (13 B'aqtun: Remembering the Jaguar Prophet [Chilam Balam] at the Entrance to the New Millennium) for its transnational use of these Yucatec Maya works. Montejo's trajectory as a Maya who was exiled in the United States during the Guatemalan Civil War and as a US-based university professor who left that post to return to Pan-Maya activism in his native country makes him an interesting example, to paraphrase Kay Warren, of how academic knowledge intersects with activism in the work of Guatemala's Pan-Maya movement (21). As Maya literature, *Oxlahn b'aqtun* steps beyond national borders to articulate a regional, transnational vision of Pan-Mayanism that, as Montejo articulates elsewhere, "is predicated on the idea that there is a shared or base Maya culture on a macrocultural level" (*Renaissance* 17). The Jakalteek poet's adoption of the prophetic voice of the Yucatec Chilam Balam in *Oxlahn b'aqtun* thus quite intentionally fits into the larger project of ethnic consciousness raising constituted by the rest of Montejo's oeuvre, a project that, for Maya K'iche' scholar Emilio del Valle Escalante, uses indigenous memory as a point of departure to rethink the nation, if not existence itself (305).

While following the performatic tradition of the books of the Chilam Balam, Montejo's poems recast and transform many of the themes, phrases, and formulas found in the books themselves. Principally, Montejo foregrounds the losses of reading, writing, and language that appear in the books of the Chilam Balam but are not necessarily the texts' foremost preoccupation. Whereas the Jaguar Prophet laments that one day "[p]erdido será el signo jeroglífico y perdida será la enseñanza que está detrás de él" 'lost will be the hieroglyphic sign and lost shall be the teaching behind it' (*El libro de los libros* 106), Montejo, in a mode that he repeats throughout the work, says,

Nos quejamos del día cuando se incendiaron los libros.
 En los templos, en las escalinatas y en las estelas
 vemos las escrituras de nuestros antepasados
 y nuestros ojos son ciegos a los signos que ellos inscribieron.
 (Montejo, *Oxlahn* 25)

We lament the day the books were burned.
 On the temples, on the stairways, and on the stelae

we see the writing of our ancestors
and our eyes are blind to the words they inscribed.

On the surface these passages express a sense of loss and disconnection between pre-Hispanic writing, and hence pre-Hispanic history, and the present. However, the reperformance of this textuality in the present of the text implies that such a loss is never complete and that connections can be re-created. The very act of mentioning colonialism's impact therefore decenters its effects and paradoxically privileges an adaptive form of decolonial continuity in contemporary Maya writing.

Indeed, decolonial, prophetic understandings of colonialism writ large lie at the heart of both sets of texts. As is often noted, in the Chilam Balam texts the Yucatec word commonly translated as "foreigner," *dzul*, takes on multiple meanings across space and time, referring both to the coming of central Mexican "foreigners," likely a group of so-called Mexicanized Maya who introduced the cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Yucatán Peninsula, and to the arrival of the Spaniards.⁵ The polysemy surrounding the term "foreigner" prevents the Spanish conquest from assuming primacy as *the* conquest of the Maya area, positing that European colonization is simply the continuity of a Maya history that has recorded similar events. Montejó's collection adapts this very polysemy to the present. In his text the foreigners are missionaries (unclear if they are colonial or twenty-first century), *kaxhlanes* (a Mayanized version of Castillian or *castellano*, here being both colonial Spaniard and contemporary *ladino*), and *wes* (another term meaning both *ladino* and foreigner).⁶ Throughout the text this foreign presence tends to be a source of oppression toward and of discord within the Maya community. However, making reference to the Guatemalan Civil War, one of the text's final passages prophesies that

los gobernantes,
los que no descienden de nuestras raíces
escogerán la paz
y se unirán todos como hermanos,
borrando los obstáculos que hoy nos separan.
Llegará el tiempo en que vistamos nuestros trajes
y hablemos nuestras lenguas
sin que nos mal interpreten como antes. (Montejó, *Oxlanh* 105)
those in power,

those who are not descended from our same roots
 will choose peace
 and all will unite as brothers,
 erasing the barriers that separate us today.
 The time will come when we wear our clothing
 and speak our languages
 without their misunderstanding us as before.

Here the state's unidirectional model of indigenous assimilation into the national whole runs in reverse, with all parties uniting in an intercultural, interlingual Guatemala where discrimination against indigenous peoples disappears and indigenous people freely communicate in indigenous languages.

In its adoption of these prophetic voices, Montejo's text demonstrates a profound concern with what we may call communal, performative reading and readership, also reflected in the books of the Chilam Balam. For example, at one juncture the books of the Chilam Balam ask who will be the priest "¿que pueda explicar rectamente las palabras de estos signos jeroglíficos?" 'who can correctly explain the words of these hieroglyphic signs?' (*El libro de los libros* 130). Montejo adopts a similar rhetorical position through his focus on the figure of the *ah b'eh*, a diviner tasked with reading the Maya calendar whose name is literally "guide to the path" (*Oxlanh* 107). Resituating these priests in patios of the Maya archaeological sites of Tikal, Palenque, and Uxmal, the text's poetic voice states about these priests:

Allí se quedarán contemplando las piedras que hablan
 para leer la fecha del retorno de las lluvias;
 pero solamente el *ah b'eh*, el guiador de caminos
 podrá interpretar los signos escritos en las piedras.

(Montejo, *Oxlanh* 49)

There they will stand contemplating the speaking stones
 to read the date when the rains return;
 but only the *ah b'eh*, the guide to the path
 will be able to correctly interpret the signs written in the stones.

As prophecy these words again underscore the loss of knowledge that accompanied the destruction of pre-Columbian writing systems while doing so in a context that, ipso facto, reconstitutes the memory if not also aspects of the content of those very systems. Montejo's situating

these readings as taking place in representative archaeological sites spread out across three “zones” of the Maya area (Tikal in Guatemala; Palenque in Chiapas, Mexico; and Uxmal in Yucatán, Mexico) also has the rhetorical effect of decolonizing these archaeological sites as sites of living Maya memory that, in turn, serve to justify transnational Pan-Maya activism among diverse Maya groups.

Reflecting the role that literature plays in the Pan-Maya movement’s consciousness-raising efforts in Guatemala and beyond, Montejo’s poem highlights the role of the *ah tz’ib’*, or “writer,” who would have transcribed performances of the Chilam Balam texts but is not mentioned in the books *per se*. Combining the past and present, poem 13 states:

Lo que el *ah tz’ib’* escribe hoy es la memoria colectiva
de los designios Mayas que pululan en los sueños.

(Montejo, *Oxlanh* 50)

What the *ah tz’ib’* writes today is the collective memory
of Maya designs that multiply in dreams.

The poem directly connects the Maya writer of the twenty-first century with the collective memory that has sustained Maya culture since the conquest. In this sense, Maya literature is not new but represents a continuity of thought that well predates the arrival of Europeans. Operating in reverse, in a later poem the poetic voice prophesies a time when

se buscará la sabiduría del *ah tz’ib’*
que grabó jeroglíficos en las piedras labradas. (Montejo, *Oxlanh* 96)
the wisdom of the *ah tz’ib’*
who carved hieroglyphs in worked stones shall be sought.

Note that the *ah tz’ib’* does not write (*escribir*) in stone but engraves (*grabar*) glyphs in it. As mentioned in the introduction, this subtle distinction is important insofar as *tz’ib’*, the Maya term most commonly translated as “writing,” actually encompasses a variety of activities, from writing and carving to painting and weaving (González 34–37). Through this connection this passage thus expands the realm of Maya literature well beyond Western notions of text centered on the book.

As these connections demonstrate, the relationship between Montejo’s text and the books of the Chilam Balam is not merely intertextual. If one accepts that the books themselves are interrelated though individual and unique manuscripts, the fact that Montejo’s poems contain

such linguistic, thematic, and prophetic borrowings, in effect manifesting the texts' performatic tradition, means that *Oxlanh b'agtun* is better considered another Chilam Balam text, an early twenty-first-century reperformance of the tradition these texts reflect. In other words, and as with the Chilam Balam texts themselves, Montejo's poems mobilize Latin letters and Western literary categories for the articulation of a distinctly non-Western project that privileges communal knowledge and performatic traditions that cannot, by definition, be fully captured by any one particular written manifestation. Performances of this tradition such as Montejo's realize that tradition's fullness in the present, rendering contemporary Maya *ts'ib* (writing) like Montejo's something much more than what Western scholars and critics refer to as literature.

NATIVE AMERICAN AND "TRANS-INDIGENOUS":
SILKO'S *ALMANAC OF THE DEAD*

In this section I turn to Leslie Marmon Silko's reperformance of Chilam Balam texts in her masterwork *Almanac of the Dead*. As I outline below, I agree with critics and scholars who note that the presence of fragments from the Chilam Balam in *Almanac* contests Western notions of the novel and articulates the work as an artifact that performs the very displacement of Western culture that it describes (Reineke 72–73). I would take this argument one step further and state that, as seen in Montejo, these fragments ultimately render the novel a late twentieth-century iteration of the performatic tradition found in the books of the Chilam Balam. Whereas Montejo's work stylistically reproduces the voices of the Chilam Balam texts, *Almanac*'s pages incorporate passages from the Chilam Balam into the work itself. Indeed, understanding the books of the Chilam Balam as constituting a performatic tradition is the key to reading this expansive text about the genesis of an intercultural hemispheric uprising of indigenous peoples and the disenfranchised that centers on Tucson, Arizona. As Womack notes, *Almanac* is far less popular than Silko's earlier work precisely because of its stance toward ancestral memory and prophecy as constituting "a call to action" (233–34).

The heart, so to speak, of the 763-page *Almanac of the Dead* is a mysterious manuscript entrusted to the sisters Lecha and Zeta by their grandmother Yoeme. Copied and recopied for hundreds of years, the manuscript commingles elements of history past, present, and future

(or prophecy) and intersperses ancient texts with, among other things, scraps of newspaper. We are told that “[w]hole sections had been stolen from other books and from the proliferation of ‘farmers’ almanacs’ published by patent-drug companies and medicine shows that gave away the almanacs as advertisements. Not even the parchment pages or fragments of ancient paper could be trusted; they might have been clever forgeries, recopied, drawn, and colored painstakingly” (Silko, *Almanac* 570). Constructed and reconstructed for five hundred years, the almanac also contains writing in Latin script and in glyphs, and “[t]here was evidence that substantial portions of the original manuscript had been lost or condensed into odd narratives which operated like codes” (569). The presence of esoteric language in the almanac recalls the so-called *Zuyua t’aan*, or “language of Zuyua,” from the books of the Chilam Balam, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, there are three such examples drawn directly from the Chilam Balam of Chumayel on page 575.⁷ Given the presence of glyphs and pictorial writing in the almanac, it is also interesting to note that at no point does Silko’s *Almanac* appear to reproduce the notebooks themselves, as these sections in the novel do not include the glyphs that are present in the manuscript. Elsewhere Silko recognizes that “[t]he Mixtec and Maya combined painting and writing, two activities that European culture considers distinct” (*Yellow* 157), a statement that demonstrates the author’s own awareness that *Almanac*’s almanac constitutes on some level a transposition of this indigenous textuality into Latin letters and the Western genre of the novel. More broadly, it also positions the novel as constituting a reperformance that points back to another document, however fictional, composed in both glyphs and Latin letters.⁸

Despite the manuscript’s status as what some scholars may refer to as a postcolonial pastiche, “[t]he first time Lecha opened the notebooks, she recognized here was the real thing” (Silko, *Almanac* 569). While, as in the citation above, the narrator states that even the older fragments cannot be “trusted,” Lecha’s embracing the notebooks’ status as “the real thing” calls into question nonindigenous constructions of indigeneity, indigenous cultures, and indigenous peoples and undercuts Western notions of authority, authorship, and textuality. The manuscript’s deconstruction of the binary opposition authentic/inauthentic articulates indigenous cultures as being dynamically reproduced over time, shifting, changing, and adapting to fit the needs of indigenous peoples. One

looking for an "authentic" ancient object may or may not find it here, as the manuscript is not an end in itself. In this sense, the notebooks are perhaps best considered as a kind of material focal point for performance that Miguel Ángel Astor-Aguilera describes in his book *The Maya World of Communicating Objects* (206). That is, the performatic process that produces and reproduces the notebooks and, in doing so, sustains indigenous histories and cosmovisions constitutes the manuscript's authenticity, its being "the real thing."

In the words of Jodi Adamson, this emphasis on ethnogenesis as dynamic process reflects the fact that Silko as an author is uninterested in artificial notions of authenticity but rather "in how the Maya struggled in the face of violence and loss to continue as a people" (*American* 139–40). In essence, the almanac within Silko's text takes up the performatic tradition of the Chilam Balam insofar as it allows for the active assimilation and adaptation of nonindigenous, supposedly "inauthentic" materials, with such apparent forgeries being precisely those aspects of the almanac that vouchsafe this authenticity. It also articulates a survival strategy that, drawing on both indigenous and Western legacies, provides the fictional sisters with "tools to defend their peoples from the effects of state- and corporate-sponsored human rights abuses and environmental exploitation" (Adamson, "Indigenous" 184). We can productively situate this fictional reperformance within Brazilian director and politician Agostinho Boal's notion of rehearsal (149–50) in order to appreciate how the fiction demonstrates political strategies that its readership can in turn reperform in the real world.

This emphasis on dynamic process and change over time in turn underscores that the grandmother, Yoeme, and others "believed the almanac had living power within it" (Silko, *Almanac* 569). This notion of the manuscript as living being steps outside of Western notions of author and authority, as the people who maintain the almanac, even as they adapt and copy it, do not achieve authority over the text, nor do they fulfill aspects of the "author-function" described by Foucault in his "What Is an Author?" Indeed, the living, "authorless" manuscript goes well beyond the historical "kinship between writing and death" Foucault notes insofar as we are not in the presence of a stable work that "attains the right to kill, to become the murderer of its author," or seeks "the total effacement of the individual characteristics of the writer" (116–17). The almanac instead decenters Western preoccupations with individuality

and enacts the dynamic continuity of indigenous community that interpellates the living, the dead, and those who are yet to be born.

At this juncture one begins to recognize how the section “Fragments from the Ancient Notebooks” (569–78) destabilizes *Almanac of the Dead* as a product of Western generic conventions and recenters it within non-Western indigenous performative textual traditions. Shari Huhndorf observes that the novel’s rewriting of history seeks to forge “a collective revolutionary identity based on histories shared by Native peoples across cultural and national boundaries” (360), a project that is paralleled by the fictional almanac’s incorporation of Aztec, Laguna Pueblo, Yucatec Maya, and Kaqchikel Maya sources.⁹ In other words and as with the revolution fictionalized in the novel itself, the ancient notebooks articulate a “trans-Indigenous” project that unifies Native peoples throughout the hemisphere and even seeks solidarity with those who are nonindigenous. The notebooks even include metacritical passages about the notebooks themselves that, recalling aforementioned passages from the *Popol wuj* and the books of the Chilam Balam, call attention to the notebooks’ status as the interpretation and reperformance of prior performances.¹⁰ At first gloss one wonders if the notebooks cull these from unnamed ethnographic or anthropological sources or if they are a previous caretaker’s notes, which, with copying and recopying, have been woven into the fabric of the notebooks themselves. Either way, the gesture constructs the performance of Native knowledge as a self-reflexive, critical process in ways that recall the relationship between Native literature and sovereignty articulated by Womack (14). In a gesture that deconstructs Western linearity within the novel, two of the Laguna Pueblo and Aztec passages, slightly different in each iteration, are found earlier in *Almanac of the Dead* in the section “Pages from the Snakes’ Notebook,” which begins on page 135 (Van Dyke 45n7), and oral prophecies concerning the coming of Europeans to indigenous lands are repeated in *Almanac* itself (16, 475) and in Silko’s novel *Ceremony* (132–38; see also Willard 21).

Of interest to the topic of this article are that the two Maya sources are the aforementioned Yucatec Maya books of the Chilam Balam and the lesser-known Kaqchikel *Memorial de Solola*. The notebooks’ roots in Maya and other indigenous traditions (as opposed to simply Western ones) demonstrate that, aesthetically speaking, their presence in *Almanac* is far more than a postmodern, self-reflexive gesture. Rather,

one must examine *Almanac* and the notebooks themselves on their own terms, namely, from performatic traditions like those of the books of the Chilam Balam in which scribes copied and recopied texts over time, excising materials that were deemed no longer relevant and including new events, people, and places that had risen to prominence in the present of a given performance. In a nod to this performatic process, the notebook in *Almanac* records an "[e]rror in the Chumayel manuscript: 11 AHU was the year of the return of the fair Quetzalcoatl. But the mention of the artificial white circle in the sky could only have meant the return of Death Dog and his eight brothers: plague, earth-quake, drought, famine, incest, insanity, war, and betrayal" (Silko, *Almanac* 572). The "error" alluded to here would apparently be the Chumayel manuscript's associating the white circle and various plagues with the coming of Christianity, as opposed to something more explicitly within an indigenous frame of reference, namely, the return of Death Dog and his brothers.¹¹

As this passage demonstrates, *Almanac*'s notebook is not the mere reproduction of these works in a literary context but an occasion where the performatic tradition embodied by the Chilam Balam texts is brought to the fore. Even if the notebooks of the text only refer to notebooks within *Almanac*'s fictional world and not to actual notebooks in the possession of two women in Arizona, through the pages of *Almanac* they nonetheless enter our world and exist in a dynamic relationship with the actual Aztec, Laguna Pueblo, Yucatec Maya, and Kaqchikel Maya traditions upon which they draw. In the words of Yvonne Rein-cke, "[T]he novel *Almanac of the Dead* enacts the functions of the old notebooks and manuscripts" and "prophetically maps 'the identity of days and months to come' and the identity of the present moment" (72–73). Silko herself suggests as much when, describing the almanac and its relationship to prophecy in the world in which we live, she states that the almanac belonging to Lecha and Zeta "correctly predicted the Zapatista uprising. Their old almanac even purports to explain the unfortunate assassination of Señor Colosio in Tijuana" (*Yellow* 158). Ultimately, this relationship configures *Almanac of the Dead* not as a novel that exists in an intertextual relationship with the books of the Chilam Balam but as a late twentieth-century Chilam Balam text that reproduces those texts' attendant performatic tradition.

CONCLUSION

As I have demonstrated, Montejo's *Oxlanh b'aqtun* and Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* approach the Yucatec Maya books of the Chilam Balam in different ways and yet for strikingly similar projects of contemporary prophecy and indigenous consciousness raising. In doing so, they go well beyond Western generic classifications and become fully prophetic works to be read and performed by indigenous and nonindigenous readers capable of doing so, and it could be argued that their signifying power as prophecy resides precisely in their respective articulations of Pan-Maya and "trans-Indigenous" traditions. Flying in the face of whatever skepticism academics or Western readers may harbor, prophecies from these texts that are as yet unrealized are situated within the trajectory of prophecies that have already come to pass, creating a mutually reinforcing structure wherein the performatic tradition of the Chilam Balam manuscripts is recognized as an indigenous form of knowledge of profound relevance to the contemporary world. Indeed, Womack's commentary on Silko's *Almanac* may be fruitfully extended to include Montejo's *Oxlanh b'aqtun* insofar as both works call on readers "to heed . . . prophecy and amend their lifestyles" and to seek justice for indigenous peoples "instead of making disastrous choices that will be the ruin of American culture as we know it" (256). With each work constituting a call to action, it thus becomes all the more incumbent upon nonindigenous scholars and critics to recognize the vitality and relevance of performatic traditions in indigenous works, approaching indigenous verbal arts as "things-in-themselves." To do otherwise not only ignores the challenges of non-Western aesthetic interventions to established canons and modes of literary critique but also runs the risk of reducing such works to Western norms and values, repeating the gestures of colonization.

PAUL WORLEY is assistant professor of global literature in the English Department at Western Carolina University. His book *Telling and Being Told: Storytelling and Cultural Control in Contemporary Yucatec Maya* appeared in the fall of 2013 with the University of Arizona Press. Stories recorded as part of his research on Maya literatures are available at tsikbalichmaya.org. He has recently published in *Chasqui*, *A contracorriente*, and *Romance Notes*.

NOTES

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for *SAIL*, whose kind words and suggestions have made this a much stronger piece. Its errors and shortcomings remain my own. In addition, I would like to thank my colleagues Laura Wright, Mae Claxton, Brian Gastle, and Melissa Birkhofer for their insights and encouragement while I was finishing this article, as well as the staff at WCU’s Hunter Library for obtaining a number of books for me. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

1. In hopes of signaling the fact that this aesthetic gesture entails a move across ethnic and national boundaries, I have opted to use Chadwick Allen’s recently proposed term, “trans-Indigenous,” as part of my framework for this article. See his book listed in the works cited.

2. Brotherston notes that Maya adaptations of the tale of Tawaddud, or Teodora, from *The Arabian Nights* appear in at least four of the Chilam Balam manuscripts (“Tawaddud”; “Culture”).

3. For those interested, Princeton houses an online facsimile of the Chilam Balam of Chumayel at <http://pudl.princeton.edu/objects/0z708w51x> that allows one to get a better grasp of the relationship between word and image.

4. I am working on Maya uses of the Chilam Balam as part of a related larger project. For representative examples, see Tselal Maya Josías López Gómez’s short story “La derrota de Bonampak,” Yucatec Maya Jorge Cocom Pech’s poems “Fragmentos del libro inédito: El Chilam Balam de Calkiní,” and Yucatec Maya Armando Dzul Ek’s drama *Bix úuchik u bo’ot ku’si’ip’il ‘Manilo’ob’ tu ja’abil* 1562.

5. As Andrea Stone notes, despite its connotations of foreignness, Dzul is a Yucatec Maya surname. Her brief discussion of Dzul’s use and meaning in the books of the Chilam Balam is a fascinating read (166–67).

6. In the Spanish spoken in parts of southern Mexico and throughout Guatemala, the word *ladino* is used to describe a person of mixed indigenous and European descent. It is roughly equivalent to *mestizo* elsewhere in the Spanish-speaking world. For a more thorough treatment of the term and its use in Chiapas, Mexico, see Wade 44–46.

7. Listing which passages specifically come from the Chilam Balam would require more space than I am allotted here. Given the correspondence between them, I am fairly confident that many Chilam Balam passages in *Almanac of the Dead* come from Ralph L. Roys’s work *The Chilam Balam of Chumayel*. For example, the riddle of *Zuyua t’aan* concerning “the girl with watery teeth” in Roys (70) appears virtually word for word in *Almanac* (575). Passages from the *Memorial* begin with the date “1560” and end with “1600” (Silko, *Almanac* 577–78) and are drawn from events found on pages 149–92 of the *Memorial*. As far as I can tell, the passages “1617–24” and “1621” do not appear in the *Memorial*.

8. It is tempting to think of this aesthetic gesture as an answer to Silko’s asking earlier in the same volume, “What changes would Pueblo writers make to English as a language for literature?” (*Yellow* 49).

9. Tracing the links between each individual fragment and the text from which it originates lies beyond the scope of this article.

10. Examples from the text include the passages “A day began at sunset. ‘Reality’ was variously defined or described” and “Narrative as analogue for the actual experience, which no longer exists; a mosaic of memory and imagination” (Silko, *Almanac* 574).

11. This prophecy can be found on page 95 of Roys’s edition of the Chilam Balam.

WORKS CITED

- Adamson, Jodi. *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001. Print.
- . “Indigenous Cosmopolitics and the Re-emergence of the Pluriverse.” *Howling for Justice: New Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko’s Almanac of the Dead*. Ed. Rebecca Tillet. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014. 181–94. Print.
- . “‘¡Todos somos indios!’: Revolutionary Imagination, Alternative Modernity, and Transnational Organizing in the Work of Silko, Tamez, and Anzaldúa.” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 4.1 (2012): 1–26. Print.
- Allen, Chadwick. *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. Print.
- Astor-Aguilera, Miguel Ángel. *The Maya World of Communicating Objects*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010. Print.
- Barrera Vásquez, Alfredo, and Silvia Rendón. “Introducción general: Los libros de Chilam Balam.” *El libro de los libros de Chilam Balam*. Ed. and trans. Alfredo Barrera Vásquez and Silvia Rendón. Mexico City: FONCA, 1948. 9–20. Print.
- Boal, Agost. *Theater of the Oppressed*. New York: Theater Communications Group, 1985. Print.
- Brander Rasmussen, Birgit. *Queequeg’s Coffin: Indigenous Literacies and Early American Literature*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012. Print.
- Brotherston, Gordon. *Book of the Fourth World: Reading the Native Americas through their Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Print.
- . “Culture and Translation in Mesoamerica in Pre-Columbian and Early Colonial Times.” *Übersetzung—Translation—Traduction*. Vol. 3. Ed. Harald Kittel et al. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011. 2228–39. Print.
- . “Tawaddud and Maya Wit: A Story from the Arabian Nights Adapted to the Community Books of Yucatán.” *Indiana* 7.2 (1982): 131–41. Print.
- Clendinnen, Inga. *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517–1570*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. Print.
- Cushman, Ellen. “Wampum, Sequoyan, and Story: Decolonizing the Digital Archive.” *College English* 76.2 (2013): 115–35. Print.
- El libro de los libros de Chilam Balam*. Ed. and trans. Alfredo Barrera Vásquez and Silvia Rendón. Mexico City: FONCA, 1948. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. “What Is an Author?” *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977. 113–38. Print.

- González, Gaspar Pedro. *Kotz'ib': Nuestra literatura maya*. Rancho Palos Verdes, CA: Yax Te' Foundation, 1997. Print.
- Hanks, William F. *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. Print.
- Hill Boone, Elizabeth. "Introduction: Writing and Recording Knowledge." *Writing without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes*. Ed. Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D. Mignolo. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996. Print.
- . *Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000. Print.
- Huhndorf, Shari M. "Picture Revolution: Transnationalism, American Studies, and the Politics of Contemporary Native Culture." *American Quarterly* 61.2 (2009): 359–81. Print.
- Knowlton, Timothy. *Maya Creation Myths: Words and Worlds of the Chilam Balam*. Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2012. Print.
- Landa, Diego de. *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* [1566]. Mexico City: CONACULTA, 1994. Print.
- Leon-Portilla, Miguel. "Have We Really Translated the Mesoamerican 'Ancient Word'?" *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*. Ed. Brian Swann. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992. Print.
- Libro de Chilam Balam de Chumayel*. Ed. Mercedes de la Garza. Trans. Antonio Mediz Bolio. Mexico City: CONACULTA, 1985. Print.
- Mann, Barbara Alice. *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas*. New York: Peter Lang, 2000. Print.
- Memorial de Solola y Título de los señores de Totonicapán*. Ed. Adrian Recinos. Mexico City: FONCA, 1950. Print.
- Montejo, Victor. *Maya Intellectual Renaissance: Identity Representation and Leadership*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005. Print.
- . *Oxlahn b'aqtun: Recordando al sacerdote jaguar (Chilam Balam) en el portón del nuevo milenio*. Guatemala City: Editorial Cultura, 2003. Print.
- Otzoy, Irma. "Maya Clothing and Identity." *Maya Cultural Activism in Guatemala*. Ed. Edward F. Fischer and R. McKenna Brown. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996. 141–55. Print.
- Parins, James W. *Literacy and Intellectual Life in the Cherokee Nation, 1820–1906*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013. Print.
- Reineke, Yvonne. "Overturning the (New World) Order: Of Space, Time, Writing, and Prophecy in Leslie Marmon Silko's *The Almanac of the Dead*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, series 2, 10.3 (1998): 65–83. Print.
- Restall, Matthew. *Maya Conquistador*. Boston: Beacon, 1998. Print.
- . *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. Print.
- Roy, Ralph L. *The Chilam Balam of Chumayel*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution, 1933. Print.

- Silko, Leslie Marom. *Almanac of the Dead*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991. Print.
- . *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996. Print.
- Stone, Andrea. "Disconnection, Foreign Insignia, and Political Expansion: Teotihuacan and the Warrior Stelae of Piedras Negras." *Mesoamerica after the Decline of Teotihuacan, A.D. 700–900*. Ed. Richard A. Diehl and Janet C. Berlo. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989. 153–72. Print.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003. Print.
- Tedlock, Dennis. "Introduction." *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings*. Trans. Dennis Tedlock. Rev. ed. New York: Simon, 1985. Print.
- Thompson, J. Eric S. *Maya History and Religion*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970. Print.
- Warren, Kay. *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998. Print.
- Willard, William. "Pipe Carriers of the Red Atlantis: Prophecy/Fantasy." *Wicazo Sa Review* 10.1 (1994): 14–26. Print.
- Womack, Craig S. *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999. Print.
- Valle Escalante, Emilio del. "Poesía maya contemporánea y la economía moral de los pasados subalternos: Gaspar Pedro González y Victor Montejo." (*Per Versiones de la modernidad: Literaturas, identidades, y desplazamientos. Hacia una historia de las literaturas centroamericanas III*. Ed. Beatriz Cortés, Alexandra Ortiz Wallner, and Verónica Quesada. Guatemala City: F. and G. Editores, 2012. 297–316. Print.
- Van Dyke, Annette. "From Big Green Fly to the Stone Serpent: Following the Dark Vision in Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, series 2, 10.3 (1998): 34–46. Print.
- Wade, Peter. *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*. Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1997. Print.

I Remember You

Postironic Belief and Settler Colonialism in
Stephen Graham Jones's *Ledfeather*

JOSEPH GAUDET

When James Cameron's *Avatar* was released in 2009 to record-setting sales, scores of fans and critics praised the film not merely for its groundbreaking cinematography but also for its prescient political critiques. As Duke scholar Michael Carmichael observed, *Avatar* was a "hyper-political film' with a simple message: 'The American Military-Industrial Complex will utterly destroy the known universe. . . . [T]he evil demons set loose to destroy humanity are—us—the US of A. The evil Usses are, indeed, Us.'" In an age of veiled imperialism, Carmichael contended, *Avatar* provided the jolt needed to wake the public from their political stupor.

But not everyone was so willing to go along with this activist assessment. While some noted the patent influences of *Dances with Wolves* and other "white savior" films, cultural scholar Lorenzo Veracini interpreted the picture as neither politically left nor right but instead as a markedly settler colonial story.¹ In the movie, "the aliens' main role—like that of indigenous peoples in other settler colonial settings—is to be an obstacle, not to be exploited" (Veracini, "District" 364). Even though the film's protagonist, an American army veteran and amputee named Jake, fights alongside the planet's indigenous peoples, Veracini contends that he enacts a settler fantasy: he declares his independence from the federal government and subsequently stakes a claim to indigenous lands. Responding to Cameron's claim that the film was not un-American but merely political, then, Veracini wholeheartedly agrees, but with a crucial caveat: "*Avatar* is not 'un-American.' . . . On the contrary, it is the most (settler, nonindigenous) American story one can tell" (364). Millions of viewers may have enjoyed the unsurpassed cinematography, but as they did so they unconsciously imbibed an uncannily familiar settler colonial narrative.²

Although much of Veracini's scholarship has revolved around Palestinian-Israeli relations, it should come as no surprise that his settler colonial analyses have found their way into film: over the last fifteen years the once little known field has flourished to the point that it now dominates journals, conferences, and publications spanning numerous fields.³ Perhaps the easiest explanation of this transformation is that settler colonialism proffers a compelling resolution to postcolonial theory's most glaring contradiction: in many locales there is simply no *post*. In contrast, settler colonialism's explicit focus on continuity, structural violence, and logics of elimination enables scholars to effectively analyze a host of diverse eras and regions across the globe. A few years ago this theoretical approach was hardly known, a peripheral discourse at the borders of cultural studies. Now one can hardly avoid it.

And while these merits are hard to counter, the wholesale adaptation of settler colonialism has not been without its problems. Part of this stems from the fact that, as Patrick Wolfe has declared, settler colonialism is a "zero-sum contest over land on which conflicting modes of production could not ultimately coexist" ("Land" 868).⁴ As such, that which defines settler colonialism—that it is an ongoing process that is never complete—can simultaneously be interpreted as a declension narrative of inevitable land loss or "elimination." Settler colonial theory is, at its core, structural and thereby perpetuates an environment that is "highly stable and relatively impervious to regime change" (Macoun and Strakosch 437). By switching the focus to the settlers and placing historical events within what amounts to a teleological framework, it seemingly naturalizes the inevitable disappearance of Native peoples, leaving little room for the capacity and contingency that these peoples and histories undoubtedly possessed.⁵ Just as in Veracini's settler colonial reading of *Avatar*, Native peoples can be transformed into passive pawns of settler politics.

Many scholars have, rather unfortunately, overlooked these impediments in the rush to embrace settler colonialism as the critical theory du jour. But as the dust settles, two intellectuals—Alissa Macoun and Elizabeth Strakosch—have raised the obligatory red flag and offered an escape from the ensuing bind: settler colonial theory should, in their view, not be applied as an all-encompassing worldview but instead must emphasize "the limited nature of its analysis and supplement this analysis through continuing engagement with other approaches" (441). That is, instead of constructing an unequivocal dichotomy (e.g., before or

after settler colonialism has been categorically imposed upon a given region or peoples), we need to reconceptualize the model as simply “one very limited way of understanding and organizing our reality” (441). Doing so not only reestablishes some semblance of agency to Native peoples but also engages the local distinctiveness, unique historical circumstances, and fractured realities of modern life.⁶ Most importantly, though, it disrupts the insidious impression of an inevitable future. As Macoun and Strakosch aver, “It is crucial that we continue to challenge the politically convenient conflation of settler desires and reality and of the political present and the future, asking always whose interests are served by this new and more sophisticated settler colonial fantasy” (440). Instead of accepting settler colonial theory as an intellectual panacea, we need to relentlessly interrogate the work that it is doing.

With the emergence of these recent challenges, settler colonialism has reached a critical juncture in its growth. At this moment, a move to incorporate the arts offers an injection of dynamism to offset any potential stasis. While Veracini has profitably examined film, contemporary literature offers a different, even complementary, set of perspectives to current debates. In particular, it narrows the scholarly focus down to a smaller, more intimate scale—the individual, family, or community—in the process enabling a more focused study of settler colonial theory’s limits.

The work of various literary titans—Momaday, Silko, Welch, Vizenor, Erdrich, Alexie—would all be appropriate here, but there is also something to be said for certain overlooked texts. This is particularly true if one wants to examine the structural, thematic, and rhetorical variances that distinguish the most recent cohort of Native American writers from its predecessors. Stephen Graham Jones, for instance, achieved some acclaim for two of his early novels—*The Fast Red Road: A Plainsong* (2000) and *The Bird Is Gone: A Manifesto* (2005)—but it is one of his more recent works, *Ledfeather* (2008), that I see as productively responding to the challenges engendered by current settler colonial debates. Like many Native writers of the last fifty years, Jones employs a postmodern form—replete with fractured storylines, metafictional self-reference, and a chasm between signifiers and signifieds—to structure his narrative, but in doing so he distinguishes himself by embracing an alternative narrative method, what has variously been termed “New Sincerity” or “Postirony” in the works of non-Native writers.⁷ This literary approach, emerging in response to the cynicism, detachment, and

alienation that many saw as defining the postmodern canon, seeks to more patently embrace morality, sincerity, and an “ethos of belief” in its works (Konstantinou, “Wipe” 38). As David Foster Wallace, one of the earliest proponents of the school, observed, “Irony, entertaining as it is, serves an exclusively negative function. It’s critical and destructive, a ground-clearing. . . . But irony’s singularly unuseful when it comes to constructing anything to replace the hypocrisies it debunks” (183). As such, instead of brandishing sardonic criticism to attack ongoing injustices, Jones inverts the foundation of settler colonial declension and redeploys it as a vessel of hope. Instead of diagnosing, he attempts to provide a cure. Read in this way, I contend, *Ledfeather* performs a powerful counternarrative to “[settler] colonial fatalism”: by reimagining the past as a postmodern blend of undetermined events, Jones opens up the possibility for alternative presents and futures; by proffering a postironic belief in the power of language to not merely imprison but to liberate, he offers belief in the face of delimiting material realities and indomitable alienation (Macoun and Strakosch 435).

THE MULTIPLE LIVES OF DOBY SAXON AND FRANCIS DALIMPERE

From its opening sentence, *Ledfeather* sets the tone for its connection to settler colonialism with a not-so-subtle allusion to the logic of elimination: “We thought he was dead already just when he opened the door” (Jones 11). In this instance, the “he” whom the unnamed narrator refers to is Doby Saxon, a Blackfeet teenager living on the present-day reservation in Browning, Montana. Doby is one of the novel’s two protagonists, and his story is delivered in a nonlinear fashion by unidentified yet often recurrent narrators. All these narrators, whether they know Doby intimately or not, possess some critical fragment of his story. As they divulge more and more of his past, death emerges as a formidable leitmotif: not only has Doby suffered the crushing loss of both his father and his best friend, but over the course of the novel he twice fails to take his own life.

But Doby is merely one part of the elaborate narrative thread that creates *Ledfeather*. Toward the middle of the text, the reader encounters Francis Dalimpere, the Indian agent for the Blackfeet during the mid-1880s and the novel’s other main character. Unlike Doby’s, Dalimpere’s

story is delivered in the form of letters to his wife, Claire, whom he left back in the eastern United States. And although these missives begin as relatively straightforward, lucid musings on the West and observations of the reservation, over time Dalimpere's thoughts and words begin to steadily unravel: it becomes less and less evident what is happening to him, how the Blackfeet are affected by his degeneration, and if the letters themselves are in any way mimetic. In the midst of this maelstrom, however, the reader is able to tenuously piece together a narrative of imperial trauma on the reservation; Dalimpere's brief tenure coincides with a period that the Blackfeet would later refer to as "the starving time," a brutal winter (1883–84) following the bison's demise during which one-fourth to one-sixth of the Blackfeet in Montana perished.⁸ It is a defining moment in Blackfeet history—it is also the backdrop for the novel as a whole.

The two estranged characters cross paths when Doby unwittingly breaks into the Museum of the Plains Indian and steals a parfleche that, unknown to anyone else, contains Dalimpere's long-lost letters. Through these missives, Doby learns the story, however unreliable it may appear, of this traumatic event in Blackfeet history. He discovers not simply the brutal slaughter of hundreds of Piegans at the hands of American apathy but also Dalimpere's own personal journey and complicity in the carnage. In particular, Doby learns of the agent's all-consuming effort to save one boy, Lead Feather, who in an attempted suicide launches a rock high into the air and back onto his awaiting skull.⁹ As Dalimpere watches in horror, the stone strikes the boy with a glancing blow, one that he somehow survives, albeit in a semicoma from which he may never emerge. The Indian agent then makes it his personal mission to save the child, declaring that he "is the hinge upon which the world up here turns" (Jones 72).

Throughout this frantic quest, Dalimpere's only other Blackfeet connection is Yellow Tail, a nebulous figure whose ostensible omnipotence is undercut by his inclination to laugh at and take advantage of Dalimpere's naïveté. With his odd bricolage of sincerity and ridicule, Yellow Tail's mundane role is to deliver the agent's letters back east; beyond this, though, he grows to take on a central position in the narrative as his own stories and unrelenting presence govern Dalimpere and his efforts to save the boy. As the agent confesses, "My sincerest hope and most ill advised but heart felt gamble is that if I can just reach across the fire and

force him [Lead Feather] to live, then these accidents of circumstance of which Yellow Tail now makes me write will be washed away, and the charges with them, both in this life and the next" (Jones 152). By forcing the agent to tell his story—or the truth behind the scrim of madness—Yellow Tail becomes a crucial interlocutor in a century-long conversation.

Notably, though, as Dalimpere's letters to Claire become increasingly hazy, they also begin to bleed into Doby's own narrative on the present-day reservation. Jones gives the reader this impression by breaking off the missives midclause and continuing them on the next page within Doby's story. In this blurred time-space continuum, Doby once again attempts suicide, and the reader finally reaches the heart of Dalimpere's letters, the one story that he had been avoiding: his own role in the starving winter. He writes to Claire:

And no, I have yet to tell you about last Winter. This is because there are no words. But I lie again. Last Winter is in my chest and in my throat. The truth is that the words to tell it as it happened, to try to hold them in my mouth all at once would be to risk them turning at once to water, so that if I parted my lips to speak they would come pouring out until I was empty of life and hope altogether, and would become but another feature of the landscape, to be reclaimed to the dirt. (Jones 48)

Nevertheless, the agent eventually does deliver the story, claiming, "There is water rising in my throat. I dare not try to speak anymore" (Jones 48). He can no longer suppress the tragedy, and both the reader and Doby find out why.

The previous fall, annual treaty rations were delivered by the United States Army. The next day, when the meat and sundry goods were all stacked, ordered, and ready to be dispensed, the agent noticed that a single blanket had been stolen from the methodical piles. With the army and his own superiors watching, Dalimpere declared that, in punishment for the crime, the goods would be held another day. The following morning, the misdemeanor was repeated, and once again Dalimpere put the dispersal on hold for another twenty-four hours. This give-and-take persisted, and as it did so the hungry U.S. soldiers dipped into the Indian supplies, eventually consuming all of the rations before the Blackfeet were furnished any. With no reserves left, the Indians finally dispersed, crestfallen at the deceit and cupidity of the American forces.

The army, satiated and no longer needed, concurrently returned east. But as the troops were leaving, Dalimpere glimpsed one of them—the former Blackfeet agent who happened to be with the army—wrapped in one of the purloined Indian blankets. Dalimpere had been duped.

With the confession delivered to posterity and the agent's role in the tragedy revealed, Yellow Tail asks Dalimpere how he will repent for his sins. In his malaise, the mournful agent replies, "Perhaps the fitting equivalent to Hell for a white man would simply be to be forced to live life as one of his subjects . . . [a] [p]unishment to begin one hundred years hence" (Jones 155–56). And so, a potentially more intimate connection to Doby is revealed, for in addition to his physical possession of Dalimpere's letters, Doby is himself a descendant of Yellow Tail, the ubiquitous figure whose voice and traditions are delivered through Dalimpere's pen. By means of these letters, the stories of both men, Dalimpere and Yellow Tail, live on and are powerfully reimaged in the midst of Doby's own struggles.

The book's closing scene—a story told by Doby's Aunt Gracie to the boy's mother, Malory Sainte—further unwraps this tenuous relationship. In this narrative re-creation, Doby obstinately stands in the middle of the main road out of town, unsuccessfully attempting yet again to end his life, to stop his suffering, when a car driven by three Blackfeet teenagers skids to an abrupt halt inches in front of him. The three—a boy and two girls—recognize his desperation and, before he can react, force him into the backseat of the car, where he slouches next to a girl from the Standing Rock Reservation.¹⁰ As the car continues on and ascends a mountain pass, the four spot a herd of elk, prompting a tribal story that only Doby knows the true ending to, for he had read it in the letters. As a result, he shares a moment with the girl:

When he looked over at her then it was like he'd been waiting a hundred years to see her, and this crazy ass Ledfeather girl all the way from Standing Rock, she looked off after the elk and then back at Doby through her hair, like she'd maybe been waiting for him too, but was scared a little, wanted to be sure, so Doby opened his mouth and said her name across the backseat of Junior's cab, *Claire*, like a flower opening in his mouth. (Jones 211–12)¹¹

As Gracie tells Malory, "It worked. . . . [H]e got away" (Jones 206–07). The two finally meet: Doby, a descendant of Yellow Tail and a reincarna-

tion of the deranged Francis Dalimpere, and Claire, the progeny of Lead Feather, the tormented boy whom Dalimpere had saved one hundred years earlier.

CONSTRUCTING THE PAST: READER AS HISTORIAN

Doby's ultimate transformation in the last scene—the unexpected shift from suicide attempt to redemption and optimism—emerges out of the stories that he gathers over the course of the novel. On the one hand, he has Dalimpere's one-hundred-year-old reminiscences as the agent strives to comprehend his own demise and the ineffable horrors of Blackfeet starvation. On the other, Doby imbibes a host of Blackfeet oral traditions over the course of his life, especially through the guidance and stories of his late father. These two contrasting vectors profitably merge in the final scene, where Doby combines the narrative bases to deliver the story of the elk. In doing so, he effectively reimagines himself and his place within the Blackfeet community and the broader stream of history. More importantly, though, he finds unexpected salvation.

At its core, then, Doby's epiphany is constructed not by the events of the past but by his narrative interpretation of them. As one cultural critic has usefully observed, "Life is rarely about what happened; it's about what we think happened" (Klosterman 103). This manifestly true but rarely acknowledged reality is at the heart of *Ledfeather*, which problematizes the notion that a singularly true, univocal account of the past both exists and can be recovered through sedulous historical scholarship. Historians have, of course, always produced narratives out of fragments from the past, but during much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries an empiricist belief—the idea that a historian's job was to re-create the past "as it really was"—drove this process (Ranke v–vi). During the 1960s and 1970s, Hayden White's trenchant critique of this paradigm spawned a more critical alternative: all history is constructed and ordered through narrative, and, ipso facto, there can never be an unbiased, singular, or "true" account of the past: "There has been a reluctance to consider historical narratives as what they manifestly are—verbal fictions, the contents of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences" (White, "Historical" 42). It is these "verbal fictions" that drive any historical revision.¹²

While this postmodern approach to history is most evident in Doby's

final healing, it is nevertheless integral to the reader's role in engaging the text as a whole. Reading *Ledfeather* is certainly not a passive act—to get anything out of it, the reader must become an active participant, both a coauthor and a veritable character within the narrative itself. Jones applies this magnetic pull before the text proper even begins: prior to chapter 1, there is a page with the cryptic epigraph “I remember you” emblazoned in its center. By using the second-person pronoun here and abjuring any contextualization, Jones signals the reader's presence in the production of the text. Both the “I” and the “you” consciously cultivate ambiguity, but it is the latter that forcibly grabs the reader. Does it refer to the reader? The protagonist? A minor character? Of course, as paratext, the reader has no background upon which to make any of these suppositions, and so she is left grasping, formulating her own tenuous narrative construction to constantly rearrange over the course of the book.¹³ Further, as the story progresses, Jones's decision to eschew realism in favor of a disjointed, ambiguously delineated narrative exacerbates these readerly demands: in a sense, the reader takes on the role of the historian, piecing together a medley of fractured snippets in a fraught attempt to derive some semblance of meaning from the parts. Juggling Dalimpere's conspicuously unreliable letters and Doby's patchwork narrative, the reader is obliged to make vexing calculations of verisimilitude, authenticity, and relative significance. It is, in essence, a nearly impossible task. But it is also history, in all of its fractured materiality and linguistic messiness.

By impelling the reader to confront the myth of historical truths, Jones is able to destabilize these grand narratives, blurring the boundaries between fiction and history, between the past and the present.¹⁴ But in the larger scheme of the text, this is merely the outermost layer of meaning. As Dalimpere's letters merge into Doby's previously delineated story, anachronistic errors also begin to populate the narrative. In one of the most elaborate sections of the text—once again conspicuously delivered through the second-person voice—the narrator recalls hunting in Glacier National Park the night that his father died:

As for the horses, they're gone, something bad.

But—not horses.

Why would you think *horses*?

It's snowmobiles. Now you remember. The *snow*mobiles are crapped out, buried, part of the Park now. (Jones 81)

Farther down on the same page, Jones once again includes “the horses,” but in this instance he physically crosses out the term and replaces it with “the *snowmobiles*” (81). By foregrounding the intertextuality of these ostensibly distinct time frames, Jones contends that the two cannot ever be fully disentangled. The details of the scene seem, at first glance, to reflect Doby’s last night with his father following the latter’s gruesome hunting accident in Glacier. But it also reflects Dalimpere’s own torturous journey through the blizzard with Yellow Tail and into the stone lodges of the encampment of the dead (118–22), an interpretation that Jones encourages through the ambiguous “you.”¹⁵ Instead of the true versus false binary that limns so many historical interpretations, the reader is presented with a multiplicity of truths that highlight the impossibility of any accurate representation of the past. Instead of a streamlined, linear story, the reader witnesses the distortions that memory and predilection can inflict upon narrative production.

Jones’s choice of letters to deliver the nineteenth-century portion of the narrative is paramount. For historians, letters—especially those produced by Indian agents—form the archival backbone of much nineteenth-century scholarship. This is particularly true for the northern plains, where a dearth of archival sources exists in comparison to most other regions. Jones plays into this assumption by juxtaposing the book’s early, nonlinear portrayal of Doby’s stories with Dalimpere’s first few letters, which are unabashedly romantic but nevertheless limpid and vaguely official in their syntactical nuances. As further missives are revealed, though, the agent becomes progressively more incoherent, paranoid, and equivocal. The reader is forced to reckon with his patent fallibility: although Dalimpere’s words are cloaked within the reinforcing authority of his government position, his stories are simply too wild, contradictory, and incongruous to be believed.¹⁶

Consequently, Jones’s first step in critiquing settler colonialism is to destabilize the very idea of history and a knowable past. In this respect, *Ledfeather* fits within many of the traditional tenets of postmodern literature and the Native American Renaissance, most notably the notion that authors can never successfully participate in the mimetic practice of transcribing the world but can instead only construct an interpretation(s) of it (Robbe-Grillet 157–58). And for the bulk of the text, this seems to be Jones’s main contribution and aim—certainly laudatory but not particularly original. With the book’s conclusion, however, he takes

these conceptualizations a step further, and in doing so he makes a crucial connection between postmodern critiques of the past and Native American practices of survivance in the face of settler colonialism.

POSTIRONIC BELIEF: HOPE, HEALING,
AND SURVIVANCE IN BROWNING

Doby was born in Browning, Montana, on a street that “everybody calls Death Row” (Jones 123). Historically, it was a place that had been forged out of a specific nexus of historical circumstances and present-day federal Indian policy. But in another sense, it represents something much broader. As the narrator explains:

As to why that street’s called Death Row, it’s the government program: you can only get a house there if you’re an elder. So what happens is all the old people put their name on the list, and if they get a house, all their children move in with them, and the children’s children, until Indians are stacked on Indians, spilling out all the windows and doors, sometimes just exploding out into the night, half of them not ever coming back.

And that’s just how it’s always been, ever since the bow and arrow days. (Jones 124)

The shift in scale that takes place in this vignette—from the specific road to the broader historical pattern—represents a crucial dynamic of the novel’s overarching goal. Throughout, and within popular perceptions of American Indian history, there is an implied connection between nineteenth-century imperialist brutality and the present-day poverty that plagues the reservation. Consequently, a host of concrete, undeniable problems—alcoholism, suicide, unemployment—can be traced back to this colonial past. This is not, in and of itself, problematic: American Indian presents, like all lives, are profoundly shaped by historical reverberations. At its best, then, this viewpoint productively forces us to take stock of the enduring legacies of the past; at its worst, though, it normalizes current problems, morphing them into an inevitable by-product of history. According to the latter interpretation, the poverty of Death Row and Doby’s multiple suicide attempts are a tragic yet somehow expected result of historical trauma and present-day colonialism. They become, in essence, an immutable footnote to settler policies.

Of course, for hundreds of years Native American authors have resisted this manufactured inevitability precisely by shifting the focus to Native stories, voices, and perspectives. In one of the most notable and constructive examples, Gerald Vizenor famously put forth the term “survance” to explain the ways that Native peoples have lived and thrived within the tempest of settler colonial realities.¹⁷ For Vizenor, survivance is “more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence. . . . The native stories of survivance are successive and natural estates; survivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victory” (67).¹⁸ According to this understanding, Native peoples do not merely persist in the face of settler colonialism but instead actively resist colonial impositions, expectations, and interpretations. For Vizenor and numerous others, one of the most effective tools of this repudiation is the story itself. As he writes of one of his own works, “There is much to be gained politically from victimization, but there is more to be gained from the power of a good story that heals, and I think my story heals the victims in a poetic and imaginative way” (Vizenor 67). Consequently, there is a great deal of importance placed upon what we, as individuals and communities, “think happened”—that is, how we interpret and explain the past—instead of an overarching colonial metanarrative that elucidates both our past and our present. In other words, by leveraging the power of the story and actively practicing survivance, Native peoples reveal the often-concealed obverse to settler colonial passivity.

Emerging out of Vizenor’s long shadow, the concepts of survivance, stories, victimry, and healing form the core of Jones’s critique of history and settler colonialism. While the book’s postmodern structure highlights the narrative concerns raised by deconstruction, *Ledfeather’s* ending nevertheless demonstrates the enduring value that remains in words and stories. Echoing many of the earlier views of Momaday, Silko, and Vizenor, Dalimpere ruminates upon this worldview in one of his letters to Claire: “[D]id you know that the Piegan believe that the utterance of words is not always just a description of the world, but that, in certain circumstances, be they ritual or incidental, those words become the thing itself almost, and thusly impinge upon the world in ways civilized man has no longer any conception of?” (Jones 60). This foreshadowing is realized in the book’s last scene, where the rhetorical past created

by Dalimpere figuratively produces Doby's present. In this instance, by reperforming Claire and Dalimpere's earlier interactions, the teenager sees himself as the "one hundred years hence" (156) manifestation of the Indian agent—and his own known relative, Yellow Tail—paying penance for his sins but in the process becoming connected once again to his long-lost love, Claire.¹⁹

It is a powerful ending, most particularly because it offers a sense of closure that is all too often withheld in postmodern texts. Perhaps best exemplified by Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, which famously concludes midsentence, readers of this genre have come to expect the lack of concrete gratification that these works typically provide in their final pages.²⁰ By drawing upon this ultimate realization and by highlighting the power of survivance and stories to inform our present lives, Jones responds by placing himself within a specific sect of the postmodern tradition: postironists. Much early postmodernism—including *Gravity's Rainbow*—was structured around acerbic critiques of capitalism, globalization, and the pernicious effects of an ever-intensifying neoliberalism. As Lee Konstantinou has outlined, however, a cohort of writers over the last two decades has pushed back against this censoring tendency, instead espousing faith and sincerity through the medium of postmodernism: "Postironists attempt to use metafictional form as a way of reconnecting form and content, as a way of strengthening belief. . . . Postironists don't advocate a stance of belief toward some aspect of the world but rather the ethos of belief in and of itself" ("No Bull" 90). It is not that these authors abandon criticism—for that is, after all, still at the core of these works—but that they attempt to locate a sense of hope, uplift, and solution in the maelstrom of discontent that dominates our modern world.

Jones's work places itself firmly in this quest for an ethos of belief by highlighting the very real individual and communal suffering that exists on the Blackfeet Reservation today while at the same time undermining any expected endings. In a sense, by offering an unanticipated palliative, he provides a way out of the downward spiral often engendered by settler colonialism and poststructuralism: although words and stories can never perfectly represent the past, they can still offer belief and healing in the face of inimitable trauma.

PROBLEMATIZING BLAME, VICTIMRY, AND THE SETTLER

Jones is far from the first author—Native American or otherwise—to draw upon the restorative power of stories, but his approach to that *dénouement* differs markedly from that of Vizenor and others. Whereas, for instance, Momaday's Abel is ultimately healed through a return to the reservation, Doby's path is more convoluted and, in essence, encompasses one of *Ledfeather's* strongest critiques. As we have seen, settler colonial theory is premised upon the existence of two distinct categories—the settler and the Native—that, in many cases, stand in as euphemisms for two complementary terms: the perpetrator and the victim.²¹ For Jones, though, these are vexed classifications. In his own words, characters like Dalimpere “problematize the whole where-to-put-sympathy thing in an American Indian novel. That always needs to be problematized. Over and over” (Pate). As such, the question is not so much who is to blame as it is how to free ourselves from this destructive cycle. Dalimpere is not the unequivocal villain in this story but is instead a pawn in a larger colonial system. The distinctions between good and bad, cause and effect, and blame and absolution are blurred until they fade completely, ablated by Jones's disjointed narrative and the inexorable march of time between the book's distant epochs.

Most critically, however, Jones implicitly obscures the distinctions between the settler and the Native, in the process calling into question the usefulness and even the potential harm of this paradigm. Throughout the narrative, the identity of the two protagonists is variously interrogated, complicated, and blurred. Doby's father, for instance, is born Piney Saxon, an appellation he abjures for Earl Two Jobs—“he'd made the name up himself” (Jones 15). And although he spends much of the novel teaching Doby “to be a real Indian” (131), he nevertheless passes the conspicuous surname “Saxon” onto his son, who is often described as sucking “his cheeks in like he can when he's trying to look especially Indian” (21). These complications then come to a head in that last scene, when Doby reimagines himself as a reincarnation of the other protagonist, Dalimpere, a man who is, at least vocationally, the archetypally destructive settler: an Indian agent.²² Doby reads Dalimpere's epistolary premonition, claiming,

[I]t was his [Dalimpere's] punishment, to become Blackfeet, to be Piegan. To live on the reservation he'd created, the situation he

was already leaving behind. To replace his own life with an Indian one, and thus know firsthand the end result of his policies. An end result generations away from last Winter, just so he could see the scope of what he'd done, that it still had traceable effect. So that, in a sense, he could be inflicting it upon himself. (117)

This is then realized not just in the interactions between Doby and Claire, which in large part mirror many of those described by Dalimpere, but in the description of Doby recounting the moose story: "He held his hand out to show the moose like he's seen it too, like *he* was the white man in that joke" (209).²³

From a settler colonial angle, this could be read in one of two ways: either Dalimpere has become completely indigenized—as Veracini claims *Avatar*'s main protagonist, Jake, does—or Doby has assimilated into settler culture, thereby realizing settler colonialism's ultimate goal of elimination (Veracini, "District" 360). Nevertheless, neither of these readings seems to satisfy the sense of unexpected hope that emerges in this final scene. Risking the censure of critics and readers who will view the ending as melodramatic, sentimental, or simply unconvincing, Jones provides a more straightforward sense of closure and Native survivance in the face of settler colonialism. In essence, this passage, and Doby's absolving realization in the book's last scene, directly attack the notion of a clear delineation between settler and Indian, at least as it pertains to intergenerational existences.

The field of settler colonialism has engaged in similar defining debates—albeit from the periphery—for the past decade. Although Wolfe and others originally presented the two categories as largely self-evident—a view that many scholars perpetuate today—there are a number of historical groups that complicate this notion. In particular, some scholars have contended that clusters of forced laborers, most notably African slaves, are technically settlers in that they replaced indigenous inhabitants on a land base, even though they indubitably did so against their own will. This contentious viewpoint has been most forcefully espoused by Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, who have unambiguously stated that "people of color are settlers. Broad differences exist between those brought as slaves, currently working as migrant laborers, are refugees without legal documentation, or émigrés who have obtained citizenship. Yet people of color live on land that is appropriated and con-

tested, where Aboriginal peoples are denied nationhood and access to their own lands” (134). For Lawrence and Dua, the boundaries are clear.

Jones may or may not have been aware of these largely arcane academic debates as he wrote *Ledfeather*, but by attacking putatively distinct categories he advances an important corollary: while acknowledging the very real materialities of a settler colonial past and present, he questions the simplistic assumptions that these two categories often engender. For Jones, the settler Dalimpere is not simply an antihero but a man who unwittingly unleashes a horrific chain of events as a consequence of his role in a larger system. On the other hand, Doby, the Native, is not merely a victim who is destined to endless suffering under the omnipresent and inescapable reach of settler colonialism; instead, he—and, by extension, Dalimpere—possesses the individual ability to heal, to live, and to ultimately thrive even in the worst of circumstances. Instead of being imprisoned by the past, he is ultimately freed by a new interpretation of it.²⁴

Jones is certainly not unique in challenging these simplistic assumptions. But what distinguishes his approach—and what ties him most directly to the proponents of the New Sincerity—is that he eschews irony. Writers such as Vizenor, Alexie, and Thomas King have devoted much of their oeuvres to challenging these binary assumptions, and there can be no doubt that their writings have had a profound impact on debates about contemporary Native America and, more broadly, American history.²⁵ But whereas irony aims first and foremost at bringing to light hypocrisy, injustice, and contradiction, it often founders when asked to yield a next step. Like settler colonial theory, it highlights the negative, but in doing so it often obscures the positive. For Jones and others, this is where the most fecund opportunity lies. In the place of irony, they see a new historical consciousness. In the place of criticism, they impart stories for the future.

MOVING FORWARD

There are countless ways one could describe Glacier National Park: as one of the United States’ premier preserved areas and most popular tourist destinations; as the home of over one million acres of diverse plants and animals, many of which are scarcely found outside of the park’s boundaries; or as part of the world’s first International Peace Park,

a designation that led to its recognition as a World Heritage Site in 1995. But beyond these familiar portrayals, a more sinister narrative lurks: dig just below the surface, and one finds a symbol of broken treaties, Indian removal, and indigenous exploitation. According to Veracini, settler colonial theory asks scholars to “focus on the settlers, on what they do, and how they think about what they do” (*Settler* 15). For Glacier, then, the narrative would be one of strategically excluding Indians and reconfiguring natural populations for the most viewer-friendly construction of wilderness. It would tell of the prodigious transportation projects, the concerted publicity drives, and the ultimate creation of one of the most awe-inspiring national parks in the world. It would, in essence, be an astounding success story.

Quite obviously, though, there are countless narratives and lives that exist beyond the imperial gaze of settler intentions. For Doby and his father, Glacier was a key site of identity, power, and, ultimately, death. In Browning, the elder Saxon had become renowned for sneaking into the park to hunt elk, a practice that he perceived not as illegal but as an active assertion of guaranteed treaty rights.²⁶ When Doby later joined his father to shoot his first “Park elk,” the mundane hunting trip transmuted into a coming-of-age ceremony—within the park, the elk were supposed to be bigger, and because there was an air of secrecy and defiance to the act, “it’s supposed to make the meat sweeter” (Jones 81). For Doby and his father, then, the park was neither a tourist destination nor a wilderness space: it was a practical place to kill, to obtain valuable meat, and to assert trampled treaty rights.

More than straightforward differences in perspective, though, the multiple narrative strands that produce Glacier as a socially constructed space highlight a major limit of settler colonial theory: as Macoun and Strakosch maintain, settler colonial theory “is most usefully understood as providing non-Indigenous people in settler states with a better account of ourselves—rather than as an account of the entire settler-Indigenous relationship” (438). Put another way, there is often a discrepancy between settler intentions and settler realities. As James Scott has contended, legibility—the ability to make a people, landscape, and space known to those in power—is a “perennial state project” precisely because it is never fully achieved (1–3). By limiting their analysis to the structural systems of settler colonialism, then, scholars reify the fatalism that Macoun and Strakosch criticize. In doing so, they miss

the myriad ways that individuals, communities, and nations continue to maneuver within the delimitations that settler colonialism seeks—but often fails—to impose.

By narrowing the scale down to the individual and by playing with a well-known settler colonial narrative, Jones reveals the power of freeing ourselves from the binaries and inevitability that settler colonial theory tends to engender. As he observes in the book's author note, "And yeah, I had to play a little fast and loose not just with the Wesel [the author of the historical account that Jones draws from to create Dalimpere], but with the reservation, but I don't feel bad about that either. The truth is never in the facts" (Jones 215). By producing a fractured, stylistically postmodern narrative, Jones reconfigures this historical inspiration and then sets the stage for a host of alternative endings. Among these, though, the conclusion that he chooses does not, at first glance, seem to fit: it is too neat; it does not fit the chaotic amalgam that precedes it. And therein lies its power. From decades of archetypal examples, readers of postmodern fiction have been groomed to expect the unrealized conclusion, the Delliolo- or Pynchon-esque finale that raises myriad questions and doubts while answering none. As Wallace famously maintained, beyond these literary progenitors, the next stage of postmodern writers "might be the ones willing to risk the yawn, the rolled eyes, the cool smile, the nudged ribs, the parody of gifted ironists, the 'How banal.' Accusations of sentimentality, melodrama. Credulity" (193). Jones's ending could certainly be labeled sentimental, but such a designation mars the tremendous power of Doby and Claire's liberating reunion. In opposition to postmodern cynicism, alienation, and detachment, this conclusion provides readers with something all too often negated in the postmodern condition: something to believe in. Instead of a diagnosis or sardonic critique of the past and present, Jones delivers that rare condition: redemption.

The answer, then, is not to eschew settler colonialism—for it has enabled pivotal revisions of countless outdated histories—but to critically engage the work that it does. For the bulk of *Ledfeather's* narrative, Doby is caught within the real structural inequities engendered by a brutal colonial past, but he is in no way reducible to those conditions. By problematizing history and time's perceived linearity, Jones reveals the underlying capacity that words possess to free individuals and communities. As Hayden White has contended, "We choose our past in the

same way we choose our future. The historical therefore is . . . at best a myth, justifying our gamble on a specific future, and at worst a lie, a retrospective rationalization of what we have become through our choices” (*Tropics* 39). For Doby and the Blackfeet as a whole, then, this belief provides a capacity to govern the future that is all too often elided in settler colonial scholarship. And though there may be no way out of settler colonialism, for Jones and others there is nevertheless a latent hope that emerges out of new interpretations of the past and present, poststructural understandings that overcome the delimiting structuralism of settler colonial frameworks.

Countless writers over the past half-century have displayed the surreptitious power that critique and irony can comprise, particularly when the target is a dominant paradigm. But perhaps it is time to move on, to be simultaneously critical and sincere in an effort to illuminate that reformative and ever-elusive next step.

Doby and his progeny now lead.

JOSEPH GAUDET is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Michigan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Scott Richard Lyons, Philip Deloria, Frank Kelderman, Chadwick Allen, and the anonymous readers of *SAIL* for their invaluable feedback.

NOTES

1. For the “white savior” view, see Brooks.

2. As numerous previous scholars have pointed out, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Americans were constantly exposed to a series of texts built upon settler colonial narratives. These include well-known books such as *A Narrative of the Captivity of Mary Rowlandson* (1682), *The Deerslayer* (1841), and *The Virginian* (1902); plays such as *Metamora; or, The Last of the Wampanoags* (1829); and movies such as *Stagecoach* (1939), *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), and *Dances with Wolves* (1990). See Rifkin; Huhndorf; Goldie.

3. For instance, in 2011 the journal *Settler Colonial Studies* was introduced; for conferences, the 2014 American Studies included six different panels addressing aspects of settler colonialism, while the 2015 annual meeting included twenty-one; and within the realm of monographs, in addition to dozens of recent publications on settler colonialism, Margaret Jacobs’s *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West*

and *Australia, 1880–1940* was awarded the 2010 Bancroft Prize, the field of American history's highest honor.

4. In addition, the structural nature arises from one of Wolfe's most memorable lines, that settler colonialism is a "structure, not an event" ("Settler" 388).

5. In addition to Macoun and Strakosch, Joseph Bauerkemper has recently raised a similar concern as he describes his occasional discomfort with settler colonial theory: "The critique is in and of itself a story about settlers; it places me and my ilk at the center. It is thus available to be misused as an invitation to catharsis or even a cashing-in of settler guilt for academic capital. Confession without correction, shrift without shift. In any case, settler colonial critique does not emphasize Indigenous stories, and it may therein risk marginalizing Native voices, histories, present, and futures" (446). In his overview of settler colonial theory, Veracini notes this potential issue but provides a rather ineffective justification for the "focus on the settlers, on what they do, and how they think about what they do" (*Settler* 15).

6. In responding to the "recurrent complaint that settler-colonial critique fails to write in Native agency," Patrick Wolfe has responded: "The issue is not the existence of Native agency, as if that could be in doubt, but its theoretical usurpation" ("Recovering" 274). Nevertheless, I would respond that the "theoretical usurpation" denotes real-world consequences; that is, the structural inevitability of settler colonialism implies a sense of fatalism—and, therefore, a lack of agency—for Native peoples.

7. Also known as "Postirony," the term "New Sincerity" comes from Adam Kelly's categorization of David Foster Wallace and a host of others' work in the wake of the first generation of literary postmodernists. According to Kelly, their work pushes back against the sardonic approach by offering something productive, a critique that moves past the negative and into the realm of solutions and hope.

8. For the starving winter, see Ewers 289–96.

9. Jones always spells the name "Lead Feather" in the book's nineteenth-century portion and "Ledfeather" in the present.

10. "She was all the way from Standing Rock. The same way there were some Sioux that got on the Blackfeet rolls wayback, some of us had snuck over the line too, got counted wrong on another rez, just never told anybody" (Jones 199).

11. Like most, if not all (depending on the reader's interpretation), of the novel, this final section is not delivered by Doby but is instead conveyed by another narrator, in this case his Aunt Gracie, who is unaware of Dalimpere's letters. Nevertheless, there are several textual references that illuminate this final act of redemption. To name but a few of the connections between the final scene and the novel's earlier sections: between Doby's "like he'd been waiting a hundred years to see her" (Jones 211) and Dalimpere's spiritual apology "one hundred years hence" (156); between Doby's "opened his mouth and said her name across the backseat of Junior's cab, Claire. . . and just let the sides of their hands touch together like it didn't really matter. But it did" (212) and Dalimpere's two letters to Claire, "so I sit here with your name on my lips and the souvenir of your hand touching mine in the back of that carriage" (78) and "How we were alone in that painted carriage, in the middle of life, you and I, the side of our hands in constant contact" (54); and between Doby reading the letters out

loud (46) and his utterance of the name “Claire” (212) and Dalimpere’s observation that “the Piegan believe that the utterance of words is not always just a description of the world, but that, in certain circumstances, be they ritual or incidental, those words become the thing itself almost” (60).

12. See White, “Historical”; White, *Metahistory*; Sartre.

13. Even after reading through the novel and returning to the opening epigraph, the reader has only a slightly stronger understanding of this sentence. For instance, the typeface is curiously different from the rest of the text, and it appears to be that of a typewriter. We know that Dalimpere uses a typewriter to transcribe his letters (Jones 43), and so it logically follows that the “I” is Dalimpere. But what about the “you”? One could make compelling arguments for it referring to Claire, Ledfeather, Yellow Tail, or Doby. As such, the conscious ambiguity of this statement, I argue, in particular the capacious “you,” engages the reader from the start as one who can only make tenuous meaning of the text itself.

14. In doing so, Jones uses literature to reproduce many of Jean-François Lyotard’s classic arguments on metanarratives and the Enlightenment. For Lyotard, ever since the Enlightenment, societies have relied upon such “grand narratives” as totalizing explanations for dominant modes of thought: belief systems, societal developments, and history in general. Within this system of thought, one that has profoundly influenced how history has been produced in the past, “the idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject” is not only possible but also necessary. A single narrative can and should be produced by historians. In the postmodern age, however, these metanarratives are deconstructed in favor of fractured narratives that are “provisional, contingent, temporary, and relative.” This is, in essence, what defines postmodernism for Lyotard and what problematizes the notion of an empirical, unitary history for Jones and others (71–82).

15. Importantly, this section (Jones 80–92) is the only portion of the text other than the epigraph to use the second-person pronoun.

16. Terry Cook, for example, has written of a shift in how we examine archives, “from viewing records as static physical objects, and toward understanding them as dynamic virtual concepts; a shift away from looking at records as the passive products of human or administrative activity and towards considering records as active agents themselves in the formation of human and organizational memory” (4). Jones plays with and challenges readers to examine these ideas by having his fictional character, Dalimpere, write with the authority and responsibilities of a government official. For more on archives and the production of history, see Trouillot.

17. As Scott Lyons and others have noted, “The word *survivance* has also been used by French-speaking Quebecois since the nineteenth century to characterize Quebec’s right to political independence based upon the *la survivance* of Franco-phone language and culture” (206n102).

18. Notably, Jones has also claimed that his first book, *The Fast Red Road*, was originally dedicated to Vizenor, but he had to change that after Vizenor blurbled the book. As Jones explained, “I thought it’d make it look like I lured him in to do the blurb” (Thomas).

19. See note 11.

20. This is, admittedly, not a uniquely postmodern practice. Most notably, James Joyce concludes *Finnegans Wake* with an incomplete sentence, as does Franz Kafka in *The Castle*. Nevertheless, Pynchon's use is one of the most well known, and it is certainly conceivable that he drew upon Joyce and Kafka, whom many read as early postmodernists. *Gravity's Rainbow* famously ends with the nebulous "Now everybody—" (760); this rhetorical device then spawned something of a trend in postmodern literature, where numerous later authors appropriated the fragment to end works. See, for example, Bret Easton Ellis's *The Rules of Attraction* (1987) and David Foster Wallace's *The Broom of the System* (1987).

21. Lorenzo Veracini also adds a third category—the exogenous other—that, while ill defined, seems to be a capacious and amorphous category for those who either do not fit neatly within the original two categories or will soon be moved into one of them (Veracini, *Settler* 26–27).

22. At the same time, though, Doby is a physical descendant of Yellow Tail, the other main character in Dalimpere's letters and an individual whom Dalimpere has a particularly vexed relationship with. Yellow Tail is "a ghost, a reflection of the Agent's own guilt and fears and self-pity" (Jones 98).

23. The themes of postironic hope, sacrifice, and a life being saved are further demarcated by one character, Junior, who is present in the book's first and last scenes. In both of these episodes, Junior, who is said to "only [know] four or five" (Jones 12) Blackfoot words, speaks in the language, uttering a phrase that "was just thank you, but bigger, like an offering too" (204). This offering corresponds with the two instances in which Doby—returning from the hunting accident with his father and being pulled from his suicide attempt in the road—is somehow saved from near-certain death.

24. Throughout the text, the theme of sacrifice, deal making, penance, and saving another's life is consistently invoked. Not only is there Dalimpere's pledge of his life in the place of Lead Feather's (Jones 152), but, to name just one, Doby's mother, Malory Sainte, sings her death song over Doby when he survives the snowmobile crash "so that anybody or anything listening would know that it was her dying, not you, and so leave you be, let you live" (86). And at the community level, a handful of Blackfeet kill themselves to donate a kidney to 34, the basketball team's star player, so that he can live and continue to play in order to inspire the community (141, 190–92).

25. N. Scott Momaday has referred to Vizenor as "the supreme ironist." Similarly, in describing the second wave of the Native American Renaissance, James Ruppert writes: "Native writers in the 1990s and the twenty-first century seek to renegotiate the dualisms of modernism. . . . The values of modernism are disrupted so that they may be renegotiated. Irony is key to their literary productions" (187).

26. An 1895 agreement between the U.S. government and the Blackfeet explicitly guarantees the Blackfeet the right to hunt within the park, but this clause has been repeatedly denied, both on the ground and in the courts, over the last century (Spence 89).

WORKS CITED

- Bauerkemper, Joseph. "Tensing, Dancing, Hoping: The Future Past of Settler Empire." *Settler Colonial Studies* 3.3-4 (2013): 444-50. Print.
- Brooks, James. "The Messiah Complex." *New York Times* 7 Jan. 2009. Web. 10 Apr. 2015.
- Carmichael, Michael. "Avatar Pulls the Trigger." *Huffington Post*. 10 Dec. 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-carmichael/iavatar-ipulls-the-politi_b_411936.html. Web. 10 Apr. 2015.
- Cook, Terry. "Archival Science and Postmodernism: New Formulations for Old Concepts." *Archival Science* 1.1 (2001): 3-24. Print.
- Ewers, John C. *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958. Print.
- Goldie, Terry. *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures*. Kingston: McGill Queens University Press, 1989. Print.
- Huhndorf, Shari M. *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001. Print.
- Jacobs, Margaret D. *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. Print.
- Jones, Stephen Graham. *Ledfeather*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008. Print.
- Kelly, Adam. "David Foster Wallace and the New Sincerity in American Fiction." *Consider David Foster Wallace: Critical Essays*. Ed. David Hering. Los Angeles: SSMG Press, 2010. 131-46. Print.
- Klosterman, Chuck. *Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs: A Low Culture Manifesto*. Reprint edition. New York: Scribner, 2004. Print.
- Konstantinou, Lee. "No Bull: David Foster Wallace and Postironic Belief." *The Legacy of David Foster Wallace*. Ed. Samuel Cohen and Lee Konstantinou. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012. Print.
- . "Wipe that Smirk Off Your Face: Postironic Literature and the Politics of Character." Diss. Stanford University, 2009. Ann Arbor, UMI 2010. Print.
- Lawrence, Bonita, and Enakshi Dua. "Decolonizing Antiracism." *Social Justice* 32.4 (2005): 120-43. Print.
- Lyons, Scott Richard. *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Print.
- Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Print.
- Macoun, Alissa, and Elizabeth Strakosch. "The Ethical Demands of Settler Colonial Theory." *Settler Colonial Studies* 3.3-4 (2013): 426-43. Print.
- Pate, Gavin. "Surviving the Wolverines: An Interview with Stephen Graham Jones." *Rain Taxi Review of Books*. 10 Oct. 2008. <http://www.raintaxi.com/surviving-the-wolverines-an-interview-with-stephen-graham-jones/>. Web. 10 Apr. 2015.

- Ranke, Leopold von. *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1535*. Leipzig: Reimer, 1824. Print.
- Rifkin, Mark. *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. Print.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*. Trans. Richard Howard. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992. Print.
- Rowlandson, Mary. *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God: With Related Documents*. 1682. Ed. Neal Salisbury. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 1997. Print.
- Ruppert, James. "Fiction: 1968 to Present." *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*. Ed. Joy Porter and Kenneth P. Roemer. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 173–88. Print.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1956. Print.
- Scott, James C. *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. Print.
- Spence, Mark David. *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- Thomas, Beth. "Smoking with Stephen Graham Jones." *SmokeLong Quarterly*. 25 June 2012. <http://www.smokelong.com/interview/stephenjon-es36.asp>. Web. 10 Apr. 2015.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997. Print.
- Veracini, Lorenzo. "District 9 and Avatar: Science Fiction and Settler Colonialism." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 32.4 (2011): 355–67. Print.
- . *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.
- Vizenor, Gerald. *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. Print.
- Wallace, David Foster. "E Unibus Plurum: Television and U.S. Fiction." *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 13.2 (1993): 151–94. Print.
- White, Hayden. "The Historical Text as Literary Artefact." *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*. Ed. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978. 41–62. Print.
- . *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975. Print.
- . *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986. Print.
- Wolfe, Patrick. "Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race." *American Historical Review* 106.3 (2001): 866–905. Print.
- . "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (2006): 387–409. Print.
- . "Recuperating Binarianism: A Heretical Introduction." *Settler Colonial Studies* 13.3 (2013): 257–79. Print.

Not Primitive Enough to Be Considered Modern

Ethnographers, Editors, and the Indigenous Poets of the
American Indian Magazine

MICHAEL P. TAYLOR

In February 1917 Harriet Monroe, founding editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, published the magazine's first issue dedicated almost solely to "aboriginal poetry" ("Aboriginal" 251). Although Monroe is celebrated for bringing together into a single magazine the leading poetic voices of her time—Ezra Pound, William Butler Yeats, T. S. Eliot, H.D., and so on—Helen Carr reports that Monroe was "particularly proud of the way the magazine pushed beyond the hegemonic Anglo-American Anglo-Saxon, whether in publishing Rabindranath Tagore's own translations of his Bengali poems, or in Pound's and others' Chinese translations, or in issues devoted to Native American traditional verse" (42). *Poetry* professed "to exhibit all that was modern and contemporary in poetry—whether it was found in imagism, regionalist verse . . . , the Bengali Tagore, or the culture of Native America" (Carr 34). It is curious, however, that from the selection of poems published within *Poetry*'s 1917 "aboriginal" issue, not a single Aboriginal poet is identified by name. Rather, Monroe presents the poems as primal specimens collected, transcribed, translated, and altered by non-Indigenous ethnographers, editors, and poets: "The poems we present are not translations, but interpretations; they use subjects and rhythms drawn from aboriginal life and song . . . [and] should be read—or rather chanted—to the accompaniment of a posture of dance and the strong beat of an instrument" ("Aboriginal" 251).

Although the editors of today's leading anthologies of modern American poetry have taken critical steps to include a wider representation of Native American and other marginalized poets, most continue to privilege ethnographic works over "modern" Indigenous poets without acknowledging, as Jace Weaver (Cherokee) argues, that "limiting consideration or admission to the canon to orature [collected tradi-

tion and culture] is a way of continuing colonialism” (23). In *The New Anthology of American Poetry* (2005), for example, Steven Gould Axelrod, Camille Roman, and Thomas Travisano present sixteen songs collected by ethnomusicologists Frances Densmore and James Mooney to represent Native American poetry from 1900 to 1950. They also include four poems published by two early twentieth-century Indigenous poets, Alexander Posey (Muscogee Creek) and Louis Oliver (Muscogee Creek); however, the featured poems represent Posey’s and Oliver’s politically milder poetry that can be dismissively read as presenting images of isolation, illiteracy, and inevitable death, rather than featuring either poet’s more striking poetic evidence of Native resistance and survival.¹

Cary Nelson’s *Anthology of Modern American Poetry* (2000), on the other hand, even excludes collected Indigenous orature, presenting N. Scott Momaday’s (Kiowa-Cherokee) early poems from the 1960s as the beginning of twentieth-century American Indian poetry. Similarly, Rita Dove’s *Anthology of Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (2011) begins its representation of “modern” Native poetry with works from the 1970s by Blackfeet writer James Welch. Together, these leading editors choose not to correct Monroe’s misrepresentation of Native American poetry, and they announce an important oversight in the scholarship surrounding the missing Indigenous poets of the early twentieth century. Nelson’s and Dove’s choices overlook over fifty years of Native poets. Axelrod, Roman, and Travisano privilege non-Indigenous ethnographers over contemporaneous Indigenous poets. In an academic culture that celebrates individual artistic genius and, by extension, the communities such individuals represent, were there no Indigenous poets in North America at the turn of the twentieth century to write and recite their own poetry? According to Monroe and today’s mainstream anthologies, the answer is no, only non-Indigenous interpreters of the “primitive” poetics of a disappearing race. Although each of these major anthologies has made critical innovations in diversifying modern American poetry, and although each includes a broader selection of Native American poetry than its predecessor, Robert Dale Parker’s *Changing Is Not Vanishing* (2010), which provides an extensive recovery of pre-1930 Native poetry, is the first anthology to begin to represent the intricate poetic networks and broad production of early Indigenous poetry in North America. And as *Changing Is Not Vanishing* demonstrates, Monroe’s now-canonized misrepresentation does not stem from any actual

absence of Indigenous poetry but rather from the perception that most Indigenous poets throughout the early twentieth century were simply not “primitive” enough to be considered “modern.”

This article examines the poetry of Arthur C. Parker (Seneca), E. Pauline Johnson (Mohawk), and Zitkala-Ša (Yankton Sioux), three early twentieth-century Indigenous writers whose poetry challenges mainstream articulations of the “modern” American Indian. By juxtaposing their poetry, as published in the *American Indian Magazine* (1913–20),² with the “aboriginal poetry” published by Monroe and other mainstream modernists, I identify two competing aesthetics that underscore, on the one hand, the modernist desire for the primitive and, on the other hand, the contemporaneous Indigenous poets’ desire for poetics that promote greater sociopolitical solidarity, resistance, and survival. Juxtaposing these aesthetics emphasizes the burgeoning recovery and reclamation of early Indigenous literatures while also questioning the internalization of certain colonial ideas and methodologies that need to be overcome in order to more fully allow such reclaimed literatures to be read as Indigenous and therefore as the foundational tree of American literature from which all other American literatures derive life (Womack 7).

HARRIET MONROE: “ABORIGINAL” POETRY

Only a year prior to *Poetry*’s “aboriginal” issue, in June 1916, Monroe announced her own significance as a shaper of modern American poetry:

Somewhere I have read a quaint old myth of a goblin who, blowing the fog out of his face, started a tempest which went careering around the world. Now and then I feel like that goblin. Is it possible that less than four years ago poetry was “the Cinderella of the arts”? Already a great wind is blowing her ashes away, and on the horizon are rolling dust-clouds which may conceal a coach and four—or is it an automobile? (“Various” 140)

Extending Monroe’s simile to current conversations about American modernist poetry, Brown and Tulsa Universities’ Modernist Journals Project (MJP) website continues, “It may have been a jet. In any case, we are all in [Monroe’s] debt for blowing away the fog around poetry.” What Monroe and MJP choose not to recognize, however, is the fact that

as the fog lifted from poetry, the returning light shone selectively on certain privileged poets and poetic modes. As Carr identifies but does not problematize, when it comes to Native American poetry, the great goblin and her network of influential ethnographers, editors, and poets chose to uncover only interpretations of Native “tradition” and “culture” without wasting their breath on the heavy fog concealing contemporaneous Indigenous poetry (34, 42).

While the poetic experimentation that *Poetry* represents has come to define the modernist poetry movement, U.S. modernists were also becoming increasingly interested in recovering and preserving America’s poetic past. And the United States proved to have deep roots, or what Monroe describes as “deep streams of original poetic art,” amongst its Indigenous populations (Monroe and Henderson xi). As *Poetry*’s editor, Monroe encouraged her contributors to tap—and refine—the poetic roots of American Indian communities before their “primitiveness” vanished into “civilization.” As a result, *Poetry*’s 1917 “aboriginal” issue presents “Tribal Songs from the South-west” submitted by Frank S. Gordon (221–31), “Indian Songs” by Alice Corbin Henderson (232–38), two poems of Native spirituality by Mary Hunter Austin (239–41), and two nature poems by Constance Lindsay Skinner (242–46). Monroe then concludes the issue by describing its work as only the beginning of an exciting poetic mining expedition:

Vivid as such work is in its suggestion of racial feeling and rhythm, it gives merely a hint of the deeper *resources*—it is a mere *outcropping* of the *mine*. But, although the *mine* exists with its stores of treasure, the danger is that the tribes, in the process of so-called civilization, will lose all trace of it; that their beautiful primitive poetry will perish among the ruins of obliterated states. (“Aboriginal” 251, emphasis added)

To combat the presumed inevitability of vanishing Indians rather than the governmental and social policies causing such social and cultural upheaval, *Poetry*’s 1917 issue provides a sample outcropping of the Native poetic mine (a brutal metaphor given the history of Native resource exploitation). As Monroe explains, the issue is “almost entirely devoted to poems from American-Indian motives” (“Aboriginal” 251). It is indeed an artistic exhibition of Native motives removed—like minerals—from their surrounding geographic, sociopolitical, linguistic,

spiritual, and communal contexts. Monroe's emphasis on "American-Indian motives" rather than poems composed by living American Indian poets—appropriations rather than accreditations—only amplifies their absence.

After announcing the open mine of primitive poetics among Native Americans and thanking those already active non-Native prospectors, Monroe concludes by explaining what she asserts are the possible methodological approaches to the extracted materials: "There are, of course, two methods of approach to this literature—that of science and that of art" ("Aboriginal" 252). Directly following Monroe's explanation, Carl Sandburg provides a literary model in his assessment of Frances Densmore's translations published as *Chippewa Music* (1910), suggesting that the translations had until then "escaped [literary] analysis" (254). Sandburg introduces four "specimens" in order to place Densmore's translations in conversation with the modernist movement. The first poem, "My Love Has Departed," begins:

A loon
I thought it was
But it was
My love's
Splashing oar. (Sandburg 255)

While presenting and analyzing these "specimens" from Densmore's translations for their literary importance, Sandburg concludes, "Suspicion arises definitely that the Red Man and his children committed direct plagiarisms on the modern imagists and vorticists" (255),³ labels since attributed to the most canonical modernist poets: Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, and H.D., to name only a few (Hickman). Although Sandburg couples his analysis with the racist rhetoric of the singular "Red Man" and tongue-in-cheek accusation of plagiarism, he recovers Densmore's translations from the U.S. Bureau of Ethnology for comparison with the most canonical poetic modes of modernism. Sandburg's ironic accusation also highlights, albeit unintentionally, how the "traditional" poetics collected from Native America not only predate but also anticipate modernism.

Supporting Sandburg's argument, *Poetry's* associate editor, Alice C. Henderson, concludes the 1917 issue's tripartite editorial comment by explaining her own methodology in her section of poetry, "Indian Songs," featured earlier in the issue. Henderson explains, "I have taken

the Indian key-note—which is often not more than a phrase, a single image, with variations of musical inflection and repetition—and expanded it very slightly” (“Aboriginal” 256). Similar to Sandburg, Henderson parallels Native poetics with the imagists and vorticists as she continues, “The Indian song often means more than it says; it is content to give the image and not to talk about it—it is not ‘journalistic’” (“Aboriginal” 256). Frank S. Gordon’s poem “The Tom-Tom,” the first poem featured in the issue, illustrates Henderson’s ideal nicely:

Drum-beat, beat of drums,
Pebble-rattle in the gourd,
Pebble feet on drifting sand . . .
Drum-beat, beat of drums—. (Gordon 221)

Gordon’s poem takes what Henderson calls an “Indian key-note,” a stereotypical image of Indigeneity, and then poeticizes that image into a modernist style, setting his work apart from more typical ethnographers who, as Henderson criticizes, “Europeanize” Native songs (“Aboriginal” 256). Henderson chooses not to recognize, however, that transcribing collected “Indian songs” into high-modernist forms is only another variant of the very Europeanization she criticizes. Instead, Henderson immediately qualifies her own work by admitting, “Of course any addition whatever is taking liberties with the originals, but I have tried to keep strictly within the spirit of them” (“Aboriginal” 256). That Henderson assumes she understands the original “spirit of them” is presumptuous, and her admitted inability to produce the exact originals simply reiterates the unstated fact that *Poetry*’s representative “aboriginal” poets are not Aboriginal at all. They are non-Indigenous ethnographers, editors, and poets claiming an intimate knowledge of and interpretive authority over Indigenous peoples and their poetry.

Monroe’s call to dig into the poetic mine, Sandburg’s ironic accusation, and Henderson’s further paralleling of Native poetry with vorticist and imagist aesthetics are all proponents of and anticipate a growing interest in American Indian poetry as a source for the theoretical and aesthetic roots of a new American poetry. Building upon the foundation *Poetry*’s “aboriginal” issue had laid, George W. Cronyn edited the first anthology dedicated solely to American Indian poetry: *The Path on the Rainbow* (1918). Despite the anthology’s prioritization of ethnologists over Indigenous poets, *The Path on the Rainbow* became what Michael Castro

describes, adding a tone of seriousness to Sandburg's earlier irony, as "the most forceful assertion to that date of Indian poetry's importance as a model and as a source for a new, uniquely American poetry." Castro goes on to cite Mary Hunter Austin's introduction to the new anthology: "Probably never before has it occurred that the intimate thought of a whole people should be known through its most personal medium to another people whose unavoidable destiny it is to carry that thought to fulfillment and make of that medium a characteristic literary vehicle" (21). Rather than recast American Indian poetry as one of many non-European ethnopoetries, as Jerome Rothenberg has done,⁴ Castro, James Ruppert, and others argued throughout the 1980s, following Austin's lead, that the Indigenous poetic resources extracted for ostensible refinement through Anglo-American modernism helped to invigorate a new, uniquely American literature, one in which the American Indian became valuable as a "subject, symbol, natural object, and source of innovation in form" (Ruppert 244). Although demonstrating how "traditional" Indigenous poetry anticipated and influenced a new American poetry argues for the aesthetic value of Indigenous poetics, the recovery and reclamation projects of Robert Dale Parker and others are only beginning to provide evidence for the more substantial argument: early Indigenous poets have always carried their own thoughts to fulfillment and made of them a critical literary vehicle for Indigenous peoples and purposes.

Providing a sample of "aboriginal poetry" similar to Monroe's and Cronyn's, Axelrod, Roman, and Travisano's anthology features Densmore's translations as the earliest forms of American modernist poetry, suggesting, as Monroe did, that the American Indian is a "contemporary' whose poetry is very much of our times, a 'consummate, primal art,' which like the new poetry, is an expression of the possibility of a reborn, non-mercenary, beauty-loving American spirit" (Carr 60). The editors go on to suggest that early twentieth-century Native American poets are also modern in that they "produced powerful poems of social observation and protest" (Axelrod, Roman, and Travisano 7). No matter how exciting such claims are that Indigenous poetics mirror or even anticipate the modernist movement or that Indigenous poets composed social protest poetry, the fact remains that almost none of the poetry presented in Monroe's magazine, Cronyn's anthology, or Axelrod, Roman, and Travisano's more recent anthology was composed by an identifiable American Indian.⁵ Instead, the featured poems are admittedly "at best,

approximations of the [actual] songs and poems” (Axelrod, Roman, and Travisano 9). As Sarah Fedirka argues, within the mainstream representation of American modernism, Indigenous voices rarely speak; instead, they are spoken for and about by white patrons (581–83).

ARTHUR C. PARKER: THE *AMERICAN INDIAN MAGAZINE*

In contrast to Monroe’s metaphor of mining primitive poetics, an exploitation and expropriation of Indigenous peoples for the sake of modernism, the poetry published in the *American Indian Magazine* (*AIM*) provides a critical lens to relocate the Indigenous poets silenced by modernism’s privileging of the primitive. *AIM* offers one of many proofs that the absence of early twentieth-century Indigenous poets within representations of American modernism stems more from an internalized interest in ethnography than from any genuine lack of American Indian poetry. Though federal Indian policies insisted upon the assimilation of living Indigenous peoples, U.S. popular culture longed for the souvenir-style American Indian (Taylor 1–12), a classic case of what Renato Rosaldo describes as “imperialist nostalgia,” which still lacks a cure.⁶ Much of the U.S. populace continues to mourn what the U.S. nation-state still strives to destroy. As a result, ethnographers and editors of modernism have and continue to preserve the primitive only to simultaneously silence the survivors because the actuality of original Indigenous authorship proves antithetical to the public’s “primitive” ideal and undermines the deeply imbedded belief in Anglo-Saxon cultural superiority.

AIM, under the general editorship of Seneca archaeologist Arthur C. Parker, released its first volume in 1913—just a year after *Poetry* released its first, and five years before *Poetry*’s 1917 “aboriginal” issue—with an array of writings from Indigenous doctors, lawyers, authors, activists, and poets with names: Episcopalian minister Sherman Coolidge (Arapaho), Princeton graduate Howard Gansworth (Tuscarora), Yale graduate Henry Roe-Cloud (Winnebago), physician Carlos Montezuma (Yavapai), and Stanford graduate John M. Oskison (Cherokee), to name only a few. Though *AIM* never aspired to be a magazine of verse, its editors viewed and published poetry written by contemporary Indigenous poets as an essential component to promote “Race Ideals” and “Race Progress.”⁷ Although the Indigenous writers featured in *AIM* and espe-

cially their participation within the Society of American Indians (SAI) has recently received increased academic attention,⁸ these same writers' poetry has been largely overlooked.

Much of the scholarship on Parker, for example, such as Lucy Maddox's foundational work, *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform* (2006), focuses on Parker's political prose and Iroquoian ethnographies without serious consideration of his fiction or poetry. Though politics and ethnographies do make up the majority of Parker's writing, he also published a number of short stories and poems under the pseudonyms Alnoba Waubunaki and Gawasa Wanneh throughout his time as *AIM*'s general editor (1913–18). Within his political prose, he also inserts his own poetry while simultaneously displaying his familiarity with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous poets. At the conclusion of his 1914 essay "With the Passing of Puritanism the Red Man Comes," for example, in which he provides a condemning history of Puritan proselytizing among the Magwas (Mohawks), Parker inserts an original poem, "My Race Shall Live Anew":

My race yet lives,—it shall not die,
It has a mission to all earth
And will the conqu'ror only heed
My race shall prove its sterling worth.
Unchain the red man, make him free
To struggle and to claim his own!
The world shall find beneath his skin
Staunch human flesh, good blood and bone.
Give freedom to the red man's mind,
Provide the tools with which to hew,—
To carve his way as other men;
And then my race shall live anew! (125)

Parker's essay trenchantly retells the failed Puritanization of Native Americans. His poem then immediately asserts Indigenous resistance and survival and argues for a greater freedom or sovereignty for Indigenous peoples to forge their own futures rather than allow the U.S. government to blindly repeat its Puritanical past. Parker's poem does not experiment with meter, rhyme, or syntax, as was often demanded by mainstream modernism. Instead, he employs straightforward iambic tetrameter and rhyme to discuss the sociopolitical realities and possibilities of the modern American Indian. Like so many popular and mar-

ginalized poets of his time, Parker chose clarity over artistic obscurity.

Parker's poetry pushes for Indigenous rights and freedom in direct response to his sociopolitical realities. Placing Parker's poetry within its political and poetic contexts also aligns Parker's poetic choices with other marginalized poets of his era. Parker's deployment of poetry mirrors industrial workers and suffragists of the time who turned to traditional poetry with its predictable rhyme schemes and short, straightforward stanzas for their advertising and political propaganda (Harrington 10). In 1914, for example, Parker reported on an SAI meeting in Washington, D.C., to illustrate how SAI likewise adopted terse stanzas to promote its politics. At the meeting, the SAI presented "an appeal covering the conditions of all Indians" to President Woodrow Wilson and other U.S. government officials. The society "had telegraphed [the New York Indian Exhibits Company] for peace pipes" in order to stage the banquet as a "Peace Dinner," but the "company having no peace pipes sent war clubs!" The ironic mistake left the committee "in a quandary, for it had no warlike intentions." Parker continues, "On the spur of the moment, the verse was penned, and the club used for peaceful advantage." The verse reads:

To knock with club and thrust with spear
Robs life of all its peace and cheer.
So let us CLUB together, friend,—
Then all our woes shall be at end.

This pithy poem was then printed on white ribbons and tied around the war clubs, which the SAI labeled "Peace Clubs," transforming a potential weapon into a poetic petition for greater Native and non-Native political cooperation (Parker, "An Account" 269–273).

Parker's article that recorded the "Peace Club" poem was also reprinted in the January 1915 issue of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School's monthly literary journal, the *Red Man* (1909–14).⁹ In his article, Parker mentions the verse to highlight how a quick stroke of Indigenous poetic ingenuity affected the presidential audience and writes, "The accomplishments of the December meeting were the reaching of the President's ear, the presentation of basic facts for his consideration, a demonstration of the Society's unity and purpose, and the establishing of a deeper confidence of the public in the capacity of red men to reach out for higher things" ("An Account" 273). At least that was Parker's per-

ception of the poem's and the other presentations' effect on their immediate non-Indigenous audience. His essay says nothing of the possible responses of his Indigenous and more allied audiences reading "Peace Club" within *AIM* and the *Red Man*.

The subsequent February issue of the *Red Man*, however, includes a story entitled "The Battle of Wounded Knee" that includes phrasing so strikingly similar to SAI's "Peace Club" that it offers a possible insight into how Parker's poem speaks simultaneously but differently to his Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences. Depicting the Messiah's commission to his Native ghost dancers, the story reads, "He told us that we must throw away the rifle and the war club. 'Live in peace,' he said, 'and let the white man live in peace with you'" (Cooper 210). Jerome A. Greene's latest treatise on Wounded Knee, *American Carnage* (2014), attributes this quotation to at least seven known collected versions of the Messiah-Ghost Dance narrative (71), suggesting perhaps a broadly understood motif equating the laying down of weapons, specifically war clubs, with the massacre at Wounded Knee. Through such an interpretive lens, SAI's poetic repetition of "club/CLUB," which seems so innocent and cordial to non-Indigenous listeners, simultaneously calls on Indigenous readers to unite in a stronger ongoing, though peaceful, resistance to the past and current legislative and literal violence against Indigenous peoples and lands rather than to passively acquiesce in order to gain membership in the U.S. executive club.

In a 1915 *AIM* essay titled "Certain Important Elements of the Indian Problem," Parker returns to his strategy of inserting poetry into a discussion of the sociopolitical realities of modern Native America. His essay addresses the "blight that has fallen upon the red race within the United States" by listing and analyzing seven things American civilization has "robbed" from Native Americans, seven gifts of the government with their seven corresponding denials of Native rights, and seven characteristics of the resulting Native American (Parker, "Certain" 24–28). Parker's repetition of seven invokes Seneca mythology in a way that embodies his vision of Native adaptation: utilizing certain European American tools—the English language—with traditional Indigenous knowledge and symbolism—the number seven—in order to provide a new understanding of the "Indian problem" from an Indian's point of view.¹⁰ Instead of highlighting his own poetry in this essay, however, Parker first cites lines from John Dryden, Robert Browning, and Shake-

speare, indicative of his European American education. He then shifts away from the Anglophone canon and concludes his section on “The Right of Freedom,” drawing a keen connection to his previous poem, with a quotation from Canadian Mohawk poet E. Pauline Johnson’s “A Cry from an Indian Wife”:

Then go and strike for liberty and life and bring back honor to your
Indian wife.
Your wife? Ah what of that,—who cares for me,
Who pities my poor love and agony?
What white robed priest prays for your safety here
As prayer is said for every volunteer
That swells the ranks that Canada sends out?
Who prays for victory for the Indian scout?
Who prays for our poor nation lying low?
None—therefore take your tomahawk and go!
Go forth nor bend to greed of white man’s hands,
By right, by birth we Indians own these lands,
Though starved, crushed and plundered lies our nation low—
Perhaps the white man’s God has willed it so! (Parker, “Certain” 31)

Like Parker’s “My Race Shall Live Anew,” Johnson’s poem does not show significant signs of “modern” poetics. It adheres, instead, to the poetic tradition of iambic pentameter and rhyming couplets. In this poem, Johnson speaks to the sociopolitical reality of armed Indigenous resistance to the Canadian government’s blatant breaching of Indigenous treaties and rights.¹¹ Understanding the context of Johnson’s poem and the power of her poetic plea for action, Parker closes his section on freedom by providing an example of solidarity among Indigenous writers and peoples in their ongoing fight for freedom and its promotion through Indigenous poetry throughout North America. Rather than co-opt Johnson as an American poet, as so many mainstream magazines and anthologies had at the time, Parker cites one of Johnson’s overtly Canadian poems, thereby displaying his familiarity not only with another Native American writer but also with an Indigenous poet in another country. He offers evidence of a wide network of Indigenous artists and intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century whose works have only recently begun to gain greater academic attention. In Parker’s own poetry and in his quotation of Johnson’s, he does not experiment with high-modernist poetics; instead, he understands how to best con-

vey his message to his audience. He understands the power of packaging his message within recognizable poetic forms with all of the social capital such forms carry.

Avant-garde modernist magazines and today's ongoing articulations of American modernism seldom entertain Parker's iambic repetitions of traditional poetics, especially when the collected and interpreted "primitive" poetry proves so much more "modern." Joseph Harrington's reading of other marginalized, less "modern" poets during the modernist period, however, has created a productive space to invite Indigenous poets of the time into modernist conversations. Harrington reports that by 1918 some magazines had begun to defend popular poetry, with its repetitions of traditional poetics, as "a means of social solidarity" (35). Professing to address and represent all of Native America, *AIM* published poetry as one of several means of promoting social solidarity. As examples of the solidifying rhetoric found throughout *AIM*, Parker's and Johnson's poetry narrates through pronouns of inclusion and solidarity despite the geographic reality of dispersion, displacement, and imposed nation-state borders. Johnson writes, "*We* Indians," "*Our* sole kingdom," "*Our* right alone," and "What they gave *us*" (emphasis mine). SAI's Peace Clubs similarly read "us" and "our." Remembering *AIM*'s poetry alongside the many other artistic and literary forms used by early twentieth-century Indigenous writers, intellectuals, artists, and activists highlights how poetry has continued as an integral avenue to promote Indigenous solidarity and survival.

E. PAULINE JOHNSON: "HONEST TO GOODNESS INDIAN POETRY"

Parker was not the only SAI member aware of Johnson's poetry. Parker's replacement as *AIM* editor, Zitkala-Ša, proved similarly connected to the network of Indigenous intellectuals, activists, and poets of the time. In a letter written to Zitkala-Ša on April 11, 1927, M. K. Sniffen of the Indian Rights Association asks, "In your various contacts, have you come across any honest to goodness Indian poetry . . . ? There is an endless amount of poetry about Indians, but I do not know of books of poetry written by Indians, although there may be such."¹² Eleven days later, Zitkala-Ša notes, "I wrote the inquirer about Indian poetry and suggested the book *Path on the Rainbow* This is a kind of translation of Indian verses,

such as are used in Indian songs, and ceremonies. It is very interesting.” Sniffen’s inquiry is refreshingly forward thinking in that he recognizes the erasure and misrepresentation of the Indigenous poets, which had only increased since modernism had declared “traditional” Indigenous peoples to be rich poetic resources. In contrast, Zitkala-Ša’s recommendation seems disappointingly assimilative. A review of *The Path on the Rainbow: An Anthology of Songs and Chants from the Indians of North America* (1918) contributed by Henderson in *Poetry*’s April 1919 issue reads:

The publication of this book is an event, since here for the first time the subject of Indian poetry is presented to us on its own merits. Before this, if one wanted to know anything of Indian verse one had to search through the scientific and often non-literary treatises in the publications of the Bureau of Ethnology, or be content with the sort of intermittent treatment of the subject found in books devoted to a more general consideration of Indian life. But in this book, Indian poetry is presented to us as an art, rather than as an ethnological curiosity. . . . And *contemporary* the book is in every sense of the word. Not only is the American Indian a contemporary of ours—a fact too often lost sight of through the use of such terms as “the vanishing race” or that other colorless and far-distant sounding word “aboriginal”—but *his* poetry is very much of our time. (“Poetry” 41)

If the anthology lived up to Henderson’s celebratory review by featuring the contemporary American Indian poets of the time, it would be a revolutionary accomplishment indeed. Unfortunately, the very dedication of the book undermines Henderson’s applause of its own contemporaneity: “To those who have labored faithfully in the collection and transcription of the Art Forms of a Vanishing Race this book is respectfully dedicated.” As the dedication announces, *The Path on the Rainbow* is much more an attempt to present the leading works of non-Indigenous ethnographers to be considered as literature rather than to bring together and highlight the works of contemporaneous Indigenous poets.

At first glance, Zitkala-Ša’s suggestion seems acquiescent to the popular demand for the primitive. *The Path on the Rainbow* seems to be only an extension of *Poetry*’s 1917 “aboriginal” issue, featuring such well-known non-Indigenous names as Mary Hunter Austin, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Frances Densmore, James Mooney, James Owen Dorsey,

Alice Cunningham Fletcher, Constance Lindsay Skinner, and Franz Boas. Yet one name stands out among the rest: E. Pauline Johnson. Unlike all of the other mainstream books *about* Indian poetry, this one is singular for the time period in that it features and names a contemporary Indigenous poet. Although, as Castro reports, Cronyn's publisher forced him to include Johnson's Canadian Mohawk poetry as American Indian poetry for "commercial appeal," and "Cronyn lamented that Johnson's poems 'show how far the Indian poet strays from her own primitive tribal songs, when attempting the White Man's mode'" (31–32). In her recommendation to Sniffen, Zitkala-Ša says nothing of Johnson's inclusion and surely displays more of her own ethnographic commitment to preserving Indigenous stories, songs, and languages, as well as her interest in traditional Indigenous poetics gaining currency as a legitimate American art form, than any apparent desire to highlight the more critical contemporary poetry of the network of Indigenous intellectuals and activists within which she participated. Yet Johnson's inclusion, as problematic and unwanted as it was, links her both to a long history of Indigenous North American poetics and to the Indigenous poetic present that unifies Indigenous peoples across international borders. Contemporary readers might cringe, wishing Zitkala-Ša would have bombarded Sniffen with her own, Parker's, Johnson's, or any other Indigenous poet's more political and derisive poetry as proof that early twentieth-century Indigenous poets were very much alive and writing for their peoples. Instead, Zitkala-Ša refers her inquirer to an anthology that highlights a deep Indigenous poetic history while, perhaps inadvertently, displaying Johnson's ability to write both within and against the dominant culture.

Unlike Parker, Johnson has always been acknowledged and anthologized for her poetry. At the turn of the twentieth century, she published two books of poems: *The White Wampum* (1895) and *Flint and Feather* (1912). She also contributed to popular magazines throughout the United States and Canada, including *Boys' World*, the *Mother's Magazine*, the *American Boy*, *Outing*, and the Toronto-based the *Week* and *Saturday Night* (Milz 129). Despite her prolific and diverse portfolio, however, she has been most often memorialized as a passive patriotic poet, the epitome of Canadian assimilation. In *The Path on the Rainbow*, Cronyn furthers this mismemorialization, choosing to include two of Johnson's more pastoral and most cited poems: "The Lost Lagoon"

and “The Song My Paddle Sings.” These featured poems differ dramatically from Parker’s quotation from “A Cry from an Indian Wife.” Neither poem overtly mentions Indigenous issues or uses inclusive pronouns to gesture toward Indigenous solidarity, as does “A Cry from an Indian Wife.” Though sociopolitical solidarity, resistance, and survival can be read into these poems, they can more easily be misappropriated as poems from a “primitive” past. Because Johnson’s inclusion was primarily commercial, Cronyn chose not to include Johnson’s less popular poetry that courageously plunges her politics into the “reckless waves” of modernity (Johnson 32). He chose not to read *The White Wampum* from the beginning and include a poem like “The Cattle Thief,” which appears just pages prior to the two Cronyn includes:

Stand back, stand back, you white-skins, touch that
 dead man to your shame;
 You have stolen my father’s spirit, but his body I
 only claim.
 You have killed him, but you shall not dare to touch
 him now he’s dead.
 You have cursed, and called him a Cattle Thief,
 though you robbed him first of bread—
 Robbed him and robbed my people—look there, at that
 shrunken face,
 Starved with a hollow hunger, we owe to you and
 your race.

 You say your cattle are not ours, your meat is not
 our meat;
 When *you* pay for the land you live in, *we’ll* pay for
 the meat we eat.
 Give back our land and our country, give back our
 herds of game;
 Give back the furs and the forests that were ours
 before you came;
 Give back the peace and the plenty. Then come
 with your new belief,
 And blame, if you dare, the hunger that *drove* him to
 be a thief. (Johnson 11–15)

Why not feed this bite of poetic realism into the modernist mouths that continue to comfortably digest “the vanishing Indian”?

Instead, Cronyn decontextualizes and misappropriates Johnson's work as an easy transition from the past to the present, choosing poems that romanticize the setting of the ethnographic translations rather than disrupt the tidy anthology with ongoing Indigenous realities. Zitkala-Ša's suggestion of *The Path on the Rainbow* as "honest to goodness Indian poetry" can thus be read on multiple levels. On the one hand, Zitkala-Ša seems assimilative in that she suggests a largely ethnographic anthology rather than her own, Parker's, Johnson's, or any other Indigenous poet's work. Yet on a more critical level, by referring Sniffen to *The Path on the Rainbow* Zitkala-Ša simultaneously highlights Johnson's success as an early twentieth-century Indigenous poet capable of being accepted by and simultaneously subverting mainstream modernism. While Cronyn's editorial choices further the misappropriation and erasure of contemporaneous Indigenous poets within modernism, Parker's and Zitkala-Ša's inclusion of Johnson's poetry in *AIM* hints at an underlying network of Indigenous writers and thinkers who wrote and used each other's writings against the colonial conceptions and resulting racism that still pervade articulations of American modernism. It hints at a network of Indigenous intellectuals, activists, and poets that consciously disregarded the borders and boundaries imposed by nation-states and national literary canons used to dislocate continental—even global—Indigenous solidarity. It is a network that recent scholarship has only begun to uncover, provide substantial evidence for, and investigate.¹³

ZITKALA-ŠA: PARODY AND QUOTATION

Similar to Johnson, Zitkala-Ša was celebrated early on for her writing. Between 1900 and 1902 she began publishing semiautobiographical stories in *Harper's Bazaar* and the *Atlantic Monthly* and was featured by *Harper's* as one of the "Persons Who Interest Us." In 1901 she published her first collection of stories, *Old Indian Legends*, some of which began to appear in textbooks and school readers in New York, Washington, D.C., and other eastern states (Davidson and Norris xii-xx). Zitkala-Ša was presented at first as epitomizing the success of the U.S. Indian boarding school system. However, Zitkala-Ša's admittance, like Johnson's, into the mainstream was highly selective. As soon as she moved beyond relating traditional tales of Indigenous culture and began working with, encouraging, and writing about contemporary Indigenous

resistance to unilateral assimilation, her work was suddenly no longer primitive enough to be considered modern.

A few established scholars, such as P. Jane Hafen (Taos Pueblo), have read critical nuance into Zitkala-Ša's early stories, and other emerging scholars, such as Dory Nason (Anishinaabe), have begun to bring critical attention to Zitkala-Ša's later political activist literature. Zitkala-Ša's poetry, like Parker's, however, has been largely disregarded. Her poetry provides another critical window into the aesthetics of early twentieth-century Native America. Beyond employing inclusive pronouns of social solidarity, for example, early twentieth-century Indigenous poets also produced poetry alongside many of their contemporary popular non-Indigenous poets to parody some of the most iconic patriotic verses of the time in ways that challenge the notion of American democracy (Harrington 30). Zitkala-Ša displays her familiarity with this popular poetic mode in her 1917 poem "The Red Man's America":

My country! 'tis to thee,
 Sweet land of Liberty,
 My pleas I bring.
 Land where OUR fathers died,
 Whose offspring are denied
 The Franchise given wide,
 Hark, while I sing.
 My native country, thee,
 Thy Red man is not free,
 Knows not thy love.

 Great Mystery, to thee,
 Life of humanity,
 To thee, we cling.
 Grant our home-land be bright,
 Grant us just human right,
 Protect us by Thy might,
 Great God, our king. (64)

Zitkala-Ša's parody of one of the most canonical hymns of American patriotism illustrates her political fortitude and her understanding of the poetics of her non-Indigenous contemporaries. Yet, rather than lace her poem with allusions and intertextualities, as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and so many other modernist poets did to force their readers

to work toward a greater meaning, and rather than present a certain “self-reflexivity” that Linda Hutcheon identifies as a marker of modern parody (2), Zitkala-Ša echoes the straightforward parodic style of Lydia Huntley Sigourney’s “God Save the Plough” (1847). Sigourney’s parody celebrates the independent American farmer over the queen of England. Zitkala-Ša’s poem interrupts the powerful emotion automatically invoked by “My Country, ’Tis of Thee” with a testimony of the injustices against Indigenous peoples, a testimony of Indigenous patriotism to and sacrifice for the land, and a unified petition for greater Indigenous rights. Like Johnson and Parker, Zitkala-Ša petitions with the all-caps “OUR” to use her poetry to promote social solidarity among *AIM*’s Indigenous readership.

As editor of *AIM*, Zitkala-Ša’s placement of the poem within the magazine also evidences her familiarity with and “modern” use of quotation, one of the most universal tropes of modernist poetry (Diepeveen 23). However, rather than use quotation as an aesthetic duplication of another’s words into her own poetic voice to add a stylistic “intrusive textur[e]” (Diepeveen 2), Zitkala-Ša utilizes a modern style of quotation similar to the poetry of popular suffragist poet Alice Duer Miller. In Miller’s *Are Women People?* (1915), which remained absent from articulations of American modernism until the early 2000s, each of her poems is placed as a response to “imagined conversations that ventriloquized anti-suffrage positions” and “formal quotation and/or parody of canonical and popular poetry” (Chapman 61). Miller’s opening poem, “A Consistent Anti to Her Son,” for example, commences with an epigraph from an antisuffrage speech: “Look at the hazards, the risks, the physical dangers that ladies would be exposed to at the polls.” Miller’s poem then responds:

You’re twenty-one to-day, Willie,
And a danger lurks at the door,
I’ve known about it always,
But I never spoke before:
When you were only a baby
It seemed so very remote,
But you’re twenty-one to-day, Willie,
And old enough to vote.

.....

I’ve guarded you always, Willie,
Body and soul from harm;

I'll guard your faith and honor,
 Your innocence and charm
 From the polls and their evil spirits,
 Politics, rum and pelf;
 Do you think I'd send my only son
 Where I would not go myself? (11–12)

Throughout her 1915 collection, Miller sets up the context of each poem with quotations from popular and political sources that her poetry then parodies. She displays her cognizance of the arguments used against women's suffrage and then poetically points out their absurdity.

Published only two years later, Zitkala-Ša placed "The Red Man's America" in *AIM* at the conclusion of a series of newspaper clippings entitled "What the Papers Say about Indians." The quotations from the papers include discussions of Indigenous law, manufacturing, architecture, and patriotism. Her poem directly follows a quotation republished from an *Outlook* magazine article titled "Indians at the Front": "According to an official report, 1,200 Indians from the Canadian reserves have enlisted for active service in the war. . . . Last year Indians contributed over \$7,000 to war funds, and Indian women have been noteworthy contributors of knitted socks, mufflers and other comforts for the soldiers" (64). "The Red Man's America" responds and reacts directly to these quotations in a way that both provides and criticizes her contemporary sociopolitical context of noncitizen, disenfranchised Indigenous peoples throughout North America donating their time, talents, money, and lives to support Canada and the United States in World War I. Perhaps it is this multifaceted context, the poignant presence of contemporary Indigenous realities in Parker's, Johnson's, and Zitkala-Ša's work, that has kept it so long on the periphery of early twentieth-century American poetry. American modernism, at its core, is a moment of aesthetic experimentation, innovation, exploration. It is a movement obsessed with the singular moment, the object itself in its simplest, most unromanticized form. It is a mindset that caused Monroe's poetic prospectors to dig into Native America to bring back a singular aestheticized tom-tom rather than the raw surrounding testimonies, poetic or otherwise, of the surviving tribes. *AIM*'s poetry recovers some of the oft-forgotten articulations of the complicated contexts American modernism has deemed less important than the artistic extraction of Indigenous aesthetic resources.

RECOVERING THE “MODERN” INDIGENOUS POET

Lest we believe that this oversight of early twentieth-century Indigenous poets is something conducted only within mainstream representations of modernism, it was not until the 2010 publication of Robert Dale Parker's *Changing Is Not Vanishing* that we began to understand the breadth, depth, and variety of pre-1930 Native American poetry. Parker's massive recovery project has become an invaluable resource to remember the otherwise forgotten Indigenous poetry that has encouraged and should continue to encourage further recoveries and reclamations of early Indigenous literatures. Although Parker's collection has shifted the understanding of early Indigenous literary production in significant and critically important ways, it also reveals how even Indigenous literary criticism has internalized some modernist assumptions and narrow definitions of aesthetic value. For example, while recovering more than three hundred poems from newspapers, magazines, manuscripts, pamphlets, rare books, and scrapbooks composed by over eighty pre-1930 American Indian poets, Parker decided not to include Zitkala-Ša's poetry. He gives two reasons for this exclusion: because of the work's relatively wide accessibility today, and, more problematically, because of Parker's own assessment that poetry “was not one of [Zitkala-Ša's] many talents” (6). In his omission of Zitkala-Ša's poetry according to an undefined standard of aesthetic value, Parker slips into momentary adherence to the poetic school of Monroe and mainstream modernist anthologies and excludes one of the most prominent female contributors from this otherwise profound record of premodern Native American poetry.

Although aesthetic critique such as Parker's continues to push literary production in powerful ways, the same critique can also become “responsible for introducing a culturally reductive set of discriminations into conversations about poetics” (Pound n.p.). This is not to say that critiquing past or contemporary Indigenous literary production is inappropriate but rather that critiquing the literature of colonized peoples can further colonial attitudes and perspectives if we are not careful. The problem with Parker's critique is not that he finds Zitkala-Ša's poetry aesthetically unimpressive but rather that he limits his discussion and justifies his omission of her poetry to aesthetics only. This is not to criticize Parker's collection itself, for his work merits wide celebration for its attention to specificity, variety, and Indigenous authorial agency. Rather,

it is to identify an editorial slip that highlights an internalized modernist dogma that continues to allow aesthetics to override sociopolitical contexts, especially those that are Indigenous.

P. Jane Hafen's (Taos Pueblo) collection of Zitkala-Ša's previously unpublished works, *Dreams and Thunder: Stories, Poems, and the Sun Dance Opera* (2005), provides an alternative treatment of Zitkala-Ša's poetry. Although Hafen appears to share Parker's unfavorable evaluation of Zitkala-Ša's poetics, she finds value in how the poems speak to the sociopolitical circumstances of the era: "Poetry is a genre for which Bonnin [Zitkala-Ša] is least known and is not where she excelled. . . . The poems generally seem controlled by their rhyme and meter and have an artificially high rhetoric consistent with sentimental verse of the period. Nevertheless, the themes of Bonnin's poetry are similar to those of her other writings" (105). Hafen's choice to insert a "nevertheless" here is vital. She does not allow her aesthetic judgment to override the importance of preserving Zitkala-Ša's poetry. Hafen provides her own evaluation of Zitkala-Ša's poetics while still allowing the poems to speak for themselves. Hafen also moves away from talking about these poems in terms of their literary aesthetics alone by asserting what Zitkala-Ša accomplishes in her poems: "She [Zitkala-Ša] writes of struggle and resistance, nature, and romance." Her poems also display "Bonnin's [Zitkala-Ša's] conviction for political imperative . . . [and] she incorporates the familiar, like the parody . . . , with the tribally specific and politic" (105). In other words, according to Hafen, Zitkala-Ša's poetry is important not because it is outstandingly poetic but because it is an expression of and critical reaction to her sociopolitical realities.

This is, of course, an incongruent comparison. Hafen is interested solely in representing Zitkala-Ša's literary production, while Parker aims to represent all of pre-1930 Native American poetry. The rhetoric of representation, however, is what I am most concerned about in this essay. Parker excludes Zitkala-Ša's poetry because he does not deem it "good" enough to be included. He repeats the same argument for "modern" aesthetics that necessitated the very recovery work he now undertakes so inspiringly well. Like Parker, Hafen also evaluates Zitkala-Ša's poetics unfavorably, yet she attests to the fact that poetry was one of the many creative avenues through which Zitkala-Ša expressed her political convictions. What both works lack in their evaluations and resulting inclusion/exclusion of Zitkala-Ša's poetry is a discussion of why Zitkala-Ša chose to write in forms that seem so unmeritorious to today's critical

readers. The same could be said for much of the scholarship—or lack thereof—on Arthur C. Parker’s and Johnson’s poetry. Did Zitkala-Ša, Johnson, and Parker compose in rhyming couplets because they lacked the poetic ability to do otherwise or because they privileged their politics over their poetics? Did early twentieth-century Indigenous poets turn to iambs, rhyming couplets, and popular poetic modes only because they had become so ingrained in their minds from years of federal boarding schools and other Eurowestern educations, or did they do so because they recognized what literary critics have taken much longer to acknowledge: that for marginalized peoples with a message, sentimentality placed within recognizable literary forms can be a straight shot to the heart of mainstream American empathy?

Poetics and politics, sentimentality and artistic seriousness are more intricately intertwined than these rhetorical questions suggest, of course. But these and other similar dichotomies undergird many of the colonial assumptions responsible for delegitimizing early twentieth-century Indigenous poetry from the Indigenous and mainstream canonical literary record of North America. Zitkala-Ša’s, Arthur C. Parker’s, and E. Pauline Johnson’s poetry does not experiment with the “modern” poetics Monroe and the academy have since canonized, but early twentieth-century Indigenous poetry does not need to measure up to the academy’s authoritative assessments of modern aesthetics to deserve merit and discussion. As Harrington suggests, the question of “good” and “bad” poetry has left the canon of modernist poetry almost exclusively representative of high modernism and as such continues to “marginalize other interesting poets.” It perpetuates a “reified, inaccurate picture of poetry, including ‘modernist’ poetry, of the period” (2). In the late 1980s, Cary Nelson argued that critical movements within black studies and feminist studies “demonstrated that the literary and social history we promulgated as sufficient in fact suppressed an immense amount of writing of great interest, vitality, subtlety, and complexity—writing, indeed, if one feels the need to argue the case on these grounds, of demonstrably high quality” (5). Although the canon has opened in significant ways to present a more diverse range of American literatures, the selective suppression Nelson confines to the past tense continues to suppress marginalized communities of writers today. And Indigenous poets are some of the most marginalized and most interesting poets still missing from the academy’s version of early twentieth-century American poetry.

It is time, as Harrington suggests, to cease comparing “apples and oranges” in order to present a more accurate portrait of modern American poetry (1). Or as Chadwick Allen (Chickasaw ancestry) argues, it is time to move beyond simple comparison to a more critically productive juxtaposition of Indigenous literatures with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous literatures (xvii–xviii). Thus, it is time to encourage new critical movements within Indigenous studies to demonstrate the ongoing suppression of Indigenous literatures and for Indigenous critical movements to lead the way in overcoming that suppression. By prioritizing the primitive over the present, the exotic over the actual, the voiceless over the vocal, the dead over the living, American modernist magazines and today’s leading anthologies have canonized a near-century of Indigenous poetic silence. It is this silence, this absence of actual Indigenous poets within American modernism, that is only beginning to be corrected through recovery, reclamation, and analysis. It is imperative, however, in our current scholarship not to seek to interpret, translate, or overstate the original before we have first presented and sought to understand the original in its respective literary and sociopolitical contexts. It is critical that we move beyond comparative frameworks of Indigenous and non-Indigenous aesthetics to discuss instead how Indigenous poets have always worked through various aesthetic means to promote Indigenous community, solidarity, resistance, and survival. It is also essential that such scholarship remains conscious of the risk of repeating academic history by recovering the past while simultaneously—albeit unconsciously—silencing the present. Let us, therefore, be cautious not to resuscitate “dead Indians” only to repeatedly suffocate “live ones” (King 53). Rather, let us recover, reclaim, and analyze the work of those passed to assert the understated reality that Indigenous peoples and their poetry have always been, and continue to be, very much alive.

MICHAEL TAYLOR is a Ph.D. candidate in English at the University of British Columbia. His dissertation argues for the need to push beyond the single-author focus of current literary scholarship in order to study and celebrate collective articulations of Indigenous solidarity alongside artistic singularity.

NOTES

I would like to express my gratitude to the Charles Redd Center at Brigham Young University for its generous support. I would also especially like to thank Daniel Heath Justice, Dory Nason, and Mary Chapman, as well as the audience at the Annual Meeting of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, for their insightful comments and feedback on earlier versions of this article.

1. The four poems included are Alexander Posey's "Ode to Sequoyah" (1899) and "Hotgun on the Death of Yadeka Harjo" (1908), as well as Louis Oliver's "Empty Kettle" (n.d.) and "The Horned Snake" (n.d.).

2. The *American Indian Magazine* was originally called the *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* (1913–15).

3. As declared in a 1916 manifesto, imagist poets celebrated the freedom to present a singular image through "poetry that is hard and clear," using common speech and new rhythms (Aldington et al. vi–vii). Vorticism, on the other hand, manifested in 1914 to "stand for the Reality of the Present—not the sentimental Future, or the sacri-pant past" (Lewis 7). Vorticist poets became known for their innovative typography, which sought to capture the motion within any given image.

4. See Jerome Rothenberg's *Technicians of the Sacred* (1985).

5. Lynn Riggs (Cherokee) is the first Native American poet I have found to be published in *Poetry*. His poem "Rhythm of Rain" was published in August 1923. His work was published again in August 1925, January 1943, and August 1943. In March 1931 *Poetry* also published Robert Liddell Lowe's review of Riggs's book of poems, *The Iron Dish* (1930).

6. Rosaldo defines imperialist nostalgia as "mourning for what one has destroyed" (107), depicting how imperialist racial majorities often use "a pose of 'innocent yearning' both to capture people's imaginations and to conceal [their] complicity with often brutal domination" (108).

7. See the front cover of the *American Indian Magazine* 4, no. 4, and 5, no. 1.

8. See especially *The Society of American Indians and Its Legacies: A Special Combined Issue of SAIL and AIQ* (2013).

9. The *Red Man* was originally called the *Indian Craftsman* and featured, among others, the literature and artwork of Carlisle students and staff.

10. For examples of the significance of the number seven in Seneca mythology, see Oren Lyons Jr.'s (Seneca) description of the "seventh generation" principle of chiefly decision making (174), as well as Arthur C. Parker's *The Constitution of the Five Nations, or, The Iroquois Book of the Great Law* (1916).

11. The resistance Johnson poeticizes in "The Cattle Thief" involved a number of confrontations and uprisings among the Cree and Métis peoples of Saskatchewan, Canada, which have since been historicized as the North-West Resistance or North-West Rebellion of 1885.

12. At the time, Matthew K. Sniffen was serving as secretary of the Indian Rights Association.

13. For a sample of the most recent scholarship, see *The Society of American In-*

dians and Its Legacies: A Special Combined Issue of SAIL and AIQ (2013), as well as Kiara M. Vigil's *Indigenous Intellectuals: Sovereignty, Citizenship, and the American Imagination, 1880–1930* (2015), among others. See also Michelle St. John (Cree), Jani Lauzon (Métis), and Monique Mojica's (Kuna/Rappahannock) Turtle Gals musical *The Only Good Indian . . .* (2007).

WORKS CITED

- Aldington, Richard, et al. *Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915. Print.
- Allen, Chadwick. *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. Print.
- Axelrod, Steven Gould, Camille Roman, and Thomas Travisano, eds. *The New Anthology of American Poetry: Modernisms 1900–1950*. Vol. 2. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005. Print.
- Carr, Helen. "Poetry: A Magazine of Verse (1912–1936), 'Biggest of Little Magazines.'" *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*. Ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 40–60. Print.
- Castro, Michael. *Interpreting the Indian: Twentieth-Century Poets and the Native American*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983. Print.
- Chapman, Mary. "Are Women People? Alice Duer Miller's Poetry and Politics." *American Literary History* 18.1 (2006): 59–85. Print.
- Cooper, Courtney Ryley. "The Battle of Wounded Knee." *Red Man* 7.6 (1915): 205–12. Print.
- Cronyn, George W., ed. *The Path on the Rainbow: The Book of Indian Poems*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1918. Print.
- Davidson, Cathy N., and Ada Norris. Introduction. *Zitkala-Ša: American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*. By Zitkala-Ša. New York: Penguin Books, 2003. Print.
- Diepeveen, Leonard. *Changing Voices: The Modern Quoting Poem*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993. Print.
- Dove, Rita, ed. *The Penguin Anthology of 20th Century American Poetry*. New York: Penguin Group, 2011. Print.
- Fedirka, Sarah A. "'Our Own Authentic Wonderland': The Modernist Geographical Imagination and 'Little Magazines' of the American West." *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*. Ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 576–98. Print.
- Gordon, Frank S. "The Tom-Tom." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 9.5 (1917): 221–25. Print.
- Greene, Jerome A. *American Carnage: Wounded Knee, 1890*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014. Print.
- Hafen, P. Jane. *Dreams and Thunder: Stories, Poems, and the Sun Dance Opera*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. Print.

- Harrington, Joseph. *Poetry and the Public: The Social Form of Modern U.S. Poetics*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002. Print.
- Henderson, Alice Corbin. "A Note on Primitive Poetry." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 14.6 (1919): 330–34. Print.
- . "Editorial Comment: Aboriginal Poetry." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 9.5 (1917): 256. Print.
- . "Poetry of the North-American Indian." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 14.1 (1919): 41–47. Print.
- Hickman, Miranda B. *The Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H.D., and Yeats*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005. Print.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. New York: Methuen, 1985. Print.
- "Indians at the Front." *American Indian Magazine* 5.1 (1917): 64. Print.
- Johnson, E. Pauline. *The White Wampum*. Toronto: Copp Clark Co., 1895. Print.
- Lewis, Wyndham, ed. *Blast*, no. 1 (1914). Print.
- Lyons, Oren, Jr. "An Iroquois Perspective." *American Indian Environments: Ecological Issues in Native American History*. Ed. Christopher Vecsey and Robert W. Venables. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1980. 171–75. Print.
- King, Thomas. *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. Print.
- Maddox, Lucy. *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006. Print.
- Miller, Alice Deur. *Are Women People? A Book of Rhymes for Suffrage Times*. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1915. Print.
- Milz, Sabine. "'Publica(c)tion': E. Pauline Johnson's Publishing Venues and Their Contemporary Significance." *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne* 29.1 (2004): 127–45. Print.
- Modernist Journals Project. "Poetry: A Magazine of Verse." Brown and Tulsa Universities, ongoing searchable database. Web. 22 July 2015.
- Monroe, Harriet. "Editorial Comment: Aboriginal Poetry." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 9.5 (1917): 251–54. Print.
- . "Editorial Comment: Various Views." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 8.3 (1916): 140–44. Print.
- Monroe, Harriet, and Alice Corbin Henderson, eds. *The New Poetry: An Anthology*. New York: Macmillan, 1921. Print.
- Nelson, Cary, ed. *Anthology of Modern American Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- Parker, Arthur C. "The Awakened American Indian: An Account of the Washington Meeting." *American Indian Magazine* 2.4 (1914): 269–74. Print.
- . "The Awakened American Indian." *Redman* 7.5 (1915): 163–68. Print.
- . "Certain Important Elements of the Indian Problem." *American Indian Magazine* 3.1 (1915): 24–38. Print.
- . *The Constitution of the Five Nations, or, The Iroquois Book of the Great Law*. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1916. Print.

- . "With the Passing of Puritanism the Red Man Comes." *American Indian Magazine* 2.2 (1914): 120–25. Print.
- Parker, Robert Dale, ed. *Changing Is Not Vanishing: A Collection of Early American Indian Poetry to 1930*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. Print.
- Pound, Scott. "Language Writing and the Burden of Critique." *Canadian Literature* 210/211 (2011): 9–26. Web. 15 July 2015.
- Rosaldo, Renato. "Imperialist Nostalgia." *Representations* 26 (1989): 107–22. Print.
- Ruppert, James. "Discovering America: Mary Austin and Imagism." *Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs*. Ed. Paula Gun Allen. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1983. 243–58. Print.
- Sandburg, Carl. "Editorial Comment: Aboriginal Poetry." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 9.5 (1917): 254–55. Print.
- Sigourney, Lydia Huntley. "God Save the Plough." *The Farmer's Almanack*. Boston: Jenks & Palmer, 1845. 39. Print.
- Sniffen, M. K. Letter to Mrs. Gertrude Bonnin. Apr. 11, 1927. Gertrude and Raymond Bonnin Collection (Vault mss1704). Box 3, Folder 16, Item 12. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo.
- Society of American Indians. *American Indian Magazine* 4.4 (1916). Print.
- . *American Indian Magazine* 5.1 (1917). Print.
- Taylor, Michael P. "The American Indian as a Souvenir: Antiquarianism, Exoticism, and Sentimentalism in Cooper's *The Pioneers*." MA thesis. University of Heidelberg. 2012. Print.
- Weaver, Jace. *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. Print.
- "What the Papers Say about Indians." *American Indian Magazine* 5.1 (1917): 54–64. Print.
- Womack, Craig. *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999. Print.
- Zitkala-Ša. *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*. Ed. Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris. New York: Penguin Books, 2003. Print.
- . Letter to Mr. Sniffen. Apr. 22, 1927. Gertrude and Raymond Bonnin Collection (Vault mss1704), Box 3, Folder 16, Item 32. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo.
- . "The Red Man's America." *American Indian Magazine* 5.1 (1917): 64. Print.

Prisoners of History

Pocahontas, Mary Jemison, and the
Poetics of an American Myth

KARENNE WOOD

Anyone interested in history will admit that it's risky to take on the personas of historical characters—to impute motives to their actions, to “speak” for them, reimagining them as human beings apart from the narrative thread that delivers them to us. And yet what do we receive in most histories of Native people in the Americas during colonial times—characters pulled out of cultural context because those who wrote about them seldom knew or even tried to understand what it meant to be Native then? In popular culture, we receive worse: characters that have been manipulated to suit the agendas of media and marketing agencies, bearing little resemblance to their origins beyond their names.

As both a Native poet and a historical researcher, I am often caught in this dilemma, aware that the mainstream stories of our people are deeply flawed but unable to find more authentic accounts, usually because the American Indians remain voiceless or were deliberately silenced. This is particularly true for Native women—their daily activities and beliefs were of no interest to the colonial explorers and settlers whose accounts form the “primary sources” dear to American historians and teachers. And so it seems only right to go back to those accounts and to look for the Native voices, to try to learn more about them as people.

I've always found the story of Pocahontas troubling and avoided writing about her for that reason. In 2006 I visited Kent County, England, with a group of more than fifty Virginia Indians, and we saw the church at Gravesend where she is buried. In 2014 I was asked to speak about Pocahontas to the Jamestowne Society in Los Angeles, because that year marked the four-hundredth anniversary of her marriage to John Rolfe. I chose to speak about the roles of Native women at that time in our region, an attempt to add cultural depth to her story. It seemed then that perhaps I had something to say about her life and the situation in which

she found herself from the perspective of a Virginia Indian woman, and so I wrote a poem. But first I researched what we know about her and her people, turning to recent books and articles by reputable scholars, ignoring stories from earlier times, which cast her as that Indian girl who saw English culture as inherently superior to her own and who “helped the white man” because she loved him.

I also found myself drawn to another Native woman, born 150 years or so later, known to American “frontier history” as Mary Jemison but not nearly as well known as Pocahontas. Interestingly, Mary Jemison was born white. And so I wrote about her, too. This essay is the story of these two women as I see it and the story of two poems that emerged from their experiences.

NOT QUITE THE FAIRY-TALE PRINCESS

In the summer of 2015 the Pamunkey Indian Tribe of Virginia received notice from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, that their efforts to obtain federal acknowledgment had finally met with success—permitting tribal members, for the first time in nearly four hundred years, to officially assert their claim as the descendants of the paramount chief Powhatan and his famous daughter, Pocahontas. All two hundred of them. In contrast, the non-Native Americans who also claim to descend from Pocahontas now number more than twenty thousand (Gleach 449). Many of them belong to an elite club that calls itself the FFV, the Founding Families of Virginia, as though no families lived here when the colonists arrived. Their grandparents and great-grandparents proclaimed descent from Pocahontas even during the period when anti-Indian sentiment was most virulent, when Virginia passed an antimiscegenation law known as the 1924 Racial Integrity Act. That law defined anyone with a drop of “Negro” blood as “colored” and felonized marriage between whites and persons of color. An exception was made, however, for those whose only non-Caucasian blood was one-sixteenth or less American Indian, to accommodate those wealthy and well-placed Virginians descended from Pocahontas (Rountree 221).

Pocahontas has long been the stuff of legend, dating back to Captain John Smith’s adventurous account of his visit to what is now Virginia in 1607. A year later he was gone, back to England, never to return to the mid-Atlantic region. The year of publication of his account, 1624,

is significant, as the majority of the other participants in his Virginia exploits had by then died; his earlier accounts do not mention the story that made Pocahontas famous. According to the 1624 account, Smith was captured by Powhatan's war chief, Opechancanough, taken on a tour of Powhatan's lands, and subjected to several rituals and perceived threats. He was then transported to Powhatan's capital, Werowocomoco, where he was suddenly forced to put his head on a stone. When warriors raised clubs to smash his head, Pocahontas leaped in, laying her head on his and pleading for his life (Smith 150–51). Scholars generally now agree that if the event occurred at all, it was probably a ritual adoption, intended to bring Smith and the English colonists into the Powhatan polity to strengthen the Powhatans' power and protect them from enemy tribes. Scholars and tribal members agree that Pocahontas was likely not present, because she was a child and would not have been permitted in council.

Smith departed for England, and Pocahontas went on with her life. She married a Patowomeck warrior named Kocoum and is thought to have had a child. Kocoum disappeared from the historical record, though, and Pocahontas was kidnapped by Samuel Argall with the help of Patowomeck people. Argall took her to Jamestowne and then to another colonial settlement, Henricus, where she learned to dress and speak like an Englishwoman. Although her father paid the ransom the English demanded, they refused to return her. Her options were limited, and when the English gentleman John Rolfe declared his desire to make her his wife, she agreed. They were married in 1614, and she had one child, named Thomas. They visited England, where she died of an unknown disease. She was about twenty years old (Lopenzina; Rountree).

AN ORIGINAL AMERICAN MYTH

The Pocahontas rescue story was popularized by English expatriate John Davis and gained momentum following the War of 1812 as Americans began to explore and develop a nascent history of their country. With the Indians of the East no longer a threat, the easterners were free to develop nostalgia, such as that evident in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. Poems and plays based on the Pocahontas rescue emerged, popularizing an attitude evident from one introduction: "Pocahontas is one of those characters, rarely appearing on the theatre



Fig. 1. The only image of Pocahontas made during her lifetime. Here her sacred name, Matoaka, and her English name, Rebecca, are noted.

of life, which no age can claim, no country appropriate. She is the property of mankind, serving as a beacon to light us on our way. . . . In Pocahontas we view the simple child of nature, prompted by her own native virtues alone, discharging the most generous acts of self-devotion” (Gleach, quoting William Watson Waldron, *Pocahontas, Princess of Virginia, and Other Poems* [1841], 9). Pocahontas came to embody those

virtues idealized for Christian white women of the time—an American mother figure, a myth, decontextualized from her culture and her community, her personal circumstances ignored or transfigured. Even her name, Amonute, disappeared, along with her sacred name, Matoaka, and her Christian name, Rebecca. She remains Pocahontas, a nickname given to a child by her father that meant “wanton” or “mischievous.”

At the same time, she emerged in the American mindset as a beautiful, exotic female Other, desired by white men, a sexual model. In her article “The Pocahontas Perplex,” Rayna Green deftly traces the art history of this model from images of Caribbean queens published in 1575 to the emergent American Indian princess that represented Liberty before the image of Columbia supplanted her. As Camilla Townsend suggests, those models gave European men notions that America was a land waiting to be ravished and that Native women were available for the taking. Pocahontas was thus cast both as a demure, motherly figure and as an object of desire, a confounding notion that Green correctly characterizes as dysfunctional. In many of the later paintings representing her, Pocahontas’s skin appears white.

Even more confounding is the misperception most Americans have that it was John Smith, and not John Rolfe, whom Pocahontas loved and wished to marry. There is no evidence to substantiate any physical relationship between Pocahontas, a child of about eleven at the time, and Smith, who was a commoner and thus not permitted to consort with those he perceived as royalty (Gleach). The “love story” between them has continued to thrive as American legend, however. It emerged in 1958, when Peggy Lee covered “Fever,” an R&B tune that refers to a love affair between the two, and most notably in 1995, when Disney released its *Pocahontas* film, which featured John Smith as a tall blonde Ken-doll and Pocahontas as a willowy Asian-looking Native, clearly older than eleven. The love myth has continued to emanate from Hollywood, most recently in Terrence Malick’s boring film, *The New World* (2006), which starred Colin Farrell as Smith and Q’orianka Kilcher, age fourteen, as Pocahontas. It’s been profitable: the majority of American children know of Pocahontas through Disney’s film, and she remains their only contact with Virginia Indians of the past and present. Not only is she legendary, but she’s been commodified, animated into an indigenous object of sexual desire that pervades American mindsets and Halloween costumes long after elementary school (Ono and Buescher).

“A MISSION TO PRESERVE”

All of this points to a disconcerting truth: while, until recently, American society has remained uncomfortable with the idea of race mixing through marriage, and some states, like Virginia, even outlawed that practice, the interracial union of Pocahontas and John Rolfe (or even Pocahontas and John Smith) is beyond question. Why is that? How did it happen that the four-hundredth anniversary of Pocahontas and Rolfe was publicly commemorated at Historic Jamestowne in 2014 (Lopenzina) and celebrated by those Jamestowne Society members as far away as Los Angeles?

Drew Lopenzina points out that colonial history, which is rooted in various forms of violence and oppression, often cloaks itself in the language of a benign and uncontested destiny. In this case, Historic Jamestowne—a site jointly owned by the National Park Service and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities—states that its mission is “to preserve, protect and promote the original site of the first permanent English settlement in North America and to tell the story of the role of the three cultures, European, North American and African, that came together to lay the foundation for a uniquely American form of democratic government, language, free enterprise and society.” On the surface, the mission statement may seem innocuous—except that the order of “the three cultures” is chronologically flawed, and continents are not singular cultural groups. Embedded in it, however, is the notion that colonial institutions and cultural beliefs are inherently privileged, ignoring tribal removals, terminations, cultural suppression, language loss, even slavery and the Racial Integrity Act, which denied Virginia’s Native peoples a separate identity and cast them in the “colored” category—except for Pocahontas and those mostly Caucasian descendants of hers who are not Pamunkey tribal members.

MARY JEMISON: A HAPPIER ENDING

In contrast to the persistent legend and reframing of Pocahontas as an animated rather than a historical character, the story of De-he-wä-mis has vanished from mainstream American consciousness. She was born in 1743 as Mary Jemison to Irish parents on a ship en route to America. The story of her life, which she told to Reverend James Seaver as



Fig. 2. *Mary Being Arrayed in Indian Costume* (with some funny-looking Senecas in the background and a canoe that resembles a large high-heeled shoe).

an elderly woman, was published as a “captivity narrative” and was immensely popular for decades afterward.

Mary grew up near what is now Marsh Creek, Pennsylvania, on land where her parents had squatted without the permission of the Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois, tribes whose homelands these were. In 1755, as tensions escalated between the French and British in what is erroneously called the French and Indian War, a party of French and Shawnee raiders captured Mary, then twelve, and her family. Mary and her younger brother were spared; the others were killed and scalped.

Two Seneca women adopted Mary; she married a Delaware man

named Sheninjee and had a son she called Thomas, after her father. Her husband died, and she married Hiakatoo, a Seneca warrior, with whom she had six children. She helped to negotiate terms for the Seneca following the Revolutionary War, when they were forced to cede land because they had supported the British. When the Seneca left the Genesee Valley in 1823, they reserved a parcel of land for Mary's use. She remained there until 1831, when she sold it and returned to her Indian people, among whom she died at the age of ninety (Seaver). Initially buried in the Seneca community at Buffalo Creek where she died, her remains were removed at the request of her descendants and relocated to the site of a Seneca council house on the estate of James Letchworth, today the site of a New York state park, where a bronze statue commemorates Jemison's life.

Given the opportunity several times to return to the world of white settlers, De-he-wä-mis chose to remain with her Indian family. Her name, however, appears in Seaver's 1824 narrative as Mrs. Mary Jemison—a conflated reflection that casts her status as a white woman who, although married to an Indian husband for decades, retains her first name and her maiden Irish surname rather than the Seneca name by which she was known. While there is evidence indicating that she chose to keep Jemison as a surname, the "Mrs." is interesting: Was that English convention her choice or Seaver's cultural assumptions at play?

Captivity narratives were popular in the nineteenth century and earlier because they detailed a traumatic lived experience that exposed violent confrontations between settlers and Native peoples, casting the former as victims and the latter as predators and obstacles to civilization. Originating with the story of "Mrs. Mary Rowlandson," who was captured by Pequots in Puritan times, the genre typically presented lurid details of grisly encounters between whites and Indians. "The Indian of the captivity narrative was the consummate villain, the beast who hatched fathers, smashed the skulls of infants, and carried off mothers to make them into squaws" (Wyss, quoting Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Savages of America* [1953], 58). These stories cast American women as pure and virtuous and their contact with "savages" as irreversible defilement, most likely through rape, because, according to cultural perspective, they would never have participated willingly. This condition was clear to Jemison, who states in her narrative that she could not endure the thought of herself and her children being ignored or despised by her

own relatives if she were ever to return to them. She also states that she loved her husband.

Although Jemison's story was initially published and presented to American readers as a captivity narrative, her voice is that of a Seneca woman. Susan Walsh and Karen Oakes argue persuasively that that voice stands in opposition to some of Seaver's editorializing, favoring Native practices and beliefs even when they conflict with those of colonial settlers and privileging the perspective of a female "cultural conservator," creating an autobiography that is quintessentially Native in nature.

CONCLUSION

In examining the circumstances of these two women, I was struck by some basic similarities: they were smart, resourceful, strong women who made the best of the difficulties they encountered. Both were abducted as teenagers, were married twice, named their first son Thomas. Both negotiated complicated circumstances during wartime, adapting to new languages and societies, as was the regional custom for captives of any race. Both were aware of their positions as outsiders and used their status to broker terms of peace for the Native people with whom they were affiliated.

Neither of these stories can be read in simple terms or as a "captivity narrative." Both women accepted their situations and managed to fit into their new societies. Neither renounced her origins, however: Pocahontas kept a circle of Native women around her even while living with Rolfe on a colonial farm; Jemison continued to practice speaking English and gave her children English names. Each seemed to have done the best she could. As such, perhaps we should consider them not as captives but as pioneers in the truest sense: those who went before us, endured difficulties, raised children, and helped to lead their people during times that, to us, remain unimaginable.

KARENNE WOOD (Monacan) directs Virginia Indian Programs at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Her second book of poems, *Weaving the Boundary*, was recently published by the University of Arizona Press, Sun Tracks series. Wood's poems have appeared in the *Kenyon Review*, *Shenandoah*, and *Fulcrum: An Anthology of Poetry and Aesthetics*. She holds a Ph.D. in linguistic anthropology from the University of Virginia and an MFA in poetry from George Mason University. Her first book, *Markings on Earth*, won the North American Native Authors First Book award, and she has been named one of Virginia's Women in History.

WORKS CITED

- Gleach, Frederic W. "Pocahontas: An Exercise in Mythmaking and Marketing." *New Perspectives on Native North America: Cultures, Histories, and Representations*. Ed. Sergei A. Kan and Pauline Turner Strong. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. 433–55. Print.
- Green, Rayna. "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture." *Massachusetts Review* 16.4 (1975):698–714. Print.
- Lopenzina, Drew. "The Wedding of Pocahontas and John Rolfe: How to Keep the Thrill Alive after Four Hundred Years of Marriage." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 26.4 (2014):59–77. Print.
- Oakes, Karen. "We Planted, Tended and Harvested Our Corn: Gender, Ethnicity, and Transculturation in 'A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison.'" *Women and Language* 18.1(1995):45. Literature Resource Center. Web. 31 Aug. 2015.
- Ono, Kent A., and Derek T. Buescher. "Deciphering Pocahontas: Unpacking the Commodification of a Native American Woman." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18.1 (2001):23–43. Print.
- Rountree, Helen C. *Pocahontas's People: The Powhatan Indians through Four Centuries*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990. Print.
- Seaver, James E. *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*. New York: American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, 1922 [1823]. Print.
- Smith, Captain John. *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles. The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580–1631)*. Vol. 2. Ed. Philip L. Barbour. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986 [1624]. Print.
- Townsend, Camilla. *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2005. Print.
- Walsh, Susan. "With Them Was My Home: Native American Autobiography and A Narrative of Mrs. Mary Jemison." *American Literature* 64 (1992):49–70. Print.
- Wyss, Hilary E. "Captivity and Conversion: William Apess, Mary Jemison, and Narratives of Racial Identity." *American Indian Quarterly* 23.3/4 (1999):63–82. Print.

Amonute, 1617

KARENNE WOOD

Tsenacomoco. A place like no other, heart of all hearts,
our center, that lime-green breast of a world.
We were of it. Belonged to its waters, which spread west
like fingers from Chesapioke, where saucer-sized oysters
stacked themselves on underwater shelves and shad teemed upriver
when trees budded, such as grew a hundred feet or higher:
cypress, sycamore, chestnut, crowding out the understory. Where,
at forest's edge, white dogwood blossoms shimmered like stars.
Where our women dug *tuckahoe* tubers, pounded out bread, and
planted their corn, beans and pumpkins with songs, according to the
moon.

My father, Powhatan, our *mamanatowick*, holiest of chiefs,
who in his dreams entered all realms seeking our futures
and who spoke with our priests the secret holy words,
called me Pokahuntas, little Mischief. A nickname. He knew my
name, Amonute.

Wind from the east, with what portent, the day runners brought
word
of more ships with sails, pale strangers with hair on their faces like
dogs?

Watch them, Powhatan said. We heard tales: they tried
to catch fish with flat pans, built a wall around their huts.
Could not feed themselves.

Opechancanough, our war chief, captured and brought us their
leader.

A squatty short man, face sprouting red fur. No one had seen
such a man or heard his talk. My father exchanged boys with him.
The white boy

would stay in our town. He and I traded words. I learned “house,”
yehakin.

“Bread,” *ponap*. “Garment,” *matchcore*. “Arrows,” *attonce*.
Aroughcun, I taught him, that one with the black-striped tail.
Mockasin, supple buckskin, scent of woodsmoke.

I wanted more words. Went to their fort, to the redheaded man.
 Chawnsmit, his name. He became my father’s son, called him Father,
 said

what was his would be ours. I learned to speak to him.
Ka ka torawincs yowo?

“What do you call this?”

And my father’s question:

Casacunnakack, peya quagh acquaintan vttasantasough?

“In how many days will there come more English ships?”

Then he left. Chawnsmit, our son. We were told he was wounded. He
 had died, they said.

That Anglo tongue, my undoing. Years passed.

Oftentimes, we were fighting the strangers.

My husband Kocoum disappeared,

and his Patawomeck people sold me to Captain Argall for a copper
 kettle.

I was to be ransomed. Was sent to Henricus

where the Reverend Whitaker, a dour man hunched like a buzzard,

instructed me in their words, their religion, and where

John Rolfe came to love me. Our people were at war. Would I marry
 him,

he asked.

Would my father make peace? We said yes. I gave up my sacred
 name,

Matoaka, she who kindles,

and I became Rebecca,

a biblical woman who left homeland for Canaan, married Abraham’s
 Isaac,

brought peace between enemies,

bore twins: the red Esau, who emerged first; and Jacob,

who through his mother’s treachery inherited the land.

A few years of calm. We planted tobacco. I bore a son, Thomas.

Then another question: would I cross the sea, go to London, be their
 emissary?

Yes, my father said. Go. We need to know more.
 I saw Plymouth, then London. Felt its crowds press upon me, knew
 its stench.
 I saw that Chawnsmit.
 He still lived. No son of ours. Heard their lies in his words.
 Knew then that more of them would always come to us.
 At last, when spring came and the winds turned, our ship left for
 home.
 I felt weak. I stumbled. We must stop, my husband said.
 She is too ill to go on.
 He cupped the bones of my face. Wiped my brow when delirium
 swallowed me. Spoke gently.
 Words.
 Black words swirling like London's murmurations of starlings that
 clouded the sky at dusk.
 At home, my sisters pat out corn cakes and laugh. The elder calls to a
 child
 who splashes at river's edge, where the sand wears each stone
 smooth.
Crenepo, woman.
Marowanchesso, boy.
Sukahanna, water.
 On the shore, men scrape dugouts with oyster shells.
Acquintan, canoe.
 Words. As though nothing had changed.
 It is but the fevered dream of one who sleeps an ocean away.
 Tsenacomoco.
 We thought it the center of the world.

De-he-wä-mis

(1743–1833)

KARENNE WOOD

Born at sea, I have lived between worlds: Ireland
to America, a farm hacked from forest; the family
attacked, captured, marched to Fort Duquesne.
French and Shawnee men dancing, my mother's red
hair on a scalp pole, bright fires.

Two Seneca women
canoeed me downriver to a town of longhouses, past
burned heads and body parts mounted on spits. Took me
as sister, gave me a name: De-he-wä-mis, "pretty girl,"
or "pleasant thing."

I have tried to be pleasant. Did as I
was asked. Practiced speaking English when alone,
recited my catechism. Named my son Thomas after
the father I'd loved. Buried a husband who fell ill
while hunting, married again, had six more children,
all with English names.

Another war, our people
forced to choose sides. Americans burned our towns.
At the Treaty of Big Tree, I spoke to the white men, and
we got better terms.

Buried a daughter, my three sons,
my husband. Alcohol. Fighting. Consumption. A landslide.
There were too many whites. Our chiefs chose to leave
for Buffalo Creek. My brother asked if I'd stay or return
to an English-speaking world I'd not known for 40 years.
What would life be among them, how could we belong?
The whites claimed me but not my daughters. Not my Indian
brother, whom I cried for days to lose. I stayed, on my own

land. Told my life to a preacher, who called it a
 “captivity story.”
 Sold the land, joined my family. I have not
 lived imprisoned; I am not just Mary Jemison now.
 At ninety, a woman with choices, I was once made
 a relative. Taught to be human. It has been enough.

KARENNE WOOD (Monacan) directs Virginia Indian Programs at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Her second book of poems, *Weaving the Boundary*, was recently published by the University of Arizona Press, Sun Tracks series. Wood’s poems have appeared in the *Kenyon Review*, *Shenandoah*, and *Fulcrum: An Anthology of Poetry and Aesthetics*. She holds a Ph.D. in linguistic anthropology from the University of Virginia and an MFA in Poetry from George Mason University. Her first book, *Markings on Earth*, won the North American Native Authors First Book award, and she has been named one of Virginia’s Women in History.

BOOK REVIEW

James H. Cox. *The Red Land to the South: American Indian Writers and Indigenous Mexico*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-8166-7597-5. 288pp.

Jace Weaver, *University of Georgia*

Full disclosure up front: I was involved in the publication of James Cox's *The Red Land to the South*. It was the last project I brought in as coeditor of the Indigenous Americas series at the University of Minnesota Press. It was not, however, published until I was no longer associated with the series. Rereading it again recently reminded me of the qualities I saw in it as a manuscript, though.

Cox examines the representations of Mexico, most specifically Indigenous Mexico, by American Indian writers of the first half of the twentieth century. It is not a literary history of Indigenous Mexico. It is a study of a particular set of representations that were filtered through the (often) romantic desires of the authors. Most of these representations are from fiction and drama, though real-world events, such as Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas's land reform in the 1930s (most famously depicted in Marjorie Becker's *Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution*), factor in.

Cox discusses Cherokee writers John Milton Oskison and Will Rogers, both of whom visited Mexico and wrote about their experiences, and "post-Renaissance" authors Leslie Marmon Silko and Gerald Vizenor, who wrote about the relationship of American Indians to Indigenous Mexico in *Almanac of the Dead* and *The Heirs of Columbus*, respectively. The core of the book, however, deals with three Native American

authors, all of whom wrote prior to the initiation of the so-called Native American Renaissance. Two of these are well known and have been the subject of a fair amount of scholarship: Cherokee poet and playwright Lynn Riggs and anthropologist and novelist D'Arcy McNickle (Métis/Flathead). Much less known is Todd Downing, a Choctaw who wrote genre fiction set in Mexico during the golden age of mystery writing during the 1920s and 1930s. The literary engagement of these three authors with Indigenous Mexico is not equal in each case.

McNickle's young adult novel, *Runner in the Sun*, is set in the pre-Columbian American Southwest and, as Cox observes, "recovers the region from the U.S. Southwest to central Mesoamerica as a Greater Indigenous Mexico" (157). His history, *They Came Here First*, deals with North America north of Mexico, though he does stress the trade routes that connected that area to Mexico. As Cox writes, "Rather than a touchstone author, . . . the McNickle of *The Red Land to the South* is one in a chorus of many American Indian literary voices from the interwar and early contemporary era. He follows other American Indian authors to Mexico and with them finds an Indian country in Mexico with strong historical, cultural, and political ties to the north" (151–52).

Riggs set two plays, *A World Elsewhere* and *The Year of Pilár*, in Mexico. The first is a cutting satire "of a failed counterrevolution by hacendados longing to recover" lands seized by President Cárdenas for return to Mexican Indians (65). *The Year of Pilár* is a kind of companion piece, dealing with an indigenous revolution.

The writer with the most sustained literary involvement with Indigenous Mexico is Downing. He wrote nine mystery novels, most of them set in Mexico, including *The Last Trumpet* and *The Cat Screams*. Of the three authors, he also wrote the only full-length nonfiction work dealing with the subject, *The Mexican Earth*.

This book is an important study, organized around the "political affinity for and historical interest in indigenous Mexico shared by some American Indian writers" in the first half of the twentieth century (2). Cox examines the way those writers envisioned (often naively) Mexico and Mexican indigeneity.

Cox's chapter on Lynn Riggs is an important addition to the growing body of scholarship on the playwright since I began his recovery for Native literature almost twenty years ago. His discussion of Todd Downing has certainly helped disperse the critical fog that has enveloped the

Choctaw writer. Since the publication of *The Red Land to the South*, he has been the subject of *Clues and Corpses: The Detective Fiction and Mystery Criticism of Todd Downing* by Curtis Evans. And Downing's novels, long unavailable, have all been brought back into print. (The most recent edition of *The Cat Screams* has an afterword by Cox.)

With sharp analysis and clear and supple prose, James Cox has produced an important contribution not to the criticism of Mexican or Mexican American literature but to the scholarship of Native American literature.

JACE WEAVER is Director of the INAS, Franklin Professor of Native American Studies and Religion, and Adjunct Professor of Law. As director, he serves as advisor for all students in the undergraduate and graduate Native American Studies Programs. He holds two doctorates, a J.D. from Columbia Law School of Columbia University and a Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in New York.