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JUNE SCUDELER, Simon Fraser University

SIOBHAN SENIER, University of New Hampshire

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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

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The editorial board of SAIL invites the submission of scholarly manuscripts focused on all aspects of Indigenous literatures, including bibliographical essays, review essays, and interviews. We define “literatures” broadly to include written, spoken, and visual texts created by Indigenous people in what are currently known as the Americas. Submissions should demonstrate critical engagement with the fields of Native American and Indigenous literary studies; we are especially interested in publishing work on lesser-known and non-canonical authors and texts. Manuscripts of roughly 5,000–7,000 words should be prepared according to the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook* and emailed as an attachment. SAIL observes a “blind reading” policy to maintain academic integrity, so do not include any identifying information anywhere in the document. All submissions are read by outside reviewers, and the entire peer-review process from submission to publication can take up to a full year. Manuscript submissions and any queries should be sent to sail.editors@gmail.com.

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FROM THE EDITORS

tawâw (welcome) to our first double issue! In consultation with the *Studies in American Indian Literatures* editorial board, we're now publishing two double issues a year. This new publication schedule streamlines some of our labor; more substantively, double issues give us an opportunity to create lengthier and richer conversations around Indigenous literatures, as well as to make room for more special sections. In this double issue, for instance, we begin with a special section on water edited by Hilary Wyss and Christina Boyles. The issue could not be more timely. Here in Vancouver, the Federal Court of Appeals recently decided to halt approval of the Kinder Morgan pipeline because of lack of consultation with Indigenous communities—particularly the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, whose territories would be devastated by an ocean spill—and the catastrophic effects of increased tanker traffic on the critically endangered resident orca population. Further, just as we are taking our essays to press, one of our collegial publications, the journal *Decolonization*, has dropped its own special issue on water. In the words of that issue's editors, Melanie Yazzie and Cutcha Risling Baldy, "struggles over water figure centrally in concerns about self-determination, sovereignty, nationhood, autonomy, resistance, survival and futurity." We find all these themes reflected in Indigenous *literature* and in the essays carefully curated by Wyss and Boyles.

We're also pleased to see that this issue's other contributors engage with contemporary Indigenous literatures, something we have concertedly tried to encourage. It's hard to keep up with all the new writing across Turtle Island, and we remain keenly interested in contributions that highlight the groundswell of new Indigenous writing, as well as those that bring to light texts in all genres that deserve more recognition. Lydia R. Cooper's "Straight Talk: Two Spirit Erasure as the Price of Sovereignty in James Welch's *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*," for example, addresses the rape of Charging Elk, a Lakota member of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show left behind in late nineteenth-century France.

Charging Elk is raped by gay chef Armand Breteuil, which Craig Womack (Muscogee) likens to an erasure of queer Indigenous / Two Spirit people. Cooper persuasively argues that Welch's silence about the Lakota winkte upholds the settler state's aim to enforce heteropatriarchy.

In contrast, in "I Got This AB Original Soul / I Got This AB Original Flow": Frank Waln, the Postmasculindian, and Hip Hop as Survivance," Sarah Kent builds on Gerald Vizenor's (Anishinaabe) concept of the "Indian" and Sam McKegney's masculindian to come up with postmasculindian. Sicangu Lakota hip hop artist Frank Waln is postmasculindian because he "disrupts the toxicity of white heteropatriarchy by crafting, (re)inventing, and living viable modes of Indigenous masculinity." Kent's intervention is vital because it argues for an Indigenous masculinity based on kinship and care.

Using witnessing as a framework in "This Story Needs a Witness": The Imbrication of Witnessing, Storytelling, and Resilience in Lee Maracle's *Celia's Song*," Laura Beard argues that Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle's 2014 novel should be read alongside discourses of reconciliation, reminding readers to witness not only what is happening now but also what may happen in the future. Witnessing is not a passive act; rather, Celia, the shape-shifting Mink, and the reader are all implicated in witnessing.

We conclude this double issue with Reginald Dyck's "Revitalization Strategies in Gaspar Pedro González's *A Mayan Life*." González's (Q'anjob'al Maya) novel, published in 1992, was actually completed in 1972 during the intensification of the Guatemalan civil war, in which Mayan peoples were targeted. Dyck provides vital contextual information for the protagonist, Lwin, and his village's need for cultural revitalization and the fight for political rights. *A Mayan Life* is a key intervention in the Mayan Revitalization movement, helping non-Mayan readers achieve a better understanding of the similarities and differences in what is currently known as the Americas.

June Scudeler and Siobhan Senior

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Water Is Life

Ecologies of Writing and Indigeneity

CHRISTINA BOYLES AND HILARY E. WYSS

“Water is Life,” the recent rallying cry of the Standing Rock Sioux opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline, gestures to the urgency of understanding ecological depredations as an attack on life itself. The idea of “water protectors” (as the activists protesting the construction of an oil pipeline under the Missouri River call themselves) emerges from a specific historical moment in relation to #NoDAPL, but this is an apt way to imagine the work of this special issue more generally as a folding together of ecology, indigeneity, and the role of writing in making visible Indigenous ways of engaging with water.

While water scarcity is a concern for all living beings, its impact tends to be greater for Indigenous communities. Reservations in particular are sites where government and corporate entities expose “residents to dangerous environmental conditions,” including dangers caused by air pollution, water contamination, dangerous working conditions, and weapons testing (Taylor 47). Although these environmental concerns are long-standing, increasing privatization of water resources, paired with the ongoing effects of climate change, have amplified discussions about Indigenous water rights in US media. Communities of color, particularly Indigenous communities, have always borne the brunt of environmental injustice; however, these issues have become more explicit in the Trump era. Both under the leadership of Scott Pruitt and in the wake of his resignation, the Environmental Protection Agency has rolled back environmental protections for protected federal lands, particularly those deemed to be of value for natural resource production. Although the EPA is charged with promoting and restoring the health of tribal lands, it also has the authority to allow “tribal communities and other stakeholders to pursue future beneficial use or reuse of resources

for economic, environmental, and traditional purposes” (“Cleaning Up”). Often, these “other stakeholders” are given precedence over tribal lands due to intersecting corporate and governmental interests. Such behavior places Indigenous communities at risk in terms of their health and well-being and threatens their sovereign claims to the land.

In response, Native communities have developed a series of protests and legal challenges to contest corporate and governmental claims to these lands. Many of these debates center on the sovereignty of tribal nations: What authority do tribes have over their rolls, lands, and resources? How do these rights operate within Western power structures? How should they operate? These questions are not answered simply, but they all have a common concern: state and federal laws stifling Indigenous nations for profit and power. This special issue of *SAIL* examines the way Indigenous writers have focused on water—its use, the laws that regulate its distribution, and its cultural and ecological value both within and outside Indigenous communities—to generate meaningful dialogue about the relationship between colonialism, water rights, and tribal sovereignty.

Varying water laws across the United States force Indigenous communities to structure their arguments within specific legal contexts. In the East, water rights are determined by riparian rights, which permit those whose land abuts a body of water to use and access that water. In the West, water rights are determined by prior appropriation, which grants water rights chronologically based on whoever first put the water to “beneficial use” as determined by state and federal law. In theory, this means that all water in the United States should be the property of Indigenous communities; however, *Winters v. United States* (1908) complicates this narrative. According to this ruling, Native water rights are determined according to the location and establishment date of reservation lands. Eastern reservations have access to water their federal land abuts, but they do not have exclusive rights or jurisdiction over this water. Western nations are given prior appropriation rights based on the date on which their reservation was established, a decision that significantly disadvantages many Native communities in the West, particularly those using water from the frequently overdrawn Colorado River. Other issues further complicate this framework; for example, non-federally recognized tribes have no legal water rights. Additionally, the Five Tribes—the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole—are

federally recognized tribes that possess fee lands rather than reservation lands. As such, they have exclusive rights over the water on their lands and are not subject to state authority regarding its use. Barring the laws surrounding the Five Tribes, who maintain the greatest sovereignty over their water rights, US water laws are designed to be exclusionary: they create a gatekeeping mechanism that privileges those in power while disadvantaging others, particularly Indigenous peoples. By denying other Native nations similar autonomy to the Five Tribes, the government negates their claims to both sovereignty and water.

Many groups have already begun to address the relationship between sovereignty and environmental justice. For example, Idle No More speaks out against the misuse of tribal lands in Canada by “assert[ing] Indigenous inherent rights to sovereignty and reinstitut[ing] traditional laws and Nation to Nation Treaties by protecting the lands and waters from corporate destruction” (“The Story”). Similarly, the Standing Rock Sioux and their supporters protested the development of the Keystone XL pipeline on treaty land that is under the control of the Army Corps of Engineers. Both of these groups demonstrate the ways in which corporate interests are allowed to supersede the health and well-being of citizens, particularly Indigenous citizens.

Additionally, the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) unites Indigenous peoples to “protect the sacredness of Earth Mother from contamination & exploitation by respecting and adhering to Indigenous knowledge and natural law” (<http://www.ienearth.org/>). By mobilizing activists from around the globe to places like Standing Rock, the Tar Sands, the People’s Summit (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), and the United Nations, the IEN demonstrates how Indigenous knowledges can be used to address many of the world’s most pressing issues: climate change, capitalistic models of consumption, and the devaluation of non-European knowledge systems.

Other activist groups examine the relationship between climate change and sovereignty through the promotion of Indigenous environmental knowledges. One group, the Navajo Water Project, seeks to provide clean water for individuals throughout New Mexico. As they note on their website, “Navajo are 67 times more likely than other Americans to live without running water or a toilet. . . . Many Natives can’t get enough clean water, creating a cycle of poverty that limits health, happiness, educational opportunity, and economic security”

("About the Project"). By addressing the inequitable living conditions for the Navajo, this group interrogates the ethics of resource allocation in the United States. Other strategies for promoting Indigenous sovereignty include recognizing Native peoples' rights to land. This can take the form of a land acknowledgment at a public event, or it can involve returning land to the tribes. Notably, the Nature Conservancy in Nebraska recently transferred 160 acres of land to the Ioway. Tribal Vice-Chairman Allan Kelley commented, "This return of a part of our reservation, in a natural condition much as our ancestors would recognize it and which we will continue to restore, is helping us to heal the land and as a tribe" (Hendee). Promoting tribal sovereignty serves as a way to promote justice, to acknowledge the damages caused by settler colonialism, and to promote environmental justice.

Water inherently is linked to both sovereignty and climate change. As water resources become increasingly scarce, access to clean, reliable water resources is crucial. By demanding that the US government acknowledge Indigenous sovereignty, Native peoples are fighting for both autonomy and survival. Of particular concern is the overallocation of the Colorado River, which provides freshwater for most of the Southwest. According to David Owen, "The Colorado suffers from the same kinds of overuse and environmental degradation that increasingly threaten freshwater sources all over the world, as the global population rises toward its projected mid-century level of nine or ten billion, and as changes in the weather play havoc with accustomed precipitation patterns" (7). Highlighting the ways in which this body of water has had an extraordinary impact on both the lived experience of vast numbers of people living within the continental United States and the cultural imaginary of Indigenous communities, three of the four pieces included in this collection discuss territory fed by the Colorado River.

Indeed, what the essays in this collection suggest is that the solutions to our global water problems are to be found in Indigenous communities and are given voice by Native writers—novelists, essayists, and poets. This includes the dismantling of many power structures that now dominate our world—capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy—as well as the implementation of ethical environmental practices, such as a return to viewing nature as a commons that is equally shared by all living things. For non-Indigenous peoples, this also includes embracing Indigenous peoples' rights to land and sovereignty.¹

As Stephanie Fitzgerald notes, “gender and eco- and environmental criticism have been historically undertheorized in relation to Native studies” (7). All the essays in this special issue of *SAIL* take on these intersecting concerns to make a powerful argument for the inextricable link between discourse and policy and the essential role of Native writers and intellectuals in making visible the political, social, and emotional perils of irresponsible water use. These essays build upon the work of Indigenous scholars who have already begun to explore the relationship between literature and water, including Shari M. Huhndorf, Stephanie J. Fitzgerald, William Huggins, and Niigaan Sinclair. These authors draw connections between original stories, lived experiences, and storytelling to demonstrate the historical, spiritual, and present role of water within their communities. Huggins terms these relationships “literary water ecologies” that help readers understand their relationship to water through the art of storytelling (56).

This special issue builds on this body of scholarship, providing new insight into the work of writers like Leslie Marmon Silko and Simon Ortiz. As Huhndorf notes, Silko’s *Sacred Water* “critically engages the broad history of colonial dispossession along with contemporary debates surrounding water rights in the Southwest” (370); the article by Christina Boyles in this issue builds upon Huhndorf’s argument by expanding this discussion to include other texts by Silko: *Almanac of the Dead*, *Gardens in the Dunes*, and *Oceanstory*. Likewise, Robin Riley Fast’s article further advances Huggins’s claim that “[n]o commentary on the literary and ecological significance of water in a desert ecosystem would be complete without the inclusion of Simon Ortiz (Acoma)” (61).

At the same time, this issue addresses the broader environmental issues present in the western United States. Acknowledging the foundational role of water in many Indigenous communities, the articles in this issue explore the ways in which water forms and re-forms the land, bringing structure and change to our ways of life. Fitzgerald describes this process with the Mississippi, noting that “[w]hat we now know of as coastal Louisiana is new land, made from sediment continuously laid down by the great Mississippi over thousands of years” (91). However, many sites are at risk. Due to industrialization, climate change, and natural disasters, the United Houma Nation is at risk of losing their homelands and ways of life (Fitzgerald 90–101). These issues are not relegated

to communities along the coast but are ever-present in Indigenous communities across the globe.

In March 2015 Niigaan Sinclair spoke at a hearing of the Lake Winnipeg Water Review to encourage legislators to address water pollution throughout the Lake Winnipeg waterway. He stated, “Lake Winnipeg, the only way I can describe it is the epicenter of my life, it is the epicenter of my family. It is what has made my family’s relationships with this place and it has done so for thousands of years in this place” (1277, lines 8–12). He went on to note that “the very first inhabitant and life form of Manitoba was *ataagib*, *ataagib* algae” and that “the members of Peguis take our relationship with *ataagib*, Lake Winnipeg, very seriously. It is our life blood. It is what has created our families, it’s what has created our Treaties, it’s what created our life. And by controlling the water within Lake Winnipeg, we are literally playing with our lives” (1288, lines 12–13, 1289, lines 10–16).

The articles in this special issue seek to pay similar homage to the bodies of water that have created and sustained our lives by advocating that Indigenous frameworks be applied to our environmental initiatives so that we can save both our water and our lives. The first essay, Christina Boyles’s “Writing Water, Writing Life: Silko as Environmental Activist,” engages with four of Silko’s post-1990 works, arguing that together they make a powerful anticolonial statement about water and the need for “an environmental ethos grounded in Indigenous practices.” Boyles argues that it is specifically by engaging with water rather than land that Silko’s later works tap into the potency of Indigenous ways of seeing that world and their revolutionary potential. Both through her writing and in her day-to-day life, Silko demonstrates the need to dismantle capitalism and (eco)colonialism in favor of a more ethical framework: environmental justice grounded in Indigenous knowledge. Robin Riley Fast’s article, “Water, History, and Sovereignty in Simon J. Ortiz’s ‘Our Homeland, a National Sacrifice Area,’” argues for the centrality of Ortiz’s classic essay in establishing a truly relevant modern resistance movement grounded in Indigenous experience. Using the experience of the Acoma people and the severe environmental degradation of their lands, Ortiz’s essay makes a claim for the interconnection between racism and land depredation and the urgent need for Native writers to advocate “for their people’s self-government, sovereignty, and control

of land and natural resources,” thus laying out a set of strategies, Fast argues, for a modern environmental movement.

This special issue moves from a discussion of prominent Indigenous authors Leslie Marmon Silko and Simon Ortiz, both of whom write of the perilous water resources of the Southwest, to an analysis of the problematic archive and alternative ways to preserve Indigenous knowledges surrounding water into our cultural memory. Thus Shanae Aurora Martinez’s article, “Intervening in the Archive: Women-Water Alliances, Narrative Agency, and Reconstructing Indigenous Space in Deborah Miranda’s *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir*,” uses the specific geography of the California mission system along the Rio Carmelo and the forms of violence that erased Indigenous people from their own history. Using Deborah Miranda’s *Bad Indians* as a way into this conversation, Martinez argues that the multigenre text usefully intervenes in the larger conversation by reaffirming Indigenous rights through an engagement with a set of archival materials that collectively establish a history of Indigenous presence.

The collection ends with an examination of Standing Rock and its antecedents. “Mnisose / The Missouri River: A Comparative Literary Analysis of River Stories from the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the #NoDAPL Movement” by Sarah Hernandez explores the extensive engagement of Native people with a narrative constructed as part of a larger settler colonial effort to contain the Missouri River (Mnisose). Hernandez thus situates the modern #NoDAPL movement alongside its precedents in various Indigenous interventions in the settler colonial narrative from Lewis and Clark onward. She writes, “The long-standing tension surrounding the continent’s longest river is recorded in an eclectic range of literatures—from oral stories to newspaper articles to travelogues, books, poetry, and, more recently, social media—that reflect a seemingly endless and highly adaptable cycle of settler colonialism” that is countered by the voices of Indigenous people speaking powerfully of their alternative relationship to the river.

The return of land (and the water connected to it) to Native communities is essential to combating the corrosive effects of settler colonial logics, but just as important, as these essays emphasize, is attending to the relationships between the environment and the people. Indigenous communities have long-standing practices that contemporary Indigenous writers and intellectuals have embraced in

their literatures and other forms of cultural expression. It is our belief that the essays in this special issue establish the interconnectedness of Indigenous water rights and the work of Native writers and intellectuals who have made the ecological issues so pressing within Native communities visible to the global community. Through their writing, they provide the communities most in need of models for engaging with the world and its water resources with strategies that move us all beyond racially charged notions of environmental justice and toward a more balanced understanding of the world and its resources.

CHRISTINA BOYLES is an assistant professor of culturally engaged digital humanities in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures at Michigan State University. She is the founder of the Hurricane Memorial project and the cofounder of the Makers by Mail project. Her research explores the relationship between surveillance, social justice, and the environment. Her published work appears in *The Southern Literary Journal*, *The South Central Review*, and *Plath Profiles*, and her forthcoming work will appear in *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, *Bodies of Information: Feminist Debates in the Digital Humanities*, and *American Quarterly*.

HILARY E. WYSS is the Allan K. Smith and Gwendolyn Miles Smith Professor of English at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. She is the author of *English Letters and Indian Literacies: Reading, Writing, and New England Missionary Schools, 1750-1830* (U of Pennsylvania P, 2012); *Writing Indians: Literacy, Christianity, and Native Community in Early America* (U of Massachusetts P, 2000); and with Kristina Bross, *Early Native Literacies in New England: A Documentary and Critical Anthology* (U of Massachusetts P, 2008). She served as president of the Society of Early Americanists from 2011 to 2013 and has been on the editorial board of the journals *Early American Literature* and *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*.

NOTE

1. For example, during the government's recent rollback of protections for Bears Ears National Monument, Patagonia and REI fought back by becoming "allied with Indian tribes, for whom some of the lands are sacred, as well as with conservationists" (Andrews). While the activism of these corporations was not perfect—they garnered a lot of press that they failed to funnel toward Indigenous communities—they did acknowledge Indigenous peoples' right to land on a public platform. By doing so, they discredited the narrative of Indigenous erasure that plagues much of Western thought.

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Writing Water, Writing Life

Silko as Environmental Activist

CHRISTINA BOYLES

As concerns regarding the earth's water resources continue to grow, Indigenous communities are often thrust to the forefront of these conflicts. Protests at Standing Rock and the Tar Sands have highlighted the challenges they face when trying to access clean water. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Indigenous peoples are some of the hardest hit by government and corporate entities seeking to privatize water for profit. One of the communities most affected by water politics are the Indigenous peoples of Arizona and New Mexico, whose water supply is being drained, polluted, and rerouted due to corporate and government interests. The work of Leslie Marmon Silko, who is a member of the Laguna Pueblo of New Mexico, is mired in the concerns of her community, particularly issues of water scarcity. While Silko discusses the role of water in Native American communities in the Southwest in each of her works, those written post-1990—*Almanac of the Dead*, *Sacred Water*, *Gardens in the Dunes*, and *Oceanstory*—examine it in the greatest depth. These texts highlight the tension between imperial interests and Indigenous knowledge, focusing specifically on issues of water scarcity to demonstrate the need for an environmental ethos grounded in Indigenous practices. Since water allocation cannot be separated from either environmental or racial factors, Silko's texts critique (eco)colonialism's relationship to Native American communities and their water supply. In *Almanac of the Dead*, Silko discusses how large quantities of water are both used and contaminated by uranium mining, an act that has the greatest impact on the nearby Native American reservations. In *Sacred Water*, Silko presents a solution to water scarcity and contamination by advocating for sustainable irrigation, farming, and gardening practices. In *Gardens in the Dunes*, Silko addresses issues of population growth and landscaping

in the American Southwest, noting that current trends are detrimental to the water supply. Her most recent publication, an e-novella entitled *Oceanstory*, completes her discussion of water by drawing connections between colonialism and environmental degradation.

Silko's work directly challenges the settler logics inherent in the environmental movement for its investment in the narrative of Indigenous erasure. By focusing on the preservation of "pristine" landscapes—many of which are stolen Indigenous lands now operating under the guise of natural parks—environmentalists fail to address the ways in which climate change poses the greatest threat for marginalized groups, especially Native communities in the Southwest. Silko notes that "[t]hose who claim to love and protect the Mother Earth have to love all of her, even the places that are no longer pristine" (*Yellow Woman* 95). One way for activists to do this is by acknowledging the environmental conditions in many Native communities. Cultural studies scholar Andrea Smith notes that "ecofeminist thinkers do not adequately discuss the material conditions in which Indian people live, how these conditions affect non-Indians, and what strategies we can employ to stop the genocide of Indian people and end the destructive forms of resource development on Indian land" (30).

In her work on *Almanac of the Dead*, Bridget O'Meara argues that "[a]n environmental movement that does not consistently and consciously foreground the relationship between the degradation of ecosystems and the violence against labor within gendered, racialized, and sexualized discourses and practices of capitalism merely serves and strengthens capital's interests in (neo)colonial and (neo)imperial projects" (71). Silko provides an ethical approach to environmentalism in her novels both by highlighting the harm created by settler culture and by demonstrating the ways in which Indigenous knowledge promotes healthier ways of being for both people and the ecosystem. T. V. Reed terms Silko's approach "decolonial environmental justice cultural studies" to emphasize the ways it challenges imperialist logics of economics, race, and the environment. Reed's assessment provides a powerful foundation for many key components of Silko's philosophy; this piece builds upon it by noting the interplay between Indigenous knowledge and decolonial projects. Decolonial environmental projects, often aligned with the "environmental justice" movement, address the needs of individuals "from an assortment of racial and social class backgrounds; they

are African, Latino, Asian, Native, and white” activists who are seeking to redress the environmental harm done to marginalized communities (Reed 40). As such, they aim to address environmental discrimination broadly, often by refuting the colonial ideologies undergirding our culture’s valuation of peoples and lands. Using “decolonial” to encompass the experiences of all people of color, however, is a form of equivocation that risks erasure of Indigenous experiences. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang note, “[F]orwarding a thesis on decolonization without regard to unsettling/deoccupying land, are equivocations . . . [that] ambiguously avoid engaging with settler colonialism; they are ambivalent about minority/people of color/colonized Others *as settlers*; they are cryptic about Indigenous land rights in spaces inhabited by people of color” (19). This article, therefore, grounds its analysis in a decolonial framework that is specifically Indigenous to acknowledge the histories of settler colonialism in Indigenous communities; to highlight the relationship between water rights, climate change, and sovereignty; and to promote environmental practices grounded in Indigenous knowledges. Doing so captures the nuance of Silko’s work and creates a richer picture of the ways in which she addresses eco(colonialism) in the Southwest.

While scholars have drawn strong connections between capitalism and the environment in Silko’s works, these discussions have not focused specifically on water issues. Rebecca Tillett states that “[o]ne of the principal issues that Silko addresses is the complicity between science/technology and capitalist ventures, such as the energy/nuclear industries and real estate, which pursue the potential for vast economic profits at the cost of irreversible ecological damage” (154). Others, like Terre Ryan, note that Silko’s works “demonstrate the ways in which white European and American men have sought to dominate all other human beings and all of the earth’s landscapes” (115). Both of these arguments demonstrate the ways in which settler power structures like capitalism and conquest are inherently harmful to marginalized groups, particularly the Native peoples of the Southwest; I build upon these arguments by examining the ways in which water relegation and access play into these structures. In particular, I demonstrate how Silko’s novels use water issues to advocate for an (eco)revolution grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems.

WATER SCARCITY IN THE SOUTHWEST

Just as the role of water has taken a central role in Silko's texts on the American Southwest, much of the current research surrounding water scarcity has taken place in this region. Since the Colorado River Compact of 1922, water allocation has been a contentious issue in the Southwest. The Environmental Protection Agency notes that "[w]ater allocations in the region, some of which were agreed upon almost a century ago, have become difficult to meet" (Environmental Protection Agency, "Climate"):

Recent studies of past climate and streamflow conditions have broadened understanding of long-term water availability in the Colorado River, revealing many periods when streamflow was lower than at any time in the past 100 years of recorded flows. That information, along with two important trends—a rapid increase in urban populations in the West and significant climate warming in the region—will require that water managers prepare for possible reductions in water supplies that cannot be fully averted through traditional means. Successful adjustments to these new conditions will entail strong and sustained cooperation among the many entities involved in Colorado River water management and science programs. (National Academy of Sciences)

In other words, the allocations outlined in the Colorado River Compact are unsustainable, and if states continue to draw their maximum water allowances, the reservoirs will go dry. Although it may seem simple to reduce allocation amounts, finding a way to do so that supports existing infrastructure and treats states fairly is quite a challenge, especially given current drought conditions. Journalist Doyle Rice notes that "[w]ater flow in the Colorado River—which supplies water to more than 30 million people in the Southwest including Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Las Vegas—is declining, along with the spring snowpack in the mountains that feed the river due to increased warmth." One contributing factor is climate change: "Temperatures in the Southwest are also rising more quickly than in other regions of the nation as a result of climate change, according to a recent climate change paper prepared by the White House. Specifically, Arizona is the fastest-warming state in the

nation, based on data from 1970 to 2011, warming at a rate of 0.6 degrees per decade, a Climate Central report found” (Rice). Warmer temperatures are detrimental not only to the Southwest’s water supply but also to its entire ecosystem. The United States Global Change Research Program asserts that “[p]rojected increases in drought, wildfire, invasive species, and pests, as well as changes in the geographic ranges of species, will likely threaten Native forests and other ecosystems in the Southwest” (qtd. in Environmental Protection Agency, “Climate”). Increased temperatures affect both the immediate water supply and the ecology that feeds it—an act that is likely to compound issues of water scarcity in the years to come.

The effects of climate change are exacerbated by the Southwest’s recent population growth. According to the United States Census Bureau, “The population growth in each state in this region exceeded the national average growth rate between 2000 and 2010. Several states, such as Nevada (35.1%), Arizona (24.6%), and Utah (23.8%) experienced population growth rates more than double the national average of 9.7%” (qtd. in Environmental Protection Agency, “Climate”). As a result, there is an ever-increasing demand for water in the Southwest, particularly in areas of urban development. Since many residents maintain pools and European landscaping in the desert climate, their use of water is very high. According to sociologist Scott T. Yabiku, “[A] landscape with turf grass or non-Native plants requires more water than a landscape with Native vegetation. By one estimate, a 3000m² turf grass lawn in Arizona uses 9,000 to 15,000 gallons per month, whereas the same area covered with [Native] plants, shrubs, and trees uses only 800 to 1,300 gallons per month” (384). European gardening and landscape practices are unsustainable, given the water availability in the region. If these practices continue, environmental engineer David Jenkins argues that “the aquifers will be pumped effectively dry, as is happening in the much larger Ogallala aquifer beneath Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas” (443).

Native communities are likely to suffer the most from a decrease in available water. The United States Global Change Research Program, a government agency examining prominent issues affecting the citizenry, notes that “[w]ith changing climate conditions, including increased temperatures and severe droughts, Native Americans living on reservations could suffer from limited access to water resources. Since res-

ervation lands were established and set aside in historic agreements, Native Americans living on reservations may be unable to relocate. They may have limited recourse if reservation water supplies become scarce or contaminated” (qtd. in Environmental Protection Agency, “Climate”). The Navajo, Pueblo, and Apache peoples are some of the few Native nations in the United States whose federally appointed lands overlap with their historic homelands. As a result, Indigenous peoples in Arizona and New Mexico are particularly tied to place. Leaving these spaces poses many challenges to these communities. First, relinquishing land has the potential to be misinterpreted as the relinquishing of sovereignty because Indigenous nations must be on federally appointed lands to establish and enforce tribal laws. Natives who live outside these lands risk losing access to ways of life grounded in the specific practices of their community. Second, leaving the land limits community members’ access to knowledge systems, infrastructure, and resources found on the reservation that may be integral to preserving the community’s history, ceremony, and unity. Finally, relinquishing the land also contributes to settler narratives of erasure, which minimize and/or negate the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples as a means of reinforcing settler domination. For all of these reasons—and likely more—Puebloan, Navajo, and Apache communities are inextricably linked to the land in the American Southwest.

Due to poor infrastructure and contamination, however, many Natives in this region have access to low-quality water. Since many individuals access their water through natural means like streams and springs, their water does not go through purification processes. While this practice worked well in the past, corporate and agricultural development in the region has led to the water supply becoming highly contaminated. Silko believes that the Indigenous peoples in this region will continue to adapt to these conditions rather than leave their lands. She states that “Mexicans and Indians grew connected to a place; they would not leave Tucson even after all of Arizona’s groundwater was polluted or pumped dry” (Silko, *Almanac* 651). While Native communities in the Southwest have developed strategies and knowledge systems around living in conditions of water scarcity, the complete absence of clean water could pose a significant threat to their health and well-being. According to the Centers for Disease Control, a number of adverse health effects and conditions were attributed either directly

or indirectly to drought. For example, people exposed to dust clouds were at increased risk for acquiring “dust pneumonia,” an often fatal type of pneumonia caused when dust fills the lungs and inflames them, resulting in high fever, coughing, chest pain, and difficulty breathing. Poor air quality can also increase the risk of respiratory infections such as bacterial pneumonia and valley fever, a fungal infection and common cause of pneumonia in many areas of the southwestern United States, Mexico, Central America, and South America. There also are numerous long-term health concerns that arise from drought, including decreased sanitation, decreased nutrition, increased infectious diseases, and increased incidence of disease caused by animals.

Moreover, according to western water law, the collection of rainwater is illegal because it interferes with water allocation policies, making it particularly difficult for communities to access clean water sources. According to the Navajo Water Project, “Navajo are 67 times more likely than other Americans to live without running water or a toilet. . . . Many Natives can’t get enough clean water, creating a cycle of poverty that limits health, happiness, educational opportunity, and economic security” (Navajo Water Project). For these reasons, it is crucial to examine the ways in which current and projected water allocation practices reinforce colonial conquest.

Because much of the research surrounding water scarcity has taken place throughout the Southwest, my argument pulls research from across the Puebloan and Navajo Nations to provide a more comprehensive picture of the threats posed by water scarcity to Indigenous peoples, particularly the Laguna and Acoma Nations, with which Silko identifies. While the Apache peoples are not named explicitly in the sources for this article, they also reside in the region under examination and are subject to water scarcity. I seek to identify the material conditions of the Puebloan, Navajo, and Apache peoples to bring attention to issues of water scarcity faced by these communities and to advocate for environmental practices that are grounded in Silko’s decolonial Indigenous framework.

WATER IN SILKO’S WORKS

Almanac of the Dead underscores the ways in which humanity has harmed the environment of the American Southwest, particularly

the lands allocated to Indigenous peoples, through uranium mining. According to the Environmental Protection Agency,

nearly four million tons of uranium ore were extracted from Navajo lands under leases with the Navajo Nation. Many Navajo people worked the mines, often living and raising families in close proximity to the mines and mills. Today the mines are closed, but a legacy of uranium contamination remains, including over 500 abandoned uranium mines (AUMs) as well as homes and drinking water sources with elevated levels of radiation. Potential health effects include lung cancer from inhalation of radioactive particles, as well as bone cancer and impaired kidney function from exposure to radionuclides in drinking water. ("Addressing")

Although the above passage discusses the impact of mining on the Navajo, likely because they are the largest tribal group affected by the mining, the negative health effects of mining extend to the Laguna, the tribe to which Silko belongs. Silko notes that the tribal elders spoke out against the mines, believing that "destruction of any part of the earth does immediate harm to all living things" (*Yellow Woman* 131). Nevertheless, numerous Native peoples went to work for mining companies because they were some of the only jobs easily available to the residents of the reservation (Brugge and Goble). Working in the mines, however, put Native workers at high risk. Public health researchers Doug Brugge and Rob Goble note that "[m]iners were paid minimum wage or less. Copies of pay stubs provided by a Navajo miner from 1949 show an hourly wage of \$0.81 to \$1.00. . . . Navajo miners report that the bosses were usually White and that the foremen did not spend as much time in the mines as did the Navajo laborers" (1411). As a result, Native workers were the most likely to suffer health consequences from their work in the mines due both to their prolonged exposure to hazardous chemicals and to their homes' close proximity to the mines. Brugge and Goble observe that

the Navajo language had no word for radiation, few Navajo People spoke English, and few had formal education. Thus, the Navajo population was isolated from the general flow of knowledge about radiation and its hazards by geography, language, and literacy level. Today, the miners and their families say that they had no

idea that there were long-term health hazards associated with uranium mining. Virtually all of the Navajo miners report that they were not educated about the hazards of uranium mining and were not provided with protective equipment or ventilation. (1411)

By constructing these mines on or near reservations, failing to educate workers about the hazards of radiation, and relying almost exclusively on Indigenous labor, these mines demonstrate that cultural and environmental conquest are intimately linked.

This disregard for Native life is also evident in Silko's novel *Almanac of the Dead*, which revolves around a sandstone snake that miners discover deep under the earth near Tucson, Arizona. Formed by the water that covered the Southwest centuries ago, the snake serves as a "catalyst for the novel" and shapes much of the narrative (Silko, *Yellow Woman* 144). According to Silko, Pueblo religious stories tell us that "Ma ah shra true ee is the giant serpent the sacred messenger of the spirit from the Fourth World below. He came to live at the Beautiful Lake, Kawaik, that was once near Laguna village. But neighbors got jealous. They came out one night and broke open the lake so all the water was lost. The giant snake went away after that. He has never been seen since" (127). Since the reappearance of the snake is precipitated by uranium mining on Laguna land, the elders believe that the snake demonstrates that "destruction of any part of the earth does immediate harm to all living things . . . like a stone snake com[ing] to remind us that violence in the Americas—against ourselves and against one another—can run as deep, but only as deep, as the deepest shafts with which humankind has pierced the earth" (132). Through activities such as mining, drilling, and fracking, these shafts have depleted the earth's resources in ways that are unsustainable; however, these activities have not altered the core of the earth. As such, Silko suggests, the violence we are doing to the earth is violence to ourselves and our communities. Those affected by these projects—through proximity, employment, or dispossession—are the most likely to suffer consequences related to their health and well-being, especially the Native peoples of Arizona and New Mexico. By embodying these inequalities, the snake serves as both a warning and a catalyst for activism.

The desire of Indigenous communities to protect the land is not new. While the mining companies view the land as a source of profit, Silko

writes, “[t]he old-timers [of the Laguna] had been dead set against ripping open Mother Earth so near to the holy place of the emergence. But those old ones had been dying off and already were in the minority. So the Tribal Council had gone along with the mine because the government gave them no choice, and the mine gave them jobs” (*Almanac* 34). Doing so, however, only invited trouble by exposing citizens to radiation, pollution, and exploitation. Silko explains the problem with the tribe’s concession through a story about Emperor Maximilian, the patriarch of the second Mexican Empire in the early nineteenth century. She notes that “[t]he Indians and mestizos refused to kill insects in the palace or the garden [at Maximilian’s request] because spirits would be offended” (215). By respecting all forms of life, Indigenous peoples maintain a sense of harmony among all living creatives—humans, animals, plants, and spirits. Over time, however, the influence of European values became more and more intertwined with Native culture through coercion, force, and government mandates. As a result, when the US government decided to establish mines on Pueblo land, the Native peoples’ only recourse was protest—outright refusal was no longer an option. Yoeme, an old Yaqui women, encourages protesting because she believes it is necessary for the survival of Native peoples; she says: “You may as well die fighting the white man . . . [b]ecause the rain clouds will disappear first; and with them the plants and the animals. When the spirits are angry or hurt, they turn their backs on all of us” (580). In order for the spirits to return, Silko suggests, the desecration of the land must stop, and humans must regain a sense of harmony with animals and the land.

Harmony with the land is difficult to achieve, even for mainstream environmental justice movements. In fact, environmentalists often give their time and resources to “virgin” landscapes whose relationship to Indigenous peoples has been erased and/or commodified. In doing so, these groups adhere to colonial notions of the environment by failing to address the places most in need of repair: the sites, typically within communities of color, surrounding mines, toxic waste dumps, landfills, and coal factories. Such behavior enables and encourages racism, exploitation, and desecration. Silko voices these concerns through the character Clinton, who “did not trust the so-called ‘defenders of Planet Earth.’ . . . Human beings had been exterminated strictly for ‘health’ purposes by Europeans too often. Lately, Clinton had seen ads purchased by so-called

‘deep ecologists.’ The ads blamed the earth’s pollution not on industrial waste—hydrocarbons and radiation—but on overpopulation. . . . ‘Too many people’ meant ‘too many *brown-skinned* people’” (Silko, *Almanac* 415). Deep ecologists are a prime example of how settler communities co-opt Indigenous values. Although they claim to value and respect all forms of life, they have been criticized for allowing marginalized groups to bear the brunt of environmental destruction. In particular, they fail to acknowledge the ways in which settler culture has encouraged and fostered environmental destruction through capitalism and industrialization, which place blame for environmental issues on “brown-skinned” people and, at their most extreme, enable their genocide.

Not only does marginalization play a factor in environmental movements, it also dramatically influences commercial development. Silko voices these concerns through Leah, a real estate developer who decides to re-create the city of Venice in Arizona by using deep wells to supply water for her city; this decision risks contaminating local supplies of freshwater. Silko notes, “She had spent millions drilling the deepest wells in North America. The water from her deep wells had been salty, but all the better for her ‘canals of Venice.’ . . . Thanks to the judge’s directed verdict, she had all the water she wanted without interference from environmentalists or Indian tribes” (*Almanac* 656). Just because Leah is able to circumvent environmental activists and Native protestors does not mean that her development does not have a significant impact on their lives.

In particular, her deep wells risk making all available groundwater unpotable, effectively cutting off Native American lands from freshwater. Although little research has been done concerning the effects of deep well drilling for water, plenty of scholars have discussed the environmental hazards of fracking, which uses the same processes and materials to extract resources from deep within the earth’s crust. According to Abrahm Lustgarten and ProPublica,

The cement casing which rings the well bore and goes through underground aquifers is meant to act as a barrier between underground water and the shaft through which frack fluid and gas flow. But the casing can fail or break during the . . . process, allowing the frack fluid or naturally-occurring contaminants to contaminate groundwater. When that happens, frack fluid and methane

can leak from the well bore directly into the water supply, causing dangerous gas buildups, and making water unfit to drink.

In addition to contaminating the water supply with dangerous pollutants, deep water drilling also increases the salinity of water, making it less potable. Since surface water is typically separated from groundwater via a rock layer, the two water sources have highly variable chemical makeups. Surface water tends to have less salinity, while groundwater has higher concentrations of salt. When water is pulled through the rock barrier, it tends to infiltrate the surface water supply, potentially making it too salty for human use. As such, deep well drilling poses a number of threats to nearby Indigenous communities that rely on natural water sources.

Embodying capitalism, Leah gives little thought to the environmental risks posed by her development. Believing that the landscape of the Southwest is inherently bad, she feels that the introduction of canals into the environment is an indisputable improvement. She states that “[s]he could not understand why the Indians or the environmentalists had bothered to sue even if her deep wells did harm other wells or natural springs. . . . [W]hat possible good was this desert anyway? Full of poisonous snakes, sharp rocks, and cactus! Leah knew she was not alone in this feeling of repulsion; most people who saw the cactus and rocky hills for the first time agreed the desert was ugly” (Silko, *Almanac* 750). By labeling the landscape of the Southwest as undesirable, Leah reinforces the notion that there is a hierarchical system in which some landscapes are better than others. In doing so, she uses colonial logics to rationalize the damage she is causing to the environment by claiming that the Southwest could not be any worse than it already is. In this critique she is also devaluing Puebloan peoples, particularly those who live off the land, by treating their respect for the environment as ignorance. Utilizing the legal system to validate her opinions, Leah justifies stripping the nearby Indigenous community of their sovereignty over the land and leaves them little recourse to respond.

To protest these injustices, Silko depicts an uprising of Native peoples seeking to reestablish healthy relationships with humans, animals, and the land. Members of this revolutionary group believe that the spirits will punish Europeans for desecrating the land by removing them from the face of the earth. Once this occurs, vegetation and animal life will

return to its original state, and Native peoples will be able to exist as they did prior to colonialism. Silko states that “[t]heir faith lay in the spirits of the earth and the mountains that casually destroyed entire cities. Their faith lay in the spirits outraged by the Europeans who had burned alive the sacred macaws and parrots of Tenochtitlan; for those crimes and all the killing and destructions, now the Europeans would suffocate in their burning cities without rain or water any longer” (*Almanac* 711). The catalyst for this transition is water scarcity; because the Europeans are so reliant on excessive water consumption, they are likely to leave the Southwest once the water supply becomes limited.

To Silko, this matters because of her belief that “after all the ground-water had been sucked out of the Ogallala Aquifer, then the white people and their cities of Tulsa, Denver, Wichita, and Des Moines would gradually disappear and the Great Plains would again host great herds of buffalo and those human beings who knew how to survive on the annual rainfall” (*Almanac* 759). This will usher in the next age for Native communities, one in which they can achieve sovereignty and be free of settler culture.

Anticipating this event, two prophets lead a revolution against Eurocapitalism. One of these prophets is Tacho, a man who is “followed [by macaws], always roosting in nearby trees until they located [him] again. . . . The blue-and-yellow macaws shrieked Tacho’s new name over and over from dawn to dusk: ‘Wacah! Wacah! Wacah! Wacah! Big changes are coming!’” (Silko, *Almanac* 339). Possessing a very intimate relationship with natural animals, Tacho learns that the environment is gearing itself up for revolution. He then shares this knowledge with others in order to recruit more people for the cause. The other prophet is El Feo, a man who claims that he is “married—married to the earth” (468). This relationship is both physical and spiritual. Notably, El Feo consecrates his marriage to the land through sex, stating that “[h]e imagined the warmth of the darkest, deepest forest in an early-summer rain; he imagined he was burying himself deeper and deeper into the core of the earth until he lost himself in eternity where wide rivers ran to a gentle ocean that included all beings” (522). Analyzing this passage is problematic: El Feo seems to lose his sense of personhood for the sake of being fully unified with the earth, becoming subsumed by the land rather than dominant over it. At the same time, his behavior emulates that of early European settlers, especially their use of sexual violence to

advance their conquest. The inclusion of this scene hints at the ways in which Indigenous culture and settler culture have become inextricably linked. While Indigenous values are key to ensuring the health and well-being of the earth, the ongoing traumas and abuses committed by settlers and replicated by some Indigenous groups have left indelible marks on Native communities. As such, Tacho and El Feo's revolution is bound to face opposition from both settlers seeking to exploit Indigenous land and members of the movement seeking to eradicate the lingering effects of patriarchy and conquest.

The end of the novel returns to the sandstone snake and connects its existence to the coming revolution. However, this connection is missed by many miners and locals who believe that "[t]he snake was so near the tailings it appeared as if it might be fleeing the mountains of wastes. This had led to rumors that the snake's message said the mine and all those who made the mine had won. Rumors claimed that the snake's head pointed to the next mesa the mine would devour, and had Sterling believing the mine had won" (*Almanac* 762). What Sterling's capitalistic worldview misses is the ways in which environmental destruction has unified Indigenous peoples across the globe. Throughout the novel, Silko prophesies movements such as IdleNoMore, the Indigenous Peoples Environmental Network, and the Zapatistas through her depiction of an uprising, led by El Feo and his twin brother, Tacho, slowly making its way from Mexico into the United States. The snake, therefore, is not a sign of the landscape's defeat in the face of capitalism; instead, its view is "looking south, in the direction from which the twin brothers and the people would come" (763). In other words, the snake is both a prophecy of and symbol for the coming revolution to reclaim Native land and landscapes.

Perhaps this is the reason why Silko's next work, *Sacred Water*, outlines the values of Indigenous environmentalists by listing concrete ways to responsibly use and respond to water scarcity in the American Southwest. She begins by repeating the story of the sandstone snake and notes that for the Pueblo, "[p]etroglyphs of coiled snakes are signs that a natural spring or pool of rain water is nearby. The head of the snake glyph points in the direction of the water. The Spaniards thought the snake glyphs pointed to buried treasures the Indians had hidden. The Spaniards did not understand: fresh water is the treasure" (*Sacred Water* 29). As it is in *Almanac of the Dead*, the significance of the snake

is misinterpreted by settler culture; however, Indigenous peoples who are familiar with its symbology recognize its connection to Indigenous environmental knowledge systems. While the Europeans take water resources for granted, a thing to use to gain power and profit, the Laguna understand that the water is worth preserving and protecting.

In 2003 the director of the Pueblo of Acoma's Haaku Water Office, Fidel Lorenzo, stated, "The Pueblo has taken the approach that the value we place upon our water can be a value that can sustain us into the future" (New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute 45). In other words, treating water with the utmost respect ensures the survival of the Puebloan peoples by preventing the community from overusing its resources, contaminating its water supply, or rescinding its rights to water. As Silko stated in *Almanac of the Dead*, "The old-time people had warned that Mother Earth would punish those who defiled and despoiled her. Fierce, hot winds would drive away the rain clouds; irrigation wells would go dry; all the plants and animals would disappear. Only a few humans would survive" (632). Thus, the only way to survive the wrath of the spirits is to ensure the ethical treatment of their lands and peoples.

While *Almanac of the Dead* discusses the implications of water scarcity on a large scale, *Sacred Water* emphasizes the individual impact that a decrease in the water supply would have on Puebloan peoples. Silko writes, "When I was a child, the people used to watch the sky for changes in the weather. I learned to watch for the fat dark rain clouds, and I remember the excitement and the anticipation as the cool wind arrived smelling of rain" (*Sacred Water* 5). She goes on to describe the ways in which the Pueblo interact with water, noting both physical and spiritual aspects of their belief system: "We children were seldom scolded or punished for our behavior. But we were never permitted to frolic with or waste fresh water. We were given stern warnings about killing toads or frogs. Harm to frogs and toads could bring disastrous cloudbursts and floods because the frogs and toads are the beloved children of the rain clouds" (6). Silko's story reveals the ways in which respect for water is an Indigenous knowledge system that is passed down through generations. Not only do children learn not to contaminate sources of freshwater, but they also view water as a divine gift from the spirits. This view prevents the misappropriation or misuse of water by making such an act abominable for the rest of the nation, ultimately ensuring the survival of the community.

The remainder of the text describes ethical ways to interact with water. For example, Silko compares the behavior of Felipe Riley with that of irrigation companies to show both good and bad ways to utilize water's power:

Felipe Riley used to dry farm with the run-off water from the hillside. He diverted the water with an intricate network of small stone check dams which he carefully engineered so that the rain water fed small ditches leading to his pumpkin and squash plants. . . . Felipe's arrangement of stone check dams was so subtle, and conformed to the natural contours so well that we never realized how Felipe had saved our old houses from the flood water until after Felipe had passed on. (*Sacred Water* 44–45)

Felipe Riley's irrigation practices are admirable for a number of reasons. Not only does he engage in dryland farming, which uses far less water than conventional farming, but also he retains the appearance and function of the landscape. Both of these factors demonstrate Felipe Riley's healthy relationship with the environment. According to Kathy Fairchild, "Dry land farming is entirely dependent on natural rainfall and, in New Mexico and Arizona, where the average annual rainfall is about 12 inches or less, the Hopi people have managed to endure and thrive by utilizing a tried and true method of farming that is totally dependent on natural precipitation." Since dryland farming has been practiced by the Native Americans of the Southwest for centuries, methods and techniques are often passed down from one generation to the next. Due to current climate conditions, dryland farming provides a powerful model for the future of farming. Fairchild notes that "[t]he future of Hopi agriculture is promising and many non-Hopi individuals have found that their traditional knowledge and techniques are appropriate technology for the modern farmer."

In contrast, when the US government installs drainage systems on Laguna land, it takes them "months and many thousands of dollars to install giant storm drains which dump the run-off into the river" (Silko, *Sacred Water* 46). This response is problematic because the drains divert the water from Native American lands into the Colorado River, which is the main source of water for the aquifers in this region. As a result, these drainage systems take water away from Indigenous communities and farmers: "[D]itches don't just capture road runoff. They also inter-

cept about 20 percent of the rainfall as it drains the hills upslope. The ditches then rapidly shunt that water downstream and discharge it like a high-velocity faucet directly into streams. . . . Rapid shunting of surface runoff leads to less groundwater recharge and falling water tables. Headwater streams now routinely dry out” (Schneider). Not only does this interfere with Native strategies of water management—irrigation and collection—but also it has significant environmental impacts. Since large-scale drainage ditches often gather water from numerous sources, the probability of contamination is high. Rebecca Schneider, a scholar of sustainable water resource management, notes that “[a]gricultural ditches and tile drains often discharge into roadside ditches. Fecal coliform bacteria from manure spread on headwater farm fields, as well as nutrients from manure, fertilizers, leaking septic fields and other sources can reduce the quality of downstream drinking water supply systems and sometimes force closing of swimming areas.” Rather than aiding the water problem, large-scale drainage ditches often exacerbate issues of water scarcity.

One reason the US government continues to build this style of drainage ditch is to increase the amount of water available for distribution as drinking water or waste water. Since the Southwest is experiencing a sizeable water shortage, every available source of water is vital. The majority of these resources, however, are given to corporations that use the water for profit: upscale housing developments, golf courses, and commercial agriculture. Although these entities are problematic, Silko critiques one group more heavily: the individual homeowner. Noting that many residents of European descent do not share Native values surrounding water use and conservation, Silko observes that “[i]n Tucson and Phoenix, more young children die from drowning than from traffic accidents. Backyard swimming pools are numerous; the clear, still water, the colorful tiles, pool steps and pool ladders are all designed to be attractive and inviting” (*Sacred Water* 54). Embedded in this critique is Silko’s belief that pools are an irresponsible use of water. According to the Arizona Department of Water Resources,

More than half of the potable water Arizona homeowners use is outdoors[.] Pools and spas are responsible for approximately 16% of the outdoor water use [or 9 percent of total water use]. In Arizona, a standard (16 ft. × 36 ft.) uncovered pool loses

four to six feet per year to evaporation, most of which occurs during the summer. Added to the water lost during refilling and backwashing, that's roughly the equivalent of filling the pool every year. Draining a pool doubles this amount.

For Silko, such frivolous use of water is unethical because it goes against the teachings she learned as a child by disregarding the ecology of the Southwest and by disrespecting people who have limited access to water. In fact, owning a pool in the Southwest is a choice that willfully ignores issues of water scarcity in the region.

Instead of abusing available water resources, Silko promotes natural methods of purifying contaminated groundwater and well water. Notably, when Silko's well is unusable due to a red algae infestation, she responds by placing water hyacinths in the pool. Upon doing so, "the pool began to clear and smell cleaner because water hyacinths digest the worst sorts of wastes and contamination: decomposing rodents and dead toads" (Silko, *Sacred Water* 72). Similarly, the datura plant also purifies land and water contaminated by plutonium: "Datura not only thrives in soil contaminated by plutonium, the datura actually removes the plutonium from the soil so that the soil is purified and only the datura plant itself is radioactive. The datura metabolizes 'heavy water,' contaminated with plutonium, because, for the datura, all water is sacred" (75). For settlers, both the water hyacinth and the datura plant are considered undesirable plant species that "infest" and "suppress" the growth of other plants. As a result, citizens of the Southwest often try to remove these plants from the landscape. This view of the water hyacinth and datura is based on a hierarchy in which some plants—particularly those that are European in origin—are given greater value than others. This pattern of thought is based in colonialism and completely disregards the restorative properties that these plants possess. Just as Native communities are often devalued in Arizona, so are these plants; thus, *Sacred Water*, like *Almanac of the Dead*, highlights the connection between racial and environmental injustice.

Silko's later works add to this conversation by discussing the ways in which landscaping and gardening are highly political acts. In *Gardens in the Dunes* she draws a detailed comparison between Edward Palmer, a European naturalist, and Indigo, a member of the Sand Lizard tribe in the American Southwest. Edward travels around the world to collect

plant specimens to sell for profit in the United States: “Edward traveled to places so remote and collected plants so rare, so subtle, few white men ever saw them before. He added these rare treasures to his growing collection of roots, stalks, leaves, and, most important, when possible, seeds. His ambition was to discover a new plant species that would bear his name” (Silko, *Gardens* 78). In pursuit of this goal, Edward forms corrupt relationships with government agencies, such as the Bureau of Plant Industry, to ensure his own financial gain. In contrast, Indigo forms significant emotional relationships with her environment—she converses with animals, she values land and water, and she collects seeds for her community. Their drastically different stances on the environment come into conflict numerous times throughout the novel, highlighting the differences between settler and Indigenous approaches to the environment.

At the beginning of the novel, Silko describes one of Edward’s trips to collect specimens from the Caribbean: “The Natives might possess unknown medicinal plants with commercial potential or a new variety of citrus or a new source for rubber. He was also eager to purchase archaeological artifacts and curiosities” (*Gardens* 86). He is surprised, however, when the Indigenous peoples of Mexico reject his requests to purchase cultural artifacts. After offering to buy meteor irons, a woman whom he terms “The Black Indian” says, “You cannot buy them but you will pay!” (88). Dumbfounded, Edward wonders, “Had she misunderstood?” (88). Such a response demonstrates that Edward does not understand the ethical implications of collecting specimens: he is stealing from other cultures to establish his own authority and financial wealth. When his ship encounters a storm on its journey home and all of his collections are lost, Edward cannot fathom the idea that the curse may have been the cause. Since the woman does not possess traits that indicate European forms of power—white skin, male genitalia, scientific training—Edward believes she is not credible. However, his trip ends in complete failure: “Dozens of rare orchids, intended to repay the underwriters of the expedition, mildewed and rotted. Later there were allegations certain plant materials were exported without proper government permits. His companions behaved irresponsibly, and the failure of the expedition nearly ruined him” (77). Edward’s failure to acknowledge Indigenous knowledge systems highlights his embodiment of the rac-

ism, sexism, and capitalism inherent in colonial environmental knowledge systems.

As the novel continues, Edward becomes more and more corrupt. Tricking his family into traveling with him to Corsica, Edward claims he is going to study the citrus plants in this region. In reality, he steals “cuts” from the trees in order to establish a monopoly on citron in the United States: “Currently, Corsica and her French and Italian owners controlled the world’s commercial supply of citron. Now, by a special arrangement with the Bureau of Plant Industry, he would own some of the first citrus cuttings ever imported to the United States” (Silko, *Gardens* 162). This statement reveals Edward’s disrespect for both the landscape and the people of Corsica. Not only does he find it appropriate to introduce a non-Native species into California that could have significant impact on California’s ecology, but also he targets Corsica because it is in the midst of political turmoil. Thus, Edward takes advantage of vulnerable cultural groups and environments for his own financial gain.

Furthermore, citrus plants require high quantities of water. Since Edward seeks to establish an orchard in California, his behavior would contribute to water scarcity in the region. According to the University of Arizona College of Agriculture, “[M]ature citrus trees use about 60 inches of water per year. Depending on the size of the tree, this can correspond to as much as 17 gallons of water per day in the winter and 135 gallons of water per day in the summer.” Such a drain on the water supply significantly reduces the availability of water for other residents of the state. Edward’s orchard, therefore, not only seeks to monopolize the citron industry but also demands an overabundance of water, both of which reveal how Edward values personal profit over the well-being of others.

Indigo, on the other hand, does not view the landscape in terms of hierarchies. Instead, she forms intimate bonds with animals, plants, and people by acknowledging their value. In the very first scene of the novel, she celebrates the rain: “After the rain, they tended the plants that sprouted out of the deep sand; they each had plants they cared for as if the plants were babies. Grandma Fleet had taught them this too. The plants listen, she told them. Always greet each plant respectfully. Don’t argue or fight around the plants—hard feelings cause the plants to wither” (Silko, *Gardens* 14). By forming personal relationships with the plants in her garden, Indigo learns to consider their needs when

planting, caring for, and harvesting them. Such behavior reveals that her environmentalism is grounded in decolonial Indigenous knowledge: she celebrates all plants, she does not seek personal profit, she prioritizes the health of the earth.

Although Indigo, like Edward, collects seeds and plant cuttings, their processes are drastically different. Edward's treks are planned and funded by government agencies, which generally do not seek permission to extract resources from other nations. His purpose is to establish and retain both national and personal power. His artifacts are either given to government agencies for the sake of reinforcing European authority or used for his own financial benefit. Indigo, on the other hand, does not take planned trips to collect seeds or plants; instead, she receives them as gifts from other women as an act of passing knowledge through the community. She claims that her fascination with seeds comes from her "Grandma Fleet[, who] always advised the girls to collect as many new seeds as they could carry home. The more strange and unknown the plant, the more interested Grandma Fleet was; she loved to collect and trade seeds" (Silko, *Gardens* 84). For Indigo, seeds provide sustenance—they are the means by which she and the Sand Lizard people survive. Yet this behavior is not solely practical. Learning to cultivate plants in her environment is a form of literacy and knowledge that encourages the health of her community and of future generations. Thus, collecting seeds is a communal act because it both serves and engages each member of Indigo's community. She notes that "[i]n years when the rains were scarce, the people carried water to the wilted plants in gourd canteens, from the spring in the sandstone cliff. Each person had plants to care for, although the harvest was shared by everyone" (16). In other words, the seeds are a form of Indigenous literacy that create unity and a sense of shared responsibility to ensure the health and well-being of all members of the community. Utilizing the techniques of dryland farming as well as small quantities of freshwater pulled from natural sources, these gardens do not put a strain on existing water supplies but instead operate in harmony with the Southwest's desert climate. Each of these choices demonstrates Indigo's and her nation's embodiment of environmental justice.

Silko's most recent work, an e-novella entitled *Oceanstory*, extends her discussion of water by showing how hierarchical structures have a global impact. In this work, a corrupt American man attempts to make

money by cheating others out of resources. When he fails to gain either power or material wealth in the United States, he decides to move to Mexico, essentially colonizing a small community by exploiting its resources, citizens, and laws for his own gain. X is not considered wealthy in the United States; however, he is moderately affluent in Mexico. His financial status enables him to bribe local authorities and corporations to steal land from a Mexican ejido, or a communal agricultural community, so that he can build beachfront properties for his own profit. Ignoring warnings from both environmentalists and the government, he decides to demolish nearby dunes in order to give his properties an uninterrupted view of the Gulf shore:

[W]hile the ejido still owned the property, the big beach dunes on the property were bulldozed, loaded and taken by the contractors who built the resort hotels and beach condos in town. Without the protective dunes, the gulf waters were slowly circling behind the beach front and reclaiming the tidal lagoon behind the beach. Sondra advised X to hire her friend, the Professor, to survey and map the best route, and to get the bulldozing done soon because the federal government was about to implement restrictions that forbade the removal of sand from the beach dunes. (Silko, *Oceanstory*)

By deliberately opposing environmental recommendations regarding the sand dunes, X exposes his property and the ejido to flooding from the Gulf. Only a few weeks later a storm comes through, leaving “no trace of the dike that held the road or the two metal culverts or even the huge black boulders” that X installed on the beach (Silko, *Oceanstory*). While neither X nor the narrator mentions the outcome for the residents of the ejido, the implication is that their property and crops are completely eradicated, destroying the food supply and hindering the well-being of the entire community. Many farmers in ejidos are Indigenous; as such, X embodies settler colonialism—he steals from Indigenous communities, exploits their labor and resources, disregards their health and well-being, and denigrates Indigenous knowledge systems. Like the characters in Silko’s other novels, X’s obsession with profit seeking results in the erasure of Indigenous peoples, allowing him to claim the right to their possessions. When his stolen resources are threatened, however, X protects the assets at all costs, racing home over winding

roads at breakneck speeds. In the process, he flips his car into a water-filled arroyo and dies, a narrative choice that reveals how capitalistic values are incredibly destructive and how the earth ultimately reclaims itself from settler culture.

Similarly, X's mother seeks her own gratification at the cost of all else. Notably, she demands a personal servant—an Indigenous woman—to care for her night and day. By positioning herself as superior to others, X's mother also embodies settler colonialism. Her subconscious, however, acknowledges the problematic nature of her behavior. In fact, she repeatedly dreams that "she heard a bumping and knocking at the front door. She didn't recognize the furniture in the house, yet it seemed familiar. When she opened the door she saw only the ocean—the entire town, every sign of anything human was gone, and the waves gently lapped at the lower step. There was no one. She was entirely alone" (Silko, *Oceanstory*). Although this dream does not come to fruition in Mexico, when she moves to New Orleans X's mother is killed in a flood. Like X, the mother is ultimately destroyed by her greed; once again, the earth reclaims itself from its mistreatment at the hands of settlers.

Only X's unnamed girlfriend, a Puebloan woman, appears to be concerned with the well-being of living things. When walking on the beach, she takes "a garbage bag along [to dispose of] each tide deposited debris—plastic bottles and plastic bags, a motor oil can, one flip-flop, fish tails, a decomposing sea lion, and the vertebra of a small whale" (Silko, *Oceanstory*). By removing trash from the beach and water, she also promotes the health of the natural environment. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "Marine debris kills and maims marine mammals, fish, shellfish, sea turtles, and birds. . . . [A]n estimated 2 million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals die on U.S. coasts each year from becoming entangled in marine debris or from digesting plastic mistaken for food" ("Marine"). The death of these animals not only hurts wildlife populations but also harms the ecology of the Gulf by causing a buildup of trash on the Gulf floor. When this occurs with biodegradable materials, which have a high demand for oxygen, available oxygen for marine life is reduced, resulting in the decline of all marine life (Environmental Protection Agency, "Marine"). Her behavior reveals that, like Silko, this woman was raised with both knowledge of and respect for the water. By putting her community's val-

ues into practice, she participates in the earth's reclamation process and embodies an ethic of decolonial Indigenous environmentalism.

Another reason X's girlfriend removes trash from the Gulf is because she believes that the ocean is a source of power for Indigenous peoples: "I knew someday the beach front real estate, all the land, would be reclaimed by the ocean but long before that another kind of tall wave—this one the tall wave of the indigenous people would reclaim all the land" (Silko, *Oceanstory*). Here the novels come full circle. As in *Almanac of the Dead*, X's girlfriend prophesies an uprising of Indigenous peoples advocating for an environmental movement grounded in Native knowledge systems. In doing so, she is calling upon Indigenous activists to rise up and fight against the abuse of Mother Earth. Groups like the Indigenous Environmental Network and IdleNoMore have taken up this call, seeking to redress the abuses of Indigenous peoples by advocating for sovereignty and environmental health.

CONCLUSION

We have the opportunity to advance Silko's ethos by engaging in activism and advocacy within our own communities. Silko's work provides us with a framework for understanding a history of water-related abuses against the Indigenous peoples of the Southwest as well as a series of recommendations on how to implement a decolonial Indigenous environmentalism in our own lives. In *Almanac of the Dead*, Silko describes the historical and spiritual significance of water to the Laguna people and outlines how their water sources are being depleted by European American capitalist interests. Her next text, *Sacred Water*, describes how Native peoples ethically interact with water and advocates the adoption of these behaviors by all other residents of this region. Her most recent texts, *Gardens in the Dunes* and *Oceanstory*, complete her narrative regarding water by highlighting the long-term consequences of misusing water and by calling environmentalists to action. In *Gardens in the Dunes* she compares ethical and unethical environmental practices as an exemplar for readers. In *Oceanstory* she describes the beginning of the revolution by advocating for Indigenous-based social movements and by depicting the earth's reclamation of its resources. Taken together, these texts provide a cohesive narrative

surrounding water scarcity both by demonstrating the harm that water privatization causes to Indigenous peoples and by outlining a framework for decolonial Indigenous environmentalism. Today, the work of Indigenous groups such as IdleNoMore, the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Zapatistas, and the Council of Indigenous Peoples of Honduras are taking up this call; however, their work is often hindered by governmental intervention, corporate greed, and/or the assassination of activists. These behaviors will undoubtedly continue until we acknowledge Indigenous peoples' rights to water and sovereignty. Only then can we achieve the environmental justice that Silko's work so passionately advocates.

CHRISTINA BOYLES is an assistant professor of culturally engaged digital humanities in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures at Michigan State University. She is the founder of the Hurricane Memorial project and is the cofounder of the Makers by Mail project. Her research explores the relationship between surveillance, social justice, and the environment. Her published work appears in *The Southern Literary Journal*, *The South Central Review*, and *Plath Profiles*, and her forthcoming work will appear in *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, *Bodies of Information: Feminist Debates in the Digital Humanities*, and *American Quarterly*.

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Water, History, and Sovereignty in Simon J. Ortiz's "Our Homeland, a National Sacrifice Area"

ROBIN RILEY FAST

As Native peoples face contemporary threats to land, water, and life, Simon Ortiz's 1981 memoir-essay "Our Homeland, a National Sacrifice Area" (*Woven Stone* 337–63) still has a great deal to teach us about the impacts of colonialist depredations and the importance of resistance. Ortiz focuses on the damage caused by a history of exploitation that has exacerbated drought and contributed to other "sacrifice area" conditions. *How* he tells the story is also instructive, as it demonstrates the kind of creative resistance that he identified in "The Historical Matrix": using the colonizers' languages and cultures for Indians' "own purposes" (8, 10). "Our Homeland" exemplifies resistance and claims sovereignty in both political and literary terms. At the same time, parallels to other struggles signal the work's continuing relevance for contemporary issues and resistance movements.

"Our Homeland" enacts its concerns and commitments simultaneously on numerous planes. Every word of the title evokes conflicts and ironies. Thematically, Ortiz's account of a personal pilgrimage is inseparable from a multilayered history of his people's identity with the land and their experiences of colonization and resistance. These intertwined stories are linked by persistent references to the depletion and degradation of life-sustaining water, damage associated with exploitative industrialization, beginning with the railroads and including, most prominently, uranium mining and processing. Because uranium is involved, the story Ortiz tells will inevitably be "current" indefinitely into the future. But the story of exploitation and destruction of Indigenous lands and water continues in many places, so the message of "Our Homeland" also encompasses contemporary struggles such as those surrounding the Dakota Access and Keystone XL Pipelines; the Athabasca-Chipewyan

First Nation's struggles related to tar-sands extraction in Alberta; Navajo and Hopi concerns about coal mining on Black Mesa; and the campaign to defend the Bears Ears National Monument.

The stories of "Our Homeland" prompt a reaffirmation of sovereignty and a call for resistance. Water is a major element of Ortiz's sovereignty claim; given water's centrality to life and culture, the claim is all-encompassing. As he has said elsewhere, a water-dependent "farming way of life and economic self-sufficiency is the basis of culture and community for the Pueblo Indian people. . . . [W]ater defines our culture" (quoted in Adamson and Stein 21). Water is thus part of community. Accordingly, references to water—its presence, absence, and history and people's relationship to it—run through "Our Homeland."

The core story of "Our Homeland" focuses on the Acoma people's experiences of life in a "national sacrifice area," in "lands [that] have suffered . . . severe and prolonged environmental degradation . . . purported[ly in the interests of] the collective [US national] good" (Hooks and Smith 562). Scholars Gregory Hooks and Chad Smith focus on the "severe and prolonged environmental degradation" resulting specifically from "military activities" (562), which would certainly include uranium mining and processing.¹ They quote a 2001 Department of Defense document that confirms the contemporary currency of "Our Homeland" as it describes effects of uranium mining and milling on Native lands in the US Southwest: "Evidence . . . remains: hazardous materials, . . . abandoned equipment, unsafe buildings, and debris. This contamination degrades the natural environment," including, of course, water, "and threatens tribal economic, social and cultural welfare" (562). The designation of a national sacrifice area, with the concomitant implication or explicit determination that the damage is too severe for meaningful repair, "implies a government policy that involves the sacrifice of the native peoples and cultures who live there" (Tarter 108), based on the assumption that "[t]he land, and the people living on the land were better left ignored. That is, neither was worth saving" (Kuletz, *Tainted* 27). This combination of exploitation, destruction, and abandonment, which in the case of uranium occurs preponderantly on or near Indigenous lands, clearly constitutes environmental racism.² Such actions and policies are responsible for the depletion and pollution of water that is a major focus in "Our Homeland," as well as in other sites of Indigenous struggle: the people of Standing Rock have resisted the Dakota Access

Pipeline in part because they fear it will endanger water sources. In the ongoing controversy over coal mining on Black Mesa, too, water is a central concern, with mining and moving coal “using billions of gallons of the Navajo Aquifer’s water,” while residents have experienced the drying up of “seeps and springs [previously] fed by the Navajo Aquifer” (Nieves 26).

Ortiz’s project reflects his belief, surely strengthened by such knowledge, that “Indian writers” must “advocate for their people’s self-government, sovereignty, and control of land and natural resources” and “look . . . at racism, political and economic oppression, . . . and the needless and wasteful exploitation of land and people, especially in the U.S.” (“Historical” 12). His multigenre practice in “Our Homeland” contributes to this resistant sovereignty claim, as it shows how Native stories can flourish within the structures of written English without conforming to all the strictures of the dominant literacy’s genres, with their formal, thematic, and linguistic norms. Further, Ortiz’s blending of poetry and prose, with the distinctive qualities he gives to each, may reflect the scope of damage done and also the breadth of his appeal. For this project, poetry alone, prose alone, would not suffice: it requires multiple discourses and approaches, which also offer multiple ways for readers to enter the text and be moved.

Having introduced key terms and topics for “Our Homeland” and this essay, I now offer fuller discussions of two important contexts: first, the local history of environmental exploitation with its effects particularly on water and thus on the Indigenous communities dependent on this water; and second, Native articulations of sovereignty, together with sovereignty’s relation to Ortiz’s resistant multigenre practices. With these contextual groundings in place, I will turn to direct analysis of Ortiz’s text.

Industrial exploitation of land and water at Acoma and other pueblos began with the railroads. Historian Richard H. Frost explains how the railroads “confiscat[ed] . . . arable, irrigable pueblo land along the Rio Grande and its tributaries. . . . [T]rack beds crossed the Indians’ cornfields and disrupted their irrigation ditches. . . . Pueblo water sources were also reduced where the railroad constructed water tanks for its engines and took water” from rivers and creeks. Thus at McCartys, Ortiz’s home, “the Santa Fe for many years pumped water from the San Jose River. . . . [I]n 1909 the volume was about 50,000 gallons daily”

(29–30). Pueblo leaders resisted these depredations, as evidenced in a letter from Acoma governor Lorenzo Pancho to President Taft in 1909: “The R.R. Company get our water what we have using irrigating our farms[.] this is very scarce water for my poor people uses[.] I want to stop them getting our water. . . . I do not want to supply warter [*sic*] to the R.R. Company” (30).³ Such resistance, however, was to little avail against industrialized Manifest Destiny; by the end of the nineteenth century the railroads’ “preemptive use of water” was “the foremost danger to pueblo life and culture” (42).

As will be seen, Ortiz alludes in “Our Homeland” to Acoma’s experience with both the railroad and the uranium industry. This is familiar history to his community and their neighbors. I include it here because it is an essential element of context not necessarily familiar to those of us from elsewhere. Further, “Our Homeland” suggests that history not only remembers wrongs but also enables affirmation of culture and identity. Knowledge of history can thus provide the grounds for resistance, which may, in turn, lead to restorative change. Similar understandings of history are mobilized in contemporary campaigns in defense of Indigenous lands. For example, a statement on the website of the Native American Rights Fund informs us that “Bears Ears has been home to Native peoples since time immemorial. . . . Our presence . . . is manifested in migration routes, ancient roads, great houses, villages, granaries, hogans, wickiups, sweat lodges, corrals, petroglyphs and pictographs, tipi rings, and shade houses.”

As for the history of uranium mining and processing in the Acoma area, there is abundant evidence of their damaging impacts.⁴ With the New Mexico portion of the Grants Uranium Belt identified as the “hottest uranium exploration area” and the proximity of the Jackpile-Paguate mine (in operation 1952–82), until 1980 the largest uranium mine in the world, environmental sociologist Valerie L. Kuletz observes that Laguna and Acoma Pueblos, along with the Navajo Nation, have “carr[ied] . . . some of the heaviest burdens and consequently suffer[ed] . . . some of the most severe health repercussions” of uranium mining and milling (*Tainted* 23, 24; see also Tarter 107–08). Kuletz draws attention to uranium-related contamination of water: “Since large amounts of water are used in the mining process and mountains of uranium tailings are produced as a byproduct[,] uranium production poisons earth, air, and water. . . . [R]adioactive elements travel in both surface and ground

water. . . . Further extending the nuclear landscape and causing harm to those who live there, millions of gallons of water in the Four Corners area,” where Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah meet, have been “subjected to radiation pollution” when breaks in tailings dams have dispersed radioactive waste “into the wider watershed areas” (*Tainted* 25-27).⁵

As with the railroads’ appropriations of land and water, the uranium industry has damaged culture and communal health. Writer Peter Eichstaedt, discussing Navajo people’s experiences, notes “the psychological strain of living around known health hazards” and the fact that “disruption” to an individual’s health or to the land also “threatens the disruption of the Navajo fabric of life and wholeness” (124, quoting testimony by Dr. Susan Dawson). Similarly, critic Connie Jacobs notes that “in addition to the high rate of diseases, especially cancer,” at Laguna, other “lasting negative effects” include “the instability and sterility of the land” and damaging, sometimes violent “disruption of . . . traditional social patterns” (45-46). Such facts demonstrate the magnitude of the damage faced not only by Ortiz’s Acoma community but also by the whole US Southwest and Native peoples disproportionately. The repercussions of uranium mining continue in diseases that afflict former mine workers and their descendants, polluted water, and land that is poisoned pretty much forever. The histories of exploitation by railroads and mining fuel the resistant passion of “Our Homeland.”

Grounded in such histories and experiences, “Our Homeland” makes a powerful implicit argument for sovereignty. I am thinking of sovereignty in the multifaceted sense that Ortiz suggests via the language of “authenticity” and “nationalism” in “The Historical Matrix”: as encompassing a field of power, including but not limited to political and cultural knowledges and actions. What “The Historical Matrix” implies is consistent and congenial with others’ more explicit definitions. Several recent articulations of sovereignty resonate with Ortiz’s language. For example, Diné historian Jennifer Nez Denetdale writes, “Cultural sovereignty is about Native American peoples planning for the future and protecting our rights to language, religion, art, tradition, and the distinctive norms and customs that guide our societies” (71). Denetdale’s emphasis on oral tradition’s relation to sovereignty accords with Ortiz’s valuing of oral tradition in “Our Homeland.” “[O]ral history,” Denetdale writes, “is an important vehicle

for practicing and realizing sovereignty. . . . [P]lacing the ancestors' teachings within a cultural sovereignty framework acknowledges the connectedness of culture to the political and reveals the links between power and knowledge" (69, 71). Acknowledging, as do Denetdale and Ortiz, the "multiple dimensions" of sovereignty, Creek Cherokee scholar Craig Womack cites as examples the "concept of inherent . . . rights . . . to self-determination" and "imagined sovereignty," a people's capacity to tell stories and "present images of themselves on their own terms" (362). Again similarly, Ojibwe critic Scott Richard Lyons writes, "[S]overeignty is the guiding story in our pursuit of self-determination, the general strategy by which we aim to best recover our losses from the ravages of colonization" (95). Lyons's statement reads as a condensation of Ortiz's argument in "The Historical Matrix." In the context of sovereignty, these writers, like Ortiz, link culture to politics, knowledge, and power. This is a crucial linkage in "Our Homeland." Indeed, this linkage might be read as a powerful source of Ortiz's faith and the grounds of the promise of "Our Homeland."

As I will shortly demonstrate, "Our Homeland" tells personal and communal stories that together enact sovereignty as cultural resistance, undermining dominant European American expectations about genre. By mixing poetry and prose, Ortiz draws our attention to the work's refusal of formal homogeneity. This structural refusal parallels his own refusal of acquiescence—his political resistance against the exploitative history and ongoing agenda of extraction, with the resulting degradation of water and life. Together, poetry and prose evoke water's importance in discourses both intimate and political. Further, Ortiz's structural practice exemplifies his claim that Indians have used the colonizers' languages and cultures "in their own—Indian—terms" and that this creative response "to forced colonization . . . has been one of resistance" ("Historical" 8, 10). The interweaving of genres creates stories that "engender, substantiate . . . continue . . . and create life" in a dynamic, collaborative dialogue of the personal and communal that strengthens the work's claims to water, land, and sovereignty (11). Ortiz's articulation of resistance implies his recognition of inherent sovereignty and is echoed in the statements of Denetdale, Womack, and Lyons.

The mixed structure of "Our Homeland" signals another plane of cultural resistance, as the work surpasses conventional assumptions about memoir and autobiography. As Choctaw critic Michael Wilson

explains, “[C]onventional forms of writing . . . sometimes carry within them philosophies or relationships of power that do not always reflect the interests of indigenous peoples.” The autobiographical form itself, he notes, suggests “an ethos of individualism . . . contrary to a vision of communal identity that is central to many indigenous groups” (x). Similarly, Tlingit scholar Caskey Russell argues that “American Indian authors can project tribal worldviews . . . through form, or rather the subversion of form,” and by “resist[ing] easy genre classifications” (42). “Our Homeland” is an autobiographical text that refuses “easy . . . classification” as an individually focused personal story. This refusal, forecast in the words “Our Homeland,” is illuminated by Ortiz himself in a 2005 interview: “Acoma culture informs who I am as a person—a person who is not a person unless there is a whole context of family, clan, community, land, and a system of knowledge that is all tied together” (Brill de Ramírez 120). Genre resistance and Indigenous redefinition parallel and support political resistance, just as poetry and prose together heighten the urgency of “Our Homeland.” Ortiz disregards dominant expectations about genre in order to expose damage done by industrial exploitation and thus to arouse resistance and allied solidarity. A creative politics of form, then, is integral to his deeply historically grounded piece and is evoked as soon as we take in the text’s/texts’ appearances on the page. His usage distinguishes between poetry and prose, but he also sometimes blends them both to subvert expectations about form and, most importantly, to intensify his focus on water, the damage of colonialist exploitation, and the call to knowledge and resistance.

The opening poem of “Our Homeland” subtly prepares us for Ortiz’s concern with water while it exemplifies qualities that mark the poetry throughout: a personal focus and a journey, both infused with a sense of place and a need to question. With these lines, like the speaker (who I’ll assume is Ortiz), we are engaged emotionally and intellectually.

It was only the second day,
and I was on my way home
from being with Srhakaiya.
It is the mountain west
of Aacqu.

I was sick,
feeling a sense of “otherness.”

How can I describe it?
 An electric current
 coursing in ghost waves through me?
 "Otherness." (*Woven Stone* 337)

Ortiz draws attention to "otherness" by repeating it, enclosing it within quotation marks, and questioning his ability to grasp it with language—all of which foreground the word and the sensation. "Otherness" suggests the experience of being "othered" by an alienating gaze and/or by historical forces. "Otherness" also implies feeling separated from the place, vulnerable to some influence that undermines the experience of "being with Srhakaiya." Note, too, the oblique suggestions of water: "An electric current / coursing in ghost waves." When Ortiz uses "otherness" on the next page in the second poem, it is associated with having drunk from a spring that was once "clear [and] cold" but is now "scummed over" (*Woven Stone* 338). His feeling of having perhaps been sickened by the spring water suggests alienation from the source of life and distance from a past when the water was both protected and refreshing.

The first prose passage, which is placed between these two poems, links to the first poem with a personal pronoun quite unusual in the prose overall: "I was raised in McCartys . . . Aacqumeh hanoh, we call ourselves" (*Woven Stone* 337). The language then shifts to focus on the village, the white man who named it in English, and water: "McCarty was . . . an Irishman who operated the water pumps which sucked water from the nearby chuna, the Rio de San Jose. The farming Aacqumeh community where the pumps were located on the AT & SF railroad became known as McCartys Stop" (337). Here we see Ortiz deploying form to complicate the appeal of personal memory evoked by the poems' more lyrical emphasis. The more expository and directly instructive approach of the prose makes the complicity of colonialism in the exploitation of water quite clear. And water is central here: to the life of the Acoma farming community, to the railroads, and thus to the existential tensions between Indigenous peoples and colonizing powers—tensions also embodied in the contrast between Indigenous and European names.

Successive prose passages are dominated by communal history. It's a history we eventually are called to recognize as shared by many Indigenous (and other) communities. The complexity and vital

importance of history for the people of Acoma and “Our Homeland” is suggested by Kuletz’s discussion of other peoples’ struggles to protect their lands. The Western Shoshones and Southern Paiutes, Kuletz explains, “have a unique collective experience and memory of” their “multigenerational homeland. . . . Violent reconstruction of this expansive space into a sacrificial landscape . . . requires annihilation of . . . a web of specific meaningful *places* . . . water sites, hunting and gathering grounds. . . . Places are where people live; they are inhabited, nourishing, and . . . sometimes sacred” (“Invisible” 248–49). Rosebud Sioux tribal chair William Kindle similarly invoked history in explaining Rosebud’s legal challenge to TransCanada’s Keystone XL Pipeline: “[T]he pipeline would go directly through traditional land that was guaranteed to the Tribe and the Great Sioux Nation in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868.”

Ortiz’s communal history likewise constitutes a claim of long-standing presence, knowledge, and endurance. This history begins with the arrival of the Acoma people in their valley, where the land and water had been “prepared for them,” a place where “dark fertile soil [was] nourished by . . . a number of perennial springs gushing forth” (*Woven Stone* 338). The presence of fresh water made this a livable and living homeland. Then Ortiz recounts the arrival of the Spanish; the Pueblo Revolt; the ascendancy of the “Mericano” (347); the building of railroads and development of nearby European American towns; and the power of American national ideology and the actions it justified, including land and water theft, boarding schools, relocation; then uranium mining and the development of the atom bomb. Many of these intrusions have affected water. Now “Ghoomi is . . . the main springs in the valley. Water flows in no large amount. . . . The elder[s] of the Aacqumeh hanoh speak about the numbers of springs in the valley. In olden times . . . Ghoomi has never been known to run dry, but it is watched anxiously” (339–40). Told in prose, this collective history is mostly presented in the third person. It is expository, informative, and far from the intimacy that characterizes most of the poems, even though Ortiz indirectly conveys anger by repeating phrases that reflect the facilitating ideologies of “national sacrifice areas”: “This was the remote barren west, after all. . . . It was the west after all, barren and undeveloped” (354).

In “Our Homeland,” then, poetry and prose are characterized by distinctive discourses and kinds of information. However, to push this

distinction too insistently would be to buy into a binary frame that could reinscribe dominant expectations and undermine the wholeness of the piece—a wholeness that reflects the communal bonds of people, land, and water. As Ortiz's text resists such an either-or framing, with its potential for enforcing "otherness," we can again see his politics of form at work.

The refusal to conform to genre-bound framing is evident in passages where the previously noted distinctions blur. Thus, having laid out the history of uranium mining, Ortiz blends the discourses of poetry and prose to expand upon the communal meanings of his personal experiences:

Right out of high school I worked in the mining and milling region of Ambrosia Lake. I was nineteen years old. . . . I worked in crushing, leaching, and yellowcake. . . . Mining is dangerous work, . . . but people continued to work there because there was no other employment available. . . . *In the national interest*, mine operators, oil corporations, utility companies, international energy cartels, and investors *sacrificed* these men and women. . . . [D]uring the struggle in the 1970's and 1980's in the Southwest, I got paranoid about my own health. In 1960 there was no information about the dangers of radiation from the yellowcake. . . . But twenty years later, I worried about it and I got angry because there weren't any special precautions we were required or urged to take. (*Woven Stone* 356–58, emphasis added)

The passage begins by evoking emotion, stressing Ortiz's youth and vulnerability. While repeating "I" intensifies the personal element, references to work link "I" to the community of exploited uranium workers. Ortiz then identifies the economic and political contexts in which all workers are vulnerable, contexts he has explained earlier, in the process conveying his family's and community's near despair: "We knew we were close to the bottom of the social scale, and we knew that was a scary and painful place to be. So I went to work at Ambrosia Lake" (*Woven Stone* 357). This devastating "so" bears the weight of virtual inevitability, driven by fear and the absence of promising alternatives.

Speaking both personally and communally, Ortiz echoes the title phrase, "national sacrifice area," reminding us that when land and water are sacrificed, so are people's lives.⁶ The gap between impersonal,

exploitative entities and “sacrificed . . . men and women” intimates an underlying violence, especially when we know that the corporations purposely kept from the workers their knowledge of the dangers of uranium. Ortiz makes the sacrifice visible when he tells us of “former miners . . . who walk around crippled, as maimed as if they had been wounded in wartime” (*Woven Stone* 358).

This long prose passage’s concluding paragraph moves from impersonal exposition about “the milling operation at the end of the leaching and settling process” to increasingly disturbing information about “[t]he workers” who “were to keep the machinery operating,” breathing “fine [uranium] dust” that “got in their hair . . . and in their eyes.” The paragraph ends by saying again, “I was nineteen then, and twenty years later I worried about it” (*Woven Stone* 358). “It” is no longer “my own health” but the conditions under which he and all of his fellows worked. Again, the repeated “I,” unusual in the prose of “Our Homeland,” deepens the personal quality. Again, too, the presence of “we” and the horrifying description of workers’ intimate exposure to poison remind us that Ortiz’s “I” was and is part of a community of suffering and then of “struggle” and that “we” is the “sacrificed . . . men and women.” The passage as a whole, then, renders this history by fusing discourses that, elsewhere in “Our Homeland,” have tended to differentiate between poetry and prose. Thus reading closely reveals that on the level of language, too, this is a multigenre, resistant text.

Ortiz unifies structure and experience as well by threading recurrent images and motifs through both poetry and prose. Water is the most important of these unifying elements; we’re made aware of its centrality via both imagery and expository references to its threatened or actual absence. Changes in the quality or availability of water are registered in terms of the speaker’s own thirst, of family history, of communal knowledge and oral tradition, and via reference to the industries and infrastructure that demanded, exploited, poisoned, and depleted the water. Water is a focus of nostalgic desire, when Ortiz wishes he was still “a boy / listening / to stories / by the river,” which “swirls and is vigorous and healthy” in “the oral tradition of storytelling” (*Woven Stone* 360, 342). Equally, water is the focus of anger that impels the call to resistance: “This much is certain now. . . . [T]he people of Deetseyama and Deechuna and Kahwaikah downstream from the Grants Uranium Belt do not have enough water any more for their few remaining cultivated

fields and gardens, and the water they drink is contaminated” (363). As water is essential to community and culture, so assaults on water are assaults on all.

The varied visual, rhythmic, and linguistic references to water in Ortiz’s poetry and prose reflect water’s varied forms and its many kinds of significance. This structure of complementary forms moves us toward a culminating exhortation and appeal. “Our Homeland” ends with a double emphasis: on the assaultive history of uranium mining and on the need for action—for Native people to act on sovereignty and for non-Natives to become informed allies. This double emphasis signals a movement from the despair of “otherness” to the possibility of hope implicit in the call to action.

In the final poem, Ortiz’s language subtly invites us to imagine the possibility of recovery: the “feeling / of ‘otherness’” returns but then “pass[es]” as he encounters some horses, “alert,” lively, that “gallop . . . / toward Srakaiya / . . . into the folds of the evening earth” (*Woven Stone* 361–62). The horses figure a relationship of unencumbered intimacy with the land (and water) from which he earlier felt estranged, and this imagery may represent hope for the land’s and the people’s recovery. However, recovery will depend, Ortiz shows us, on knowledge and action, which the remaining prose passages of “Our Homeland” are designed to engender. Again, poetry and prose, with their different discourses and appeals, work together. Now, in relatively distanced third-person discourse, in the prose passage immediately following the poetic image of the horses, Ortiz recites devastating facts about New Mexico uranium exploration and mining, including that the “43 mines in the late 1970’s were dewatering . . . between 190,000 to 250,000 gallons per minute.” (Recall the concerns of the people of Black Mesa and Standing Rock, facing actual or possible loss of water.) After noting uncertainties at the time regarding continued uranium production, the possibility of mine closings and layoffs, and the effects of “concerns and protests about radiation hazards and pollution” (362), Ortiz moves to close the distance between the cruel history of uranium mining and the impulse toward hope. The Acoma and Laguna peoples’ indisputable knowledge of loss is bleak: they no longer have enough water for farming, and their drinking water “is contaminated by Grants and the past [uranium] processing mills” (363). Yet the sentences that follow confirm the relation of water and resistance, an inherently hopeful relationship: “The hanoh

anxiously watch the springs at Ghoomi and Gaanipay. Their struggle will go on; there is no question about that" (363). This is a statement of necessary faith: faith that both faces the grimness of ongoing history and affirms the strength of Indigenous peoples' knowledge and commitment—a knowledge and commitment that "Our Homeland" works to uphold and nurture. This is a faith, too, in the power of knowledge to build alliances among Indigenous peoples and others who learn to recognize their own responsibility—witness the hundreds of members of other tribal nations and non-Natives who joined the Dakota Access protests under the most threatening conditions. As well, Ortiz's hope reflects his belief in Natives' empowered use of dominant languages "in their own—Indian—terms" ("Historical" 8) to tell resistant sovereign stories—as Lyons says, "to best recover our losses from the ravages of colonization" (95).

Consistent with this faith, in the final paragraph of "Our Homeland" Ortiz introduces a new discourse and a heightened urgency: "We must have passionate concern for what is at stake" (*Woven Stone* 363). This call for concern builds on all that has preceded it in the text and in the history the text recounts, and it is grounded in the convictions of Indigenous land- and history-based sovereignty that Ortiz evoked most directly a few pages earlier: "The struggle . . . will continue. It is in the stories of the oral tradition and the [oral stories'] advice and counsel. . . . It is not only a matter of preserving and protecting Indian lands[;] . . . rather it is a matter of how those lands can be productive *in terms which are Indian people's to make*, . . . just like the oral tradition of the Aacqumeh hanoh says," rather than "Indian people being forced to serve a U.S. national interest which has never adequately served them" (360, emphasis added). Calling on oral tradition is an act of resistance—as were his earlier references to the people's arrival at a place "prepared for them" and to the memory of "vigorous and healthy" water in "the oral tradition of storytelling" (338, 342). Both recall Denetdale's characterization of oral history as a "vehicle for practicing and realizing sovereignty" (69). Oral tradition substantiates sovereignty and constitutes a history of equal standing with the dominant forms represented by the statistics that Ortiz cited earlier.

Ortiz continues his final paragraph by defining the demands of sovereignty: "We must understand the experience of the oppressed . . . and

accept the responsibilities of that understanding” in order to “be able to make the necessary decisions for change” and “fight against the destroyers, thieves, liars, exploiters who profit handsomely off the land and people” (*Woven Stone* 363). He at once urges Acoma and other Native people to act on their sovereignty and calls on non-Natives for solidarity. Doing so, he challenges a broadly imagined people to become a resistant community: “all people of this nation” (360), “the American poor and the workers and white middleclass,” “all of us” (361), “especially the racial and ethnic minorities,” “the people of this nation, not just Indian people” (363). Urgency is heightened by the use of “we.” Ortiz has used the first-person plural sparingly up to this point, but now it appears eleven times, from the first sentence, “we must have passionate concern for what is at stake,” through the last one, “We will win” (363). Ortiz’s “we” includes Acoma and other Indigenous communities; it also clearly includes the rest of us. He is affirming his people’s sovereign resolve, and he is calling for allies. He defends Acoma lands, water, and stories and contests settler colonialism’s self-interested metanarratives (e.g., Manifest Destiny, white Western supremacy) and the boundaries they enforce (e.g., between Natives and others and between humans and the rest of creation (see Russell 38)). His expansive use of “we” effectively contests such divisions both by explicitly invoking solidarity among Indigenous peoples and others and by implicitly recalling the fundamental interrelationships of land, water, and people in community and cultures. Thus we can recognize water, which, like story, “substantiates life,” as included and embraced by “we.” On the simplest and most complex levels, without water, “we” could not exist.

“Our Homeland, a National Sacrifice Area” is representative of Native writers’ work to revise the assumptions of colonialist literary norms in “their own—Indian—terms.” As it recounts history and claims sovereignty, it equally represents how such revisions can support significant political weight with justice-seeking urgency. Perhaps, reading very narrowly, one could consider “Our Homeland,” first published in 1981, dated. There may now be no uranium mining or processing in New Mexico, and the Navajo Nation in 2005 passed a law banning uranium mining. But Ortiz’s histories, warnings, and call to action are as timely today as they were in 1981. He is addressing a long-term crisis that results from our settler-colonial history of misuse and

exploitation. Indeed, the broad relevance of “Our Homeland” is evident in numerous accounts of threats and damage to Indigenous water, land, and people. Coal mining at Black Mesa, on Navajo and Hopi lands, has already caused great damage. The uranium industry is persistent. For many years, Navajos, Acomas, Lagunas, Zunis, and Hopis have been concerned about renewed uranium mining near Mount Taylor, which is sacred to all (Smithson 18). Today, drilling, pipelines, mining for gold and copper, and proposals that Indigenous nations become storage sites for hazardous wastes endanger Native lands, lives, and water and, as Ortiz reminds us, threaten and implicate us all.⁷ In the present US political situation, all of these forms of extraction and exploitation are being promoted.

As Ortiz insists in “Our Homeland,” only with recognition and action “to overcome economic and political oppression . . . [o]nly then will there be no more unnecessary sacrifices of our people and land” (*Woven Stone* 361). There is cause for cautious hope in regional, national, and international Indigenous-led resistance against destruction of land, water, and communities. The Standing Rock people’s struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline has brought these issues to wide attention. And numerous organizations have been active outside of the national media spotlight; those that have struggled to research, recover from, and resist the uranium industry, for example, include Eastern Navajo-Diné Against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM), the Laguna Acoma Coalition for a Safe Environment (LACSE), the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE), and the Indigenous Environmental Network.⁸ Kuletz exposes how scientific language and other official discourses, as well as the institutional practices that support them, disempower marginalized peoples and their knowledge (*Tainted* 27–34).⁹ In “Our Homeland,” Ortiz crafts vibrant, forceful language to affirm local knowledge and call out exploitative interests and practices; doing so, he engages with Native and non-Native activists in dedicated struggle to “fight back: for the sake of the people, for the sake of the land.”¹⁰

ROBIN RILEY FAST has written *The Heart as a Drum: Continuance and Resistance in American Indian Poetry* and coedited (with Christine Mack Gordon) *Approaches to Teaching Dickinson’s Poetry*. Her many articles include essays on works by Luci Tapahonso, Carter Revard, Simon J. Ortiz, Thomas King, Jim Barnes, Adrian C. Louis, Louise Erdrich, and Maurice Kenny.

NOTES

Quotations from “Our Homeland, a National Sacrifice Area” are with the permission of Simon J. Ortiz.

1. Steve Lerner states that the term “national sacrifice zones” originally referred explicitly to “areas dangerously contaminated as a result of the mining and processing of uranium into nuclear weapons” (2).

2. On environmental racism, see Tarter (108); on “radioactive colonialism,” see LaDuke and Churchill. Many of the other sources I cite also address the racism endemic to the uranium industry’s mining and processing practices. See Lerner (2–6) on the disproportionate exposure of low-income and minority populations to hazardous industries and waste.

3. See Frost (37–39) and elsewhere regarding resistance at other Pueblos.

4. On the effects of uranium, particularly for Acoma and Laguna peoples, see Manuel Pino’s testimony at the World Uranium Hearing (146–48); also see Jacobs; Eichstaedt (163–65).

5. Tarter notes the serious contamination of Laguna’s surface water and groundwater sources (107); LaDuke and Churchill, too, draw attention to this contamination at Laguna, Acoma’s neighbor pueblo, and “throughout the Grants Mineral Belt” (124–25).

6. On unsafe working conditions and denial of information to mine- and millworkers, see Jacobs (43); LaDuke and Churchill (113); Eichstaedt (165–66); and Alvino Waconda’s testimony at the World Uranium Hearing (149). For an explanation of the milling process and the dangers associated with it, see Eichstaedt (128).

7. Recent action by an agency of the state of New Mexico may further delay required cleanup of “ongoing pollution” at Mount Taylor. See New Mexico Environmental Law Center. For other examples of concern, see Begaye; Smithson; “A Slow Genocide”; and World Uranium Hearing.

8. See these organizations’ websites: www.endaum.com; swuraniumimpacts.org (Multicultural Alliance and Laguna-Acoma Coalition); ienearth.org (Indigenous Environmental Network). For current information on uranium operations, see www.wiseinternational.org (World Information Service on Energy).

9. Compare the presentation of Southern Paiute speaker Viviyuntu Vivian Jake: “[T]he uranium mining companies . . . tell lies which really are printed up almost to be believable by the general public. . . . We need to come up with language that we can understand and that we can have the world to understand” (World Uranium Hearing 270).

10. This is the title of the book in which Ortiz first published “Our Homeland.”

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Intervening in the Archive

Women-Water Alliances, Narrative Agency, and Reconstructing
Indigenous Space in Deborah Miranda's *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir*

SHANAE AURORA MARTINEZ

The affirmation “California is a story. California is many stories” opens Deborah Miranda’s *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir*, in which Miranda pries California—both the story and the geography—from the hands of Franciscan missionaries and their settler-colonial successors (xi). Of the many stories that make up the geography now known as the state of California, narratives about water remain prevalent. This analysis pivots upon the voice of the Río Carmelo, whose agency is channeled through Miranda and the Indigenous women she relies on for their long-standing relationships with the water. It embraces Waziyatawin’s assertion that “complete decolonization is a necessary end goal in a peaceful and just society,” and it requires us to “*rethink our ways of being and interacting in this world to create a sustainable, healthy, and peaceful co-existence with one another and with the natural world*” (13, emphasis added). Furthermore, if we apply Doreen Massey’s conceptualization of space to Miranda’s Río Carmelo context by accepting that space is (1) “the product of interrelations,” (2) “constituted through interactions . . . in which distinct trajectories coexist,” and (3) “always in the process of being made,” then narratives that detail long-standing interrelationships between Indigenous Californians and their ancestral lands have the power to reaffirm the Río Carmelo as Indigenous space (9). In my analysis of this multi-genre text, I examine how *Bad Indians* intervenes in the archival plethora of narratives used to justify settler-colonial land claims in order to “[overturn] the institutions, systems, and ideologies of colonialism that continue to affect every aspect of Indigenous life” (Waziyatawin 13). In short, I argue that *Bad Indians* uses the archive—built out of exploitative settler-colonial research methodologies—against itself in an effort to restore Indigenous rights to the Río Carmelo.

While *Bad Indians* is labeled a memoir, its subtitle defies generic classifications by expanding the scope of the text beyond the individual to include tribal relationships. By its namesake, a tribal memoir must be polyvocal. As a tribal memoir, Miranda's text also functions as a "tribalography," according to Choctaw scholar LeAnne Howe's definition of such as a "rhetorical space" in which "Native people created narratives that were histories and stories with the power to transform" (118). Howe explains that stories bind cultures together around shared attitudes, and thus storytelling, regardless of genre, is "a performance of those beliefs, a living theater" (121, 123). *Bad Indians* contains a mosaic of voices from disparate sources that form a storied landscape composed of written and oral testimonies, poetry, essays, government documents, BIA forms, ethnographer's fieldnotes, photographs, family stories, newspaper articles, and the diaries of imperialist explorers and Franciscan priests. These sources comprise the archive upon which Miranda draws to construct a tribal memoir that performs the decolonization of the Río Carmelo.

In the introduction, Miranda states that her purpose for writing *Bad Indians* is "to create a space where voices can speak after long and often violently imposed silence" (xx). While the sources listed above contain the voices of those who impose oppressive silence and those who were oppressed by that silence, Miranda juxtaposes them to demonstrate the broader discursive entanglements behind settler colonialism that demand restitution. In many instances, the narratives of settler colonialists need only be present, since they proudly declare their own commitments to injustice. Yet it is Miranda's attuned archival research that has excavated the voices of the "Bad Indians" resisting settler colonialism and seeking justice through the return of their ancestral lands. By writing a tribalography that challenges the official story, Miranda changes the script of settler colonialism in California mission history for future generations.

Throughout this project I use the term *intervenes* according to Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's description of *intervening* as one of twenty-five Indigenous projects that utilize decolonial research methodologies. As an Indigenous project, "[i]ntervening takes action research to mean literally the process of being proactive and of becoming involved as an interested worker for change. Intervention-based projects are usually designed around making structural and cultural changes. . . . Intervening

is directed then at changing institutions which deal with indigenous peoples and not at changing indigenous peoples to fit the structures” (Smith 147).¹ *Bad Indians* not only intervenes on the metanarrative of the Mission Mythology, which purports that California was not only made but made better—in the words of settler scholar Charles Franklin Carter—with the “peaceful conquest by the strong yet gentle rule of the Church” (35). It also reveals that California and Indigenous Californians were made more exploitable through intersecting forms of violence that pivot upon missionization and its physical control of Indigenous peoples and landscapes. According to settler scholar of anthropology and museum studies Elizabeth Kryder-Reid, “The missions were intended to be self-sufficient plantations sustained by the labor of the neophytes,” who required access to “extensive water systems . . . for irrigating gardens, washing laundry, and tanning hides” (7, 35). By establishing permanent institutional structures near waterways, the missions limited access to the waters and surrounding homelands that Indigenous Californians depended on as they reaped the resources that were seasonally available. Especially affected were the skilled fishermen of coastal tribes, “whose sophisticated watercraft and tools allowed them to harvest even the deep-sea mammals, as well as other oceanic, anadromous, and riverine fish species” (35). By appropriating resources around major waterways, the missionaries forced Indigenous peoples into a dependent relationship with their institutions for sustenance. The following pages will examine multiple narrative interventions that rely on long-standing interdependent tribal relationships with the Río Carmelo to re-create Indigenous space in both geopolitical and ideological domains.

In *What Does Justice Look Like?* Waziyatawin suggests various ways to decolonize the geography of Minnesota that are broadly applicable. One such strategy is truth telling, so that the violences wreaked by colonization (genocide, displacement, exploitation, enslavement, ethnocide, etc.) can be adequately redressed. Honest narratives about the history of colonization, which continues to affect Indigenous-settler interrelations in the present, are necessary because “if settler society denies the injustices of the past and present, then the impetus to maintain the status quo is strong; there is no recognized need for change” (Waziyatawin 83). Unfortunately, *Bad Indians* reveals that the state of California’s fourth-

grade curriculum requirements discourage the kind of truth telling that would recognize the need for decolonization.

Fourth graders across California are required to complete the Mission Unit as part of California's history curriculum, continuing the practice of settler-colonial myth making that is authorized by the ostensibly accurate institution of education. To excel, students must be complicit in perpetuating the Mission Mythology by researching and constructing a diorama of one of the twenty-one missions established by the Franciscan order that "glorifies the era" and neglects the history of Indian exploitation and enslavement by Spanish, Mexican, and US American colonists (Miranda, *Bad Indians* xvii). As Miranda explains, the Mission Project is "impossible to avoid, a powerfully authoritative indoctrination in Mission Mythology. . . . [It] is all too often a lesson in imperialism, racism, and Manifest Destiny rather than actually educational or a jumping off point for critical thinking or accurate history" (xvii).² Because the Mission Unit is a statewide requirement, its narrative is granted authority by the settler-colonial state government to justify its existence by erasing the violence of its becoming. Fourth graders are introduced to the imperialist history of California from the perspective of colonizers who continue to hold systemic power, but they are discouraged from critically thinking about this historical period because such a narrative would threaten the very foundations of California statehood.

The narrative underpinning settler colonialism in California is the story of missionization, since it is the legacy from which all other settler societies trace their presence. In what he refers to as both a "guide-book" and a "[brief] . . . early history of California," settler scholar Charles Franklin Carter's *The Missions of Nueva California* (1900) follows the settler-colonial practice of subsuming Indigenous presence into the landscape by beginning his historical narrative with the "Catholic régime" (xiii). Carter's narrative credits the Catholic Church for bringing civilization to "a country of Indians, who . . . were amongst the lowest of all the aborigines," and reinforces the settler-colonial myths that history in the Americas begins with the European discovery and domestication of Indians (35). While Carter posits missionization as the beginning of history in California, Miranda refers to this period in history as "The End of the World" for Indigenous Californians (Miranda, *Bad Indians* 1). Carter's text—written for "the tourist" and

“all lovers of these historic spots” like himself—epitomizes the precise settler-colonial metanarrative that constitutes the Mission Mythology in which Miranda’s memoir *intervenes* (Carter xiii; Miranda, *Bad Indians* xvi–xvii). Not only are students denied an honest account of mission history, the pressure of this extensive project discourages them from doing the rigorous research that would prevent a regurgitation of the Mission Mythology.

Despite being published in 1900, the metanarrative of missionization in *Missions of Nueva California* continues to thrive in the present day. More than one hundred years after Carter published his history book for tourists, Miranda visited the Mission San Carlos Barrromeo de Carmelo on her family’s ancestral land, just twenty miles from the Río Carmelo, to find massive amounts of “project paraphernalia . . . for fourth graders and tourists to view while imagining the same rote story” (*Bad Indians* xviii). Miranda describes feeling “unprepared for the gift shops well stocked with CDs of pre-researched Mission Projects, xeroxed pamphlets of mission terms, facts, and history (one for each mission), coloring books, packaged models of missions ([‘easily’] assembled in 10 minutes!),” disturbingly complemented by the Carmel Mission website’s “4th Grade Corner,” where daily life at the missions is “blissfully described” (xviii). While teachers discourage the use of prepackaged Mission Project materials, their ready availability is tempting for students and parents visiting the missions for research purposes. However, these materials give rise to questions about the training students receive in ethical research methodologies and the skills they are expected to acquire for critically questioning sources. The missions undoubtedly benefit from the Mission Unit curriculum, monetarily and ideologically, which makes the abundance of “Project Paraphernalia” insidiously opportunistic. While tourist sites should strive to offer accurate and ethical narratives about places and peoples, their ideological purposes are at odds with those of the researcher. Yet the missions provide the same self-glorifying narratives as authoritative primary sources for both fourth-grade Mission Projects and tourist consumption.³

Juxtaposing Carter’s and Miranda’s texts demonstrates that the institutional conflation of education and tourism is not new, but it should be deeply troubling. The tourist industry’s practices—or methodologies in the context of the academy—of knowledge consumption and knowl-

edge production have their roots in ethnographic research.⁴ Chris Rojek and John Urry write extensively about the culture of tourism. In their coedited collection, *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*, they ask the question: “Where does tourism end and so-called field work begin?” Unfortunately, the answer is elusive, as they explain: “This lack of clear distinction results from the immensely varied ways in which we now know tourists ‘sense’ the external world. Some of these senses involve the deployment of skills which parallel those used by the academic researcher. Semiotic skill is the most significant here, involving an ability to move forwards and backwards between diverse texts, film, photographs, landscape, townscape, and models, so as to ‘decode’ information” (Rojek and Urry 9). Geography and anthropology are specifically cited by Rojek and Urry as disciplines with methodologies that closely parallel tourist practices, since they both rely on visual data collection and travel to conduct research (9). Research methodologies are practices that Indigenous scholars like Devon Mihesuah, Waziyatawin, and Smith have interrogated for decades, because non-Indigenous researchers lack “empirical knowledge . . . in areas such as tribal religions, kinship, social mores, and oral stories” that might enable them to more accurately interpret the peoples and places they study (Mihesuah 14).⁵ Semiotic skills alone are simply not enough.

Ethical research methodologies require non-Indigenous researchers to understand their social positions as outsiders with limited authority over tribally specific worldviews. As Mihesuah explains, “Scholars can only strive for accuracy by scrutinizing all viable written data, by incorporating the accounts and interpretations of the participants and descendants of the participants—both Indian and non-Indian—into their analysis, and by holding their pro- or anti-Indian biases in check” (5). While Mihesuah is specifically sharing her “conscientious ethnohistorian’s standpoint” (5), her assessment parallels the concerns expressed by Rojek and Urry, who study tourists by “unpacking the orientations that people bring with them when they engage in tourist activity and also with tracing some of the mythologies of escape involved when people go touring or dream of touring” (2). Both scholars and tourists tend to assume that their ostensibly objective perspectives are valid, failing to recognize how their own biases are informed by mythologies upholding the power dynamics of settler-colonial institutions that intersect against the mission backdrop.

The myths are so pervasive that some researchers and tourists struggle to accept evidence that contradicts their expectations. Miranda recounts a visit to Mission Dolores, where she meets a mother and daughter who are working on a Mission Project by “reading directly from the flyer given to tourists in the gift shop” (*Bad Indians* xviii). When the mother regurgitates the Mission Myth of “all those Indians and how they lived all that time ago,” Miranda announces herself as a living member of the Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen Nation with ancestors listed in the mission’s Book of Baptisms but omits that they are also listed in the Book of Deaths (xix). Miranda describes the mother as thrilled to meet her and learn about her work, but the daughter was “literally shocked into silence. Her face drained, her body went stiff, and she stared at me as if I had risen, an Indigenous skeleton clad in decrepit rags, from beneath the clay bricks of the courtyard” (xix). Despite being on her ancestral land, Miranda’s presence is unexpected for the mother and shocking for the daughter, as neither ever imagined meeting a living Indigenous person while studying the history of Indigenous peoples. The fourth grader, steeped in Mission Mythology, struggles to reconcile the metanarrative about disappeared Indians with Miranda’s personal narrative of existence even as Miranda stands before her.

In this story, Miranda’s living presence intervenes in the Mission Mythology, which denies the existence of any living Mission Indians and in effect denies their claims to land. The fourth grader she meets epitomizes the process by which settler-colonial metanarratives are institutionally authorized and internalized. While studying missions at school, the student is primed to recognize the signs and symbols of missionization: adobe walls, red clay roof tiles, original cemetery, and fully restored gardens. These details constitute what Miranda refers to as “visual mythology” to substantiate the “cultural storytelling that drains the missions of their brutal and bloody pasts for popular consumption” (*Bad Indians* xvii). The physical geography is an essential component for narrating the relationships that construct the space of a tourist site. As Philip Crang explains, “The production and consumption of tourism are fundamentally ‘geographical’ processes. At their heart are constructions of and relationships with places and spaces. . . . [T]hese places and spaces operate as settings for performances of both producers and consumers, helping to establish the precise character of a tourism product and its performance” (143). Crang’s essay, “Performing the Tourist Prod-

uct,” explores the relationship between employees performing “culturally constructed characters” and the tourists they encounter (143). However, his analysis of tourist sites as settings upon which relationships to places are performed applies to Miranda’s interpretation of the pristine appearance projected by the missions.

Today, there is no evidence of Indigenous enslavement, rape of Indigenous women, starvation, or the brutal disciplinary measures taken by the padres to keep Indigenous Californians obedient and imprisoned. The only Indians to be found are in the cemetery, and the absence of an Indigenous narrative perspective performs the tourist product as a geography devoid of Indians. The tourists who move freely throughout the missions perform their sense of entitlement to the land on which they travel, further sustaining the Mission Mythology of Franciscan innocence in the colonial project.

However, it is through Miranda’s own rigorous research that she finds photographs of women labeled “Belles”: *A Digger Belle* and *The Three Belles of San Luis Rey* (*Bad Indians* 44, 49).⁶ The photographs are evidence that Indigenous Californians, specifically women, were forced to perform for tourists in order to survive. While they were not formally employed by the missions, the women’s presence as Indians became a marketable tourist product. The three women referred to as the Belles of San Luis Rey—Tomasa, Rosaria, and Vaselia—were known to share stories and pose for photographs in exchange for money from tourists (Miranda, *Bad Indians* 50). The image of them that Miranda uncovers is from an early 1900s postcard that was used to market the missions to tourists (48). As Miranda explains, “[B]elle,’ with its connotations of civilization and domesticated females with the sole purpose of serving as objects for male enjoyment, seems to have been a widespread joke in California—sarcasm, irony, mean-spirited derision of Indian women” (47). She continues, “If a ‘Mission Bell’ is an icon of touristic pleasure, then to be a ‘Mission Belle’ is to also be marked as a commodity, female ([though] not human): marketable, a product of brief enjoyment” (49). Indian women became the “culturally constructed characters” of the Mission Mythology simply by surviving. When the missions were secularized, the Indians who were imprisoned there were left homeless, despite being on their ancestral lands. Many were sold into slavery, but these women entered a different type of servitude.

Not unlike the Indians who were paid to act in Buffalo Bill’s Wild

West show, which Philip Deloria writes about in *Indians in Unexpected Places*, the “Mission Belles” were “caught in the curious mix of fiction, memory, realism, actuality, and expectation” (53). In their effort to fend off starvation and because they had no land to return to, their resourcefulness was fully exploited within the national mythos. Their abject poverty was shown to result from their inability to survive in modern civilization, not from having their land stolen or destroyed by gold mining. They appeared to be fulfilling the promises of Manifest Destiny as the disappearing last remnants of the mission Indians, not the survivors of social upheaval and genocide. Their presence became a symbol of their inevitable absence at the missions, lending authenticity to the experiences of tourists and contributing to the education-tourism conflation.

Those who visit the missions for research purposes practice a form of academic tourism, wherein the student assumes that the tourist narrative is a credible source and consumes it wholesale (unless Miranda intervenes). Rojek and Urry define academic tourism as the travel academic work involves to conferences and other similar institutions where participants “may use their travel experiences as part of their supposedly authoritative academic data” (9–10). However, I expand upon this definition of academic tourism to refer to the voyeuristic research practices of scholars with no investment in the people, places, or political consequences that may result from their studies. One such researcher was Smithsonian ethnologist John Peabody Harrington (1884–1961), who internalized the settler-colonial myths about disappearing Indians and sought to collect language lessons and Coyote stories before it was too late (Miranda, *Bad Indians* 28). Harrington was no different from tourists who look for symbols of authenticity, and his fieldwork led him to seek out predetermined symbols of Indigenous cultures while the broader histories of Indigenous peoples’ relationships to their homelands in California were conveniently neglected.

Yet despite Harrington’s desire to record what he thought were the narratives of a dying culture, he unintentionally recorded narratives of genocide, sexual assault, land theft, neglect, and displacement. Rather than crediting Harrington for documenting injustice, Miranda credits his informant, Isabel Meadows, for her foresight, since “this means that Isabel herself knew the power of story, and believed in our survival”

(*Bad Indians* 28). According to Miranda, “Isabel snuck in the stories *she* wanted to salvage: her own private project, a memorial, and a charmstone of hope for future generations” (28). While Harrington’s fieldwork and the Smithsonian’s subsequent archive construct the metanarrative about Indigenous cultures and languages that he assumed were soon to be disappeared, conversely, Meadows’s stories are narrative interventions in the metanarrative that detail the violent daily processes of settler colonialism intent on displacing and disappearing Indigenous Californians. Genocide and ethnocide are not apolitical acts of nature, and Meadows’s stories make that clear: oppression is systemic. Harrington’s negligence of this fact can be attributed to the privilege that allowed him to assume scientific objectivity because he did not share the same political stakes as those he studied. But Meadows knew this, and Miranda relies on Meadows’s narrative interventions in Harrington’s archive to construct her own narrative intervention in the Mission Mythology. Their own tribalogy, Isabel’s archival contributions acknowledged injustices against ancestors that communicate a Native worldview for future generations forced to navigate settler-colonial societies (Howe 124).

One story in particular documents the transnational geopolitics of settler colonialism on Indigenous land claims that sit at the intersection of Spanish, Mexican, and US American imperialism. Meadows is Miranda’s relative by marriage, and her story recounts the expulsion of the Carmeleños from Rancho El Potrero, their land in the former pasture of the Carmel Mission given to them by the padre when secularization took effect. Before Rancho El Potrero was Carmel Mission’s pasture, it was the site of an Indigenous village called Echilat, the village from which Miranda’s ancestors descended (*Bad Indians* 200). What makes this story transnational is its documentation of the transition from mission (Spanish) to Mexican to US imperialism and the effect on Indigenous-held land titles in California after the 1848 ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Miranda uncovers Meadows’s story of government-sanctioned theft but also retells it in a way that emphasizes its oral transmission to text. The combination of these relational elements constructs the Río Carmelo as an Indigenous space regardless of who holds the deed to the land. While Miranda offers a creative retelling of Meadows’s archival contribution, in the

section titled “Ularia’s Curse” she is actually retelling Ularia’s story as it was shared by Meadows. The story bridge from Ularia to Meadows to Miranda is nonlinear, as well as transnational.

In Meadows’s story, she briefly mentions “la maldición de la Ularia” that took the life of Bradley Sargent, the US American who stole Rancho El Potrero, but she offers no further details of Ularia’s curse (Miranda, *Bad Indians* 200–01). Miranda uses Meadows’s words (“Pero la maldición de la Ularia cayó en la familia de los Sarchens” [But the curse of Ularia fell upon the Sargent family]) as an epigraph and catalyst for her narrative in addition to Meadows’s historical narrative and Sargent’s obituary. In “Ularia’s Curse,” when Estéfana and her family are being run off the land at Rancho El Potrero near the Río Carmelo, she presents the title to the land and is told, “Those signatures are no good anymore; Indians can’t own land” (41). Despite written documentation from the Mexican governor, Juan Bautista Valentín Alvarado y Vallejo, confirming Estéfana’s inherited claim to the land, Estéfana and other displaced and disoriented Indians gather near the Río Carmelo.

In Miranda’s retelling, she begins the narrative by stating, “Isabel says it was Ularia’s curse that killed Sargent,” and she repeats the phrase “Isabel says” in almost all of the nine paragraphs that compose this section for a total of seven times (*Bad Indians* 41–42). The repetition of “Isabel says” recenters oral narrative as a reliable historical record of Indigenous land claims that stands the test of time far better than the written documents issued by settler-colonial governments (41). Miranda’s retelling affirms Simon Ortiz’s seminal essay in a California context when he explains that “the oral tradition has been the most reliable method by which Indian culture and community integrity have been maintained” (9). The use of the phrase “Isabel says” to recall the existence of documents issued by the Mexican government reinforces the enduring dependability of oral history, since it outlives the assumed permanence of a written land title. The oral story committed to Harrington’s fieldnotes also locates Rancho El Potrero based on its geographical relationship to the Río Carmelo.

The resilience of this oral history, which is situated over the geography of the Río Carmelo, disrupts the colonial metanarratives about the area and reinforces the significance of human and nonhuman relationships to construct Indigenous space. Massey’s definition is inclusive of nonhumancentric relationships, and her conceptualization

of space is validated by Indigenous theorists thinking from tribally specific contexts. The existence of “Ularia’s Curse” as an oral narrative in print form relies on the sustained interrelationship between Indigenous peoples and their landbases, like the Carmeleños’ interrelationship with the Río Carmelo. Both Miranda and Meadows assert the agency of the Río Carmelo in their narrative constructions of Indigenous space. In the following quote, Miranda articulates the incredibly lovingly reciprocal relationship that the women have with the river that sustains them:

And Ularia remembered: the river would be here long after she was gone. “Will you miss us, River?” she wondered. “Will you miss our feet on your riverbed, our twined fishing nets combing your waters, our sacrifice of the first salmon every year?”

Isabel says the river must have said yes, because where else would Ularia have gotten the idea? . . . The Americans say Ularia cursed the river. But Isabel says no; Ularia wouldn’t do that. Isabel says Ularia gave the river the idea to curse Sargent. But rivers tell time differently than people, and so it took ten years before the river finished what Ularia had begun. Ularia was long since dust on the day the river took Sargent, took his life from him like that, drank him down, and cleansed itself of his greed.

Isabel says wherever they are, she’s sure Ularia’s bones are laughing. (*Bad Indians* 42)

The narrative begins with Estéfana’s displacement to the Río Carmelo by US encroachment, moves ten years forward to Sargent’s death from falling into the river, and then returns to the point ten years in the past when Ularia cursed Sargent while sitting on the riverbank, crisscrossing temporalities and creating a story bridge around and *with* the river itself (Miranda, *Bad Indians* 41). The central role of the Río Carmelo in this multilayered narrative intervention recognizes it, too, as an agent of change and an ally to the displaced women. The narrating agent of the following historical account uses a storytelling voice to describe the loving reciprocal relationships between the Carmeleños and the Río Carmelo, which runs through their land. Ularia details the reciprocity of her relationship to the river when she recalls the sacrifice of the first salmon, and, in turn, the river inspires and assists her curse on Sargent for some semblance of justice. When the Americans say Ularia cursed the river, Isabel knows this account is not congruent with the

relationship between Ularía and the Carmelo. The reinforcement of this long-standing relationship between Ularía and the Carmelo stands as a testament to the river as an Indigenous space, despite the narratives of land titles and justice systems that condone theft.

With this multilayered narrative intervention in academic tourism and its archival body, Isabel channels the voices of both Ularía and the Río Carmelo. Miranda asks, “Is it ironic, or poetic, that the Carmel River, whose Indigenous people [Sargent] personally drove from its banks, had the final word?” (*Bad Indians* 201). She answers her own question with musings that “perhaps the best word is *la maldición* (‘the curse’). . . . Perhaps it worked. It’s a good story” (201). As a story, the narrative of “Ularía’s Curse” is one of resistance against settler colonialism. This resistance pivots upon the tribal relationships that value a women-water alliance against destructive forces. When Miranda refers to herself as one of the story bridges connecting her to her ancestors, to their words and experiences, it is because her book reaches into the archives of settler-colonial institutions and connects her to other guerrilla storytellers like Isabel (xx). “Through the vehicle of [Harrington’s] field note,” Miranda explains, “we are engaged in a very Indigenous practice: that of storytelling as education, as thought experiment, as community action to right a wrong, as resistance to representation as victim” (29). Although Miranda’s tribal ancestors have been victimized by the systemic assault of intersecting settler-colonial practices, the story does not end there; instead, it demands justice no matter how long it takes. The story narrates relationships, but it also inspires sustained action by emphasizing the significance of “truth telling” to validate Indigenous experiences, voices, and practices even in the face of perilous circumstances. As Leslie Marmon Silko explains in “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective,” “Keeping track of all the stories within the community gives us all a certain distance, a useful perspective, that brings incidents down to a level we can deal with. If others have done it before, it cannot be so terrible. If others have endured, so can we” (52). *Bad Indians* is a reminder that academia is inundated with stories, and it is our responsibility as scholars to intervene in the metanarratives that have violated our humanity so that we can privilege the stories that envision social justice world making.

In this project I fully embrace Eve Tuck’s and K. Wayne Yang’s assertion that “[settler] colonization can be visually understood as the

unbroken pace of invasion, and settler occupation, into Native lands. . . . Decolonization, as a process, would repatriate land to Indigenous peoples" (25). In the final section of *Bad Indians*, "To Make Story Again in the World," Miranda dreams into existence a story map of Rancho El Potrero that rivals the maps drawn to obtain grants of government land from Spain and later Mexico during secularization. According to settler scholar Robert Becker, the maps were called *diseños* (designs) and were part of land title petitions submitted by settlers that described the land they wished to colonize. *Diseños* were not drawn to scale. They relied on geological features, yet they were a fundamental part of defining the parameters of specific land claims (Becker). Ironically, land titles were granted with several provisions that ostensibly protected Indigenous peoples' rights while simultaneously displacing them from their lands. For example, the first provision required that "a permanent dwelling [be] erected and inhabited," encouraging settlers to squat on the lands they wished to claim, while the third provision stated that the "rights of previous inhabitants [Indians] be reserved and protected" (Becker). While these provisions were established by the Mexican government, US settlers like Bradley Sargent disregarded land title provisions and simply occupied a property with armed guards until the Indigenous inhabitants and rightful landholders were forced off their own land (Miranda, *Bad Indians* 200).

When Miranda learns that her family held a Spanish land grant that was honored by the Mexican government and later challenged by the US government, she turns to archival research to find out more about these landowning relatives. In the final section of the book, we learn in a more typical historical timeline the backstory to "Ularia's Curse," including an image of a *diseño* depicting Rancho El Potrero. As Miranda explains, "The stories still exist, and testify that our connections to the land live, like underground rivers that never see the light of day, but run alive and singing nonetheless. The stories call us back" (*Bad Indians* 203). Upon finding that the land is protected within a nature preserve, Miranda contacts a historian of the preserve, and their communication inspires her to dream a storied map of her ancestral land.⁷

In the dream, Miranda approaches Rancho El Potrero with her sister, identifying landmarks described in stories about various relatives. Upon examining the mountain range surrounding Rancho El Potrero, Miranda recognizes Pico Blanco as a significant landmark in stories

about Estéfana. Among the rancho's ruins, Miranda is brought right to the banks of the Río Carmelo (*Bad Indians* 205). From the vantage point of the river, on a rocky island in the middle of the Río Carmelo, Miranda follows ancestral symbols for grizzly bear carved in a large, light-colored rock with a little cave in the center. In the dream, she recalls a saying that those who put their hand in the rock's cave will be granted a sacred power, and so she and her sister both do so (206). The dream intertwines the supernatural and the mundane, so that Miranda imagines sharing her sacred land with young people who are part of a training program while simultaneously expressing relief at having a place to return her ancestors' bones (207). Miranda's narrative map relies on the rich oral narratives that locate the Carmeleños from Rancho El Potrero along the banks of the Río Carmelo. Since Miranda is able to imagine with tangible accuracy the parameters of her ancestral land, the tribal stories converge to reveal the river as an Indigenous epistemological archive that allows Miranda to map her homeland by imagining how the stories fit together on the physical landscape. Through the river as an epistemological reserve, Miranda demonstrates how the relational agency of spatially situated narratives has the potential to destabilize Euroamerican assumptions about what constitutes both an archive and landownership.

Miranda's multigenre text relies on both written and oral stories situated on and around the Río Carmelo at Rancho El Potrero to substantiate her tribe's claim to their original land. By broadening the body of the archive, *Bad Indians* imagines social justice space making and demonstrates yet another strategy for intervening in academic research methodologies for the purpose of decolonization. By emphasizing the significance of place-based narratives, this article is committed to dismantling oppressive institutionalized discourses with geopolitical ramifications by expanding the definition of an archive according to Indigenous epistemologies and using the knowledge located in water archives for decolonization. While the power of story persists, there are many stories to contend with on the way to decolonization. In this article, I only strive to offer perspective on the practical action that Miranda takes to disseminate the stories needed to change the world. Even though Miranda is not hopeful that Rancho El Potrero will be returned to her tribe, still she believes "there is a pathway open to me—to my tribe, our families—to return to a place which formed us" (*Bad Indians* 204). Intervening is a powerful strategy.

SHANAE AURORA MARTINEZ is a doctoral candidate from California studying Indigenous American literatures in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. She is the recipient of the Advanced Opportunity Program Fellowship, and her social justice scholarship has been recognized by the Graduate School with the Tomás Garrett-Rosas Research Award.

NOTES

1. As Smith notes, “The projects intersect with each other in various ways. They have multiple goals and involve different indigenous communities of interest” (142). With consideration for the complexity of *Bad Indians*, it is as much an (7) Intervening project as it is a project of (1) Claiming, (2) Testimonies, (3) Storytelling, (4) Celebrating Survival, (5) Remembering, (6) Indigenizing, (8) Revitalizing, (9) Connecting, (10) Reading, (11) Writing, (12) Representing, (13) Gendering, (14) Envisioning, (15) Reframing, (16) Restoring, (17) Returning, (18) Democratizing, (19) Networking, (20) Naming, (21) Protecting, (22) Creating, (23) Negotiating, (24) Discovering, and (25) Sharing.

2. In 2016 the California History–Social Science Project (CHSSP), a team of educational researchers headquartered at UC Davis, announced a new History–Social Science Framework to address the complexities of the Spanish colonial period, among other socially notable events in history. According to Anthea Hartig, the executive director of the San Francisco–based California Historical Society, which is working with CHSSP, “The intent . . . is to ‘complicate that narrative’ [“featuring the ‘gentle padre and grateful, subservient Indian’] and make it more meaningful and inclusive and especially to help students understand California’s native people are still here and have survived phenomenally difficult, challenging and horrifying histories to become a vibrant part of California today” (<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/California-public-schools-mission-project-model-11953722.php?cmpid=fb-desktop>). While the new framework has enormous potential to teach an accurate account of mission history and ethically represent Indigenous Californians, it will take years to implement.

3. This is not surprising, since the Catholic Church maintains the savior narrative of missionization. In 2015, amid protests from California Indians and allies, including Miranda herself, proclaiming, “Serra Ain’t No Saint!,” Pope Francis canonized Junípero Serra, the eighteenth-century Spanish Franciscan who oversaw the founding of the twenty-one Alta California missions, inflicting devastation on Indigenous Californians and engendering the Native apocalypse (<https://badndns.blogspot.com/2015/09/canonization-fodder-california-indians.html>; <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/serra-the-saint-why-not/>). Francis justified his decision by claiming, “Junípero sought to defend the dignity of the native community, to protect it from those who had mistreated and abused it,” conveniently forgetting that Franciscans were an essential part of the colonizing project sanctioned by the Spanish Crown (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/24/pope-francis-makes-spanish-missionary-junipero-serra-a-saint-amid-protests>).

4. I have chosen not to include the Catholic Church in this study. My focus on education and tourism as sites of knowledge production follows the presumption behind *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities* that “the academy is worth Indigenizing because something productive will happen as a consequence” (Mihesuah and Wilson 5). The Catholic Church does not fall under the scope of this project, given its insistence on maintaining the Mission Mythology at the expense of social justice.

5. Devon Mihesuah’s edited collection, *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, from which this quote is drawn, is one of many texts that offer insightful critique of the fraught and often exploitative relationships between Indigenous peoples and academics.

6. Miranda reports that the slur “Digger” was officially discontinued in 1922 when it was finally recognized for its offensiveness to Indigenous Californians, specifically the Miwok (*Bad Indians* 51).

7. Through her archival research, Miranda was able to locate Rancho El Potrero, “the last Esselen-owned land in California” (*Bad Indians* 203). It is currently protected within the Santa Lucia Nature Conservancy by wealthy homeowners in “a combination private, corporate-owned real estate holding and nature conservancy consisting of Bradley Sargent’s former ranch, itself stolen from Indians” (203). Ironically or not, its preservation relies on economic gatekeeping that determines access to the space. One would have to be able to afford a “million-dollar (or more) home,” because it is not open to the general public (204).

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Mnisose / the Missouri River

A Comparative Literary Analysis of River Stories from the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the #NoDAPL Movement

SARAH HERNANDEZ

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's firm opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), an underground conduit that cuts across the Missouri River twice as it transports 450,000 barrels of crude oil a day from North Dakota to Illinois, has recently thrust the river into public discourse. However, as Lakota scholar Nick Estes points out, Mnisose / the Missouri River has been a source of contention between tribal and federal governments for more than two hundred years, beginning with the Lewis and Clark Expedition in the nineteenth century and followed by the Pick-Sloan Missouri River Basin Project in the twentieth century and, most recently, the #NoDAPL movement in the twenty-first century (1). The long-standing tension surrounding the continent's longest river is recorded in an eclectic range of literatures—from oral stories to newspaper articles to travelogues, books, poetry, and, more recently, social media—that reflect a seemingly endless and highly adaptable cycle of settler colonialism.

In recent discussions of colonialism and nationalism, many literary, religious, and political scholars have suggested that books, newspapers, and other literary texts have long been used to colonize and decolonize Indigenous people and communities. Dakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr. wryly observes: "When missionaries arrived they had only the Book and we had the land; now we have the Book and they have the land" (101). This critique links print literature (i.e., "the Book") to a colonial system that has long sought to oppress and silence Indigenous people. Although "Books" capitalized denotes the Christian Bible, both religious and secular texts have been used to colonize Indigenous people and communities.

Indigenous colonization or settler colonialism, according to Eve Tuck

and K. Wayne Yang, occurs at two different levels: externally and internally. External colonialism denotes “the expropriation of Indigenous land / water / air / subterranean earth” (Tuck and Yang 5), while internal colonialism refers to “supplanting indigenous laws and epistemologies” with Western beliefs and values (8). Briefly stated, the impetus of external colonialism is avarice for material wealth, while internal colonialism refers to the institutions and mechanisms used to justify that greed, theft, and corruption. Many scholars argue that literature is one such mechanism.¹

Although literature has the power to colonize tribal people and communities, it also has the potential to decolonize them. In *Native Women and Land: Narratives of Dispossession and Resurgence*, Stephanie Fitzgerald convincingly argues that oral, print, and electronic literatures have each been used to, respectively, empower, disempower, and reempower the Cherokee, Navajo, Ojibwe, and Dakota nations. The third chapter of Fitzgerald’s book examines “the effects of illegal land transfers on Native land and lifeways,” specifically focusing on the impact that the Pick-Sloan Project had on the Missouri River and the Dakota nation (70). Fitzgerald describes the Missouri River as a “land narrative,” or “palimpsestic landscape imprinted with physical, cultural, or spiritual narratives that have retained their resonance for centuries” (4). She urges scholars to study this and other land narratives carefully and to read Indigenous landscapes as “a microcosm of the Native world, which is re-created again and again through each re-telling of the creation story” (19). This article also considers the land narrative, Mnisose / the Missouri River, amplifying discussions of the ancient and sacred river by examining some of the texts not covered by Fitzgerald and bringing the discussion up to date with the #NoDAPL movement.

Whereas Fitzgerald’s book explores multiple tribal creation stories, this article further traces the genealogy of Mnisose / the Missouri River from the mid-nineteenth century to the present to examine the transformation of these river stories across different time periods, genres, and nationalisms. Over the past two centuries, Mnisose / the Missouri River has been translated and retranslated numerous times by both Native and non-Native writers to serve various and often contradictory political agendas. In 1851 early missionary translators such as the Reverend Stephen R. Riggs and the Pond brothers helped transform Mnisose / the Missouri River from an oral to a written form. Since then, sev-

eral other writers and scholars have also translated and reinterpreted these sacred tribal river stories. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many of these representations were used to erase, infantilize, and/or vilify Dakota people while simultaneously replacing them with a new set of colonized river stories (i.e., internal colonialism) that helped early American settlers justify land theft and the forced removal of Dakota people from their traditional homelands (i.e., external colonialism).² Ultimately, Mnisose / the Missouri River is an example of both literary and literal colonization that tribal people are still overcoming today.

COLONIZING AND DECOLONIZING MNISOSE / THE MISSOURI RIVER

Mnisose / the Missouri River is both a flowing body of water and an ancient and sacred creation story. As a natural resource, the river stretches 2,341 miles from the Rocky Mountains to the Mississippi River, providing water and sustenance to more than two dozen tribes. Over the years, many of these tribes have developed “a powerful connection” to the river, a connection they have maintained through the oral storytelling tradition (Westerman and White 14). According to Dakota literary scholar Gwen Westerman, “[O]ral stories and oral traditions . . . are reflected in place names . . . [that] are carried forward by multiple storytellers” from one generation to the next (14). Often, these oral stories convey important cultural lessons or values that help preserve and perpetuate traditional Indigenous lifeways that have the potential to unite the community. Dakota historian Waziyatawin Angela Wilson emphasizes that oral stories “are not merely interesting stories or even the simple dissemination of historical fact. They are, more importantly, transmissions of culture upon which [tribal people and communities] survive” (Wilson, “Grandmother” 13). These stories, which are passed down from storyteller to storyteller, ensure that tribal culture, language, history, and values are shared with each subsequent generation.

Further evidence of the inextricable link between Indigenous people, places, and stories is obvious in the relationship between Mnisose / the Missouri River and the Dakota nation.³ Dakota people believe that Mnisose / the Missouri River is more than just a flowing body of water. It is also a sacred creation story that tells them “where they came from, who they are, and what is expected of them” (Wilson, “Grandmother”

13).⁴ Dakota poet Gabrielle Wynde Tateyuskaskan expands upon this complex relationship in her poem “Isanti River Journey.”

The living Oyate and ancient river
have shared a journey.
The birth of the people began
with pure life giving water. (Howe and Tall Bear 73)

The first stanza of this poem indicates that the speaker, like many Dakota people, believes that her early ancestors emerged from the river. Because of this intimate connection, she views the river as a rich source of cultural knowledge and experience. She firmly maintains: “This inherited memory has been etched in my genes” (Howe and Tall Bear 73).

In Tateyuskaskan’s poem, the river bears witness to nearly every atrocity committed against the Dakotapi. Her poem is organized chronologically, with each stanza focusing on a different dramatic/traumatic moment in Dakota history. Initially, the poet imagines a comforting image of her early “Dakota ancestors” traveling a “natural highway created by water” (Howe and Tall Bear 73). Gradually, this positive image disintegrates into a “malignancy on the waterways” that brings explorers, fur traders, settlers, broken treaties, and eventually a war that ends in the tribe’s exile from their traditional homelands (73–75). These repeated attempts at colonization and forced assimilation lead to “the destruction of Dakota culture, spirituality, and family” (74). Despite these hardships, the speaker of the poem insists that both the river and its people are resilient because both of them have found the strength and ingenuity to adapt to their new colonized environment. Tateyuskaskan’s poem ends on a positive note:

Like ancient rivers that have
reshaped their shores
the people have adapted,
moving from loss toward life. (Howe and Tall Bear 75)

For many non-Native readers, the river likely symbolizes diachrony, the flow from past to future. According to Fitzgerald’s theory, however, for Native people the river is more than an abstract metaphor. This land narrative is also a creation story that conveys important cultural values and life lessons (Fitzgerald 16–17). In Tateyuskaskan’s poem, Mnisose /

the Missouri River conveys the important Dakota life lesson of adaptation. It is a profound lesson that the poet takes to heart, as her poem itself is a form of adaptation, a conscious move “from loss toward life” (Howe and Tall Bear 75). In effect, she is using poetry to reimagine a traditional oral story in a more modern form as print literature.

In many ways, Tateyuskanskan’s poem in both content and form captures the devastating effects of settler colonialism, a systemic form of oppression that conspires to extinguish Indigenous lifeways and supplant them with the colonizer’s way of life. As historian Patrick Wolfe argues, settler colonialism is not the result of one large-scale event; instead, it is a “structure,” an ongoing process that seeks to “destroy” Indigenous cultures and “replace” them with a dominant one (290). Although the primary goal of settler colonialism is acculturation, Wolfe points out that settler colonialism is paradoxical, because it does not simply lead to “the erasure of indigeneity”; instead, it creates a new space for Indigenous expression (388–89). Wolfe’s theory suggests that settler colonialism is a contradiction that simultaneously destroys tribal traditions while creating new ones. Ultimately, Mnisose / the Missouri River is a prime example of this paradox because it is a traditional Dakota oral story that was colonized and intercepted by missionary translators who misinterpreted and misappropriated these tribal river stories for nearly two hundred years, that is, until Dakota writers reclaimed their land narrative by reimagining it in print form as both poetry and prose.

As an ancient and sacred creation myth, “Mnisose / the Missouri River” has existed since time immemorial.⁵ It is usually one of the first oral stories shared among Dakota people; thus, it was also one of the first oral stories relayed to missionary translators and ethnologists.⁶ Edward Duffield Neills, an American historian, was one of the first writers to misinterpret and misappropriate this river story by disputing the Dakota’s claim that they emerged from the river’s water. According to Neills, “the Dakotahs” simply used this creation story to “claim superiority over other people” (*History of Washington County* 1). With this new representation, Neills not only delegitimized this ancient and sacred creation story but also appropriated the river by renaming Mnisose the Missouri River and relocating it “to the centre of the United States of America” (1). Neills’s decision to appropriate Mnisose is ironic and highly hypocritical, as he initially criticized Dakota storytellers for using this tribal river story “to claim superiority over other nations,” and

then he himself scripted a new colonized representation of the river that privileged the American nation at the expense of the Dakota nation (1).

It is unclear if Neills was consciously aware that he was promoting this nationalist agenda; however, many early American writers commonly used these types of literary tropes in ways that “contributed to the politics of possession and dispossession” (Cook-Lynn, *Stegner* 40).⁷ As demonstrated in the next three sections of this article, these types of colonized river stories, which many different writers have perpetuated over the past two hundred years, have had a negative impact on the Dakota nation—at least until recently, when modern/contemporary Dakota writers and scholars began to “write back” to the colonizer and reclaim Mnisose / the Missouri River, using various literary genres and mediums to decolonize their tribal river stories and (re)unite the Dakota nation (and many other tribal nations) to protect the sacred river from the “black snake.”

THE FIRST ASSAULT ON THE RIVER: THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION

The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri river, and such principal stream of it, as, by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, may offer the most direct and practicable water communication across this continent, for the purposes of commerce.

—President Thomas Jefferson’s instructions to Meriwether Lewis
(missouririverwatertrail.org/river-history/river-lewis-and-clark)

In 1804 Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led the first American expedition westward to find and map a transcontinental water route to the Pacific Ocean. Although Lewis and Clark failed to locate this water passage, their expedition is often viewed as a triumph in the annals of American history, as it opened Mnisose / the Missouri River to more trade, travel, and economic opportunity for the emerging American nation. “The Missouri River became the first American highway,” says Kent Keenlyne of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. He also points out that the river was used to “carr[y] heavy loads of fur down the river and liquor, cholera, and smallpox back up. Within a relatively few years, the native stocks, both wildlife and man alike, were severely depleted” (Keenlyne 33). In many ways, the Lewis and Clark Expedition is the first

river story in American history and one of the most distressing chapters in the Dakotapi's continuous and ongoing story about Mnisose / the Missouri River. Dakota scholar Katheryn Akipa refers to this distressing new chapter as "The Beginning of Sorrows" (Howe and Tall Bear 7). Dakota writer Charmaine White Face compares Lewis and Clark to "the starter cells of a vast, cancerous way of thinking that is rapidly killing Unci Maka," or Grandmother Earth (59). Clearly, European American and tribal people view the outcome of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in starkly different terms. This section analyzes those differences, and explores how early European American writers and scholars composed a new set of colonized river stories that initially threatened but eventually galvanized the modern tribal voice.

Over the past two centuries, the Lewis and Clark journals became the basis for a new set of colonized river stories that Dakota scholar Kim Tall Bear says helped "lionize" Lewis and Clark as "great men who 'discovered' untouched lands" and thus helped increase feelings of American patriotism that contributed to the growth of the American nation (Howe and Tall Bear 45). Eventually, these patriotic or nationalist sentiments began to marginalize the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota nations, pushing them from their traditional homelands and to the very fringes of their own tribal river stories. Over the past two centuries, hundreds of European American writers have published countless books, journal articles, and conference proceedings about Lewis and Clark that have elevated the American nation at the expense of many different tribal nations (Slaughter 2). This process has been further aided by the rise of the internet, which has resulted in a variety of websites, videos, interactive maps, and other online materials that have helped glorify the expedition (2).

The Lewis and Clark journals that informed this new set of colonized river stories "read like extended field reports, with scientific notations clustered alongside a continuous travelogue that is filled with high adventure" (Slaughter 1). Often, these journals—and the historical and literary representations that emerged from them—were fraught with anti-Indianisms, literary and literal forms of discrimination that "exclude and displace" American Indian people from public and political discourse (Cook-Lynn, *Anti-Indianism* 4). Lewis and Clark's journals made no mention of the Dakota's ancient and sacred creation story.⁸ According to American historian Thomas Slaughter, Lewis's "scientific

notations,” did not leave room for “silly,” “charming” folktales (6). Lewis’s blatant omission of tribal river stories marks the first of many historical and/or literary representations that systematically erased tribal people from the river.

Racism by omission is the most common and often the subtlest anti-Indianism found within the annals of American history. As evidenced in the colonized river stories that emerged after the Lewis and Clark Expedition, when Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota people were not being erased from American history, literature, and consciousness, they were usually being infantilized and/or vilified. For example, Lewis’s characterization of American Indian oral stories as “silly,” “charming” folktales diminishes and trivializes American Indian people and their traditional knowledge systems. In addition to infantilizing American Indian people, Lewis and Clark’s journals (and the subsequent stories that emerged from them) also helped perpetuate negative stereotypes of American Indian people. For example, Lewis observed that the Lakota, close relatives of the Dakota, were “the vilest miscreants of the savage race” (qtd. in Thwaites 98). Lewis’s characterization of tribal people as ignoble savages is unsurprising, as it is another common anti-Indianism used frequently in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries to disparage tribal people and communities. This criticism, says Lakota scholar Craig Howe, “shaped a negative image of [tribal people] that [still] persist[s]” today (Howe and Tall Bear 35). Very few writers and/or scholars have critically examined the anti-Indianisms rampant in the historical and literary representations of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Slaughter calls the expedition “one of the most superficially considered stories in American history” (2). In fact, many of the historical and literary representations of the expedition went unexamined for nearly two centuries.

At least until 2006, when the Oak Lake Writers’ Society (OLWS), a tribal writers’ group based in South Dakota, published *This Stretch of the River: Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota Responses to the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the Bicentennial*. With this book, sixteen tribal writers expressed their growing concerns about the glorification of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the new set of colonized river stories that threatened to extinguish their own culturally rich tribal river stories. According to Craig Phillip Howe and Kimberly Tall Bear, the editors of *This Stretch of the River*, the purpose of this first-of-its-kind tribal

collection of poetry, memoir, and historical and critical essays is twofold, as the anthology seeks to “present alternative perspectives to the mainstream narratives of the expedition and its consequences” and replace those colonized narratives with a land narrative that “positions the Missouri River in a central role” and “foreground[s the river] as a powerful living entity” (x). In other words, the goal of the OLWS is to reappropriate Mnisose / the Missouri River by consciously and deliberately shifting attention away from the Lewis and Clark Expedition (i.e., a colonized river story) back to their own land narratives, based on a creation story (i.e., a tribal river story) that tells them “who they were, where they came from, who they are, and what is expected of them” (Wilson, “Grandmother” 13). Through these efforts, these sixteen Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota writers are able to decolonize Mnisose / the Missouri River and reclaim it as an ancient and sacred creation myth that will help perpetuate their culture, language, history, and values for countless generations to come.

The following conversation with three tribal elders reiterates the rich cultural knowledge inherent in the river and its stories. “We are people of the river,” says Lanniko Lee, “yet now some of our own people don’t have an understanding of . . . the river . . . [and] they have very little understanding of cottonwood stories, fish stories,” or river stories (Howe and Tall Bear 85). Dakota anthropologist and linguist Ella Deloria referred to these types of stories as “real ohų’kaka tales,” ancient and sacred myths that help convey an important message or cultural lesson that helps perpetuate traditional lifeways (xi). Whirlwind Soldier reaffirms Deloria’s explanation when she says: “Disrupting the river disrupted a way of life, and a way of transferring knowledge. It broke a link” (Howe and Tall Bear 98). The Lewis and Clark Expedition and the later Pick Sloan Project and Dakota Access Pipeline are the catalysts that helped disrupt this way of life. Gladys Hawk explains this broken link even further when she says: “If you take away the natural world as we knew it, you can no longer create or tell the stories. You can’t tell the stories anymore to younger generations because those animals [and plants] are no longer there to be used to tell the stories in order to teach the values those stories were intended to teach” (Howe and Tall Bear 98). Without a doubt, the colonization of these tribal river stories has had a negative impact on the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota nations. “[But] are we beaten down and are we quitting?” asks Whirlwind Soldier.

“Hell no!” (98). These three tribal elders acknowledge that Mnisose / the Missouri River, both the waterway and its oral stories, might never fully recover from the devastating effects of colonization. However, they are hopeful that *This Stretch of the River* will fill an important gap in American history, and bring them one step closer toward reclaiming some of their tribal river stories, and empower future generations to create new ones.

According to Fitzgerald, land narratives like Mnisose / the Missouri River “are continuously created and re-created from creation stories to contemporary literature,” as evidenced by *This Stretch of the River* (16). Although Mnisose / the Missouri River isn’t explicitly retold as a creation myth in *This Stretch of the River*, echoes of oral tribal river stories are reflected in nearly every poem, memoir, and essay in the collection. These reverberations are the hallmark of a skilled tribal historian and storyteller, says Wilson. These recordkeepers are “very apt at interpreting contemporary events and incorporating them into . . . accounts that blend old and new” (Wilson, *Remember This!* 41). In many ways, *This Stretch of the River* blends the old and new, including old and new river stories, old and new events that impact the river, and even old and new modes of expression to describe the river (oral, written, and electronic). Through these efforts, the OLWS re-create Mnisose / the Missouri River, a land narrative, to challenge mainstream narratives about Lewis and Clark and the United States while, even more importantly, honoring and celebrating their Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota ancestors and their traditional knowledge systems. Ultimately, *This Stretch of the River* is what Wolfe described earlier as a new space of Indigenous expression, as the sixteen poems, stories, and essays contained within the collection serve as powerful acts of resistance and decolonization.

A prime example of decolonization is perhaps most evident in an essay Whirlwind Soldier composed for *This Stretch of the River* entitled “Renaming a Nation.” The title of the essay alludes to colonization and the unethical transfer of the traditional homelands of the Oceti Šakowin (i.e., the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota nations) to the United States of America (i.e., the American nation). Whirlwind Soldier’s essay, which consists of both poetry and prose, is organized chronologically by Lakota wintercounts, which emphasize the differences between tribal and western perspectives about Mnisose / the Missouri River. Further evidence of these differences is obvious in Whirlwind Soldier’s descrip-

tion of Mnisose / the Missouri River as a relative. She refers to Mnisose as “Grandfather River,” a living entity with a heart, a soul, and other human qualities, such as the ability to dance, weep, tell stories, and most of all remember traditional lifeways (Howe and Tall Bear 30, 79–102):

if this land has a soul
it is in the river, its
deep rushing water danced across the breadth
of this land
it wove magical stories. (Howe and Tall Bear 23)

In this poem, Whirlwind Soldier’s use of personification serves two purposes: it underscores the intimate relationship that Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota people have with the sacred river and it also suggests that the poet rejects mainstream (i.e., colonized) narratives about Mnisose / the Missouri River. As demonstrated in the previous section about Lewis and Clark (and again in the next section of this article), the river is often portrayed and treated by European American society as a commodity. Whirlwind Soldier and the rest of the OLWS subvert this mainstream narrative (i.e., a colonized river story) and replace it with land narratives (i.e., tribal river stories) that acknowledges the river as a powerful living entity. According to Fitzgerald, land narratives often “depict a relationship to land based on kinship structures, collaboration, and stewardship, rather than on Western forms of capitalism and commodification” (17). In “Reclaiming a Nation” Whirlwind Soldier uses kinship terms to reappropriate Mnisose / the Missouri River and decolonize the colonized river stories that nearly silenced Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota voices for two centuries.

Dakota scholar Elden Lawrence refers to this silence as the “period of missing voices” (Howe and Tall Bear 31). This ominous silence persisted for nearly two hundred years, until sixteen tribal writers—Kim TallBear (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), Craig Howe (Ogalala Lakota), Lydia Whirlwind Soldier (Sicangu Lakota), Gladys Hawk (Hunkpapa Lakota), Kathryn Akipa (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), Elden Lawrence (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), Charmaine White Face (Ogalala Lakota), Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux Tribe), Zion Zetina (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), Gabrielle Wynde Tateyuskanskan (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), and Joel Waters (Ogalala Lakota)—decided to “work together” to honor “tribal ways of knowing” (xi). This type of collaboration, one

that celebrates and legitimizes Indigenous knowledge, is an example of literary decolonization and an important first step toward literal decolonization. According to Fitzgerald, land narratives “map out the continuance of Native peoples and nations in the face of continuing land loss and dispossession” (15). *Mnisose / the Missouri River* is one such land narrative, as the river is a source of cultural strength and continuance that has united Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota people since time immemorial. *This Stretch of the River* reiterates that many Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota people have continued to preserve and perpetuate *Mnisose / the Missouri River*, often reimagining these sacred tribal stories in unique and creative ways that will provide future generations of Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota young people with a roadmap to protect and defend the river and their tribal nations.

THE SECOND ASSAULT ON THE RIVER:

THE PICK-SLOAN MISSOURI RIVER BASIN PROJECT

The unruly Missouri River and its tributary systems hold the key to solutions of many of the problems imposed by nature. Engineering studies by the Corp of Engineers of the Department of the Army and other cooperating Federal and local agencies have paved the way for the great undertaking to harness the “Big Muddy.” The project has been blue printed. Engineering skills have shown the way. Modern machines and men are at work on the most vital projects of the program to put the river to work for the valley and the nation.

—*The Development and Control of the Missouri River*

The Pick-Sloan Missouri River Basin Project, a series of manmade dams intended to reroute *Mnisose / the Missouri River* named for Lewis Pick, director of the Missouri River office of the Army Corps of Engineers, and William Sloan, director of the Billings, Montana, office of the Bureau of Reclamation, is an example of a historic recurrence, a repetition of an earlier event: the Lewis and Clark Expedition in the nineteenth century. Local historian Kathy Grow points out several interesting parallels between Lewis and Clark and Pick and Sloan. She observes that all four military men left an indelible “footprint” on the sacred river, which they treated like a challenge, an epic battle between man and nature (Grow 120). According to Grow, these parallels, while interesting, “are only fit

for trivia games—and conspiracy theorists” (120). However, I argue that these parallels are more than coincidences. As Wolfe points out, settler colonialism is a deeply embedded “structure, not an event,” that seeks to “destroy” Indigenous cultures and “replace” them with a dominant one (290). The fact that the Pick-Sloan Project, like the Lewis and Clark Expedition, helped strengthen the American nation but also displaced thousands of tribal people who had relied upon the river since time immemorial is further evidence of the validity of Wolfe’s theory of settler colonialism. Initially, “the Pick-Sloan efforts to harness the river were extolled across the nation as a technological triumph . . . but tragedy accompanied that triumph. Nearly a million and a half acres of fertile bottomlands were permanently drowned beneath the big main stem reservoirs” in Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming (Keenlyne 35). Ultimately, so many parallels exist between the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the Pick-Sloan Project because both projects privilege the American nation, with little regard for the twenty-eight tribal nations living along Mnisose / the Missouri River.

In 1944 Congress authorized Lewis Pick and William Sloan to build a series of manmade dams to tame “the unruly Missouri River and its tributary systems[, which] hold the key to solutions of many of the problems imposed by nature” (qtd. in Grow 126). This quote underscores the substantial difference between American Indian and European American perspectives on the river, as the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota nations approached the river as a sacred resource that must be protected, while Pick and Sloan viewed the task of rerouting the river as a battle between man and nature. Like Lewis and Clark, Pick and Sloan were determined to commercialize the wild river and transform it into a commodity to bolster the American economy by generating hydropower, stabilizing agricultural development, and increasing tourism and recreational activity. These dams had a positive impact on the American economy, generating 3.2 million kilowatt hours for American ranchers, farmers, and other settlers residing along the river (Lawson 109). However, the Dakota nation, specifically the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, “had almost all of their useable lands taken. . . . [T]heir reservation was so drastically impacted that they have [not] been able to establish a viable community [since]” (Vine Deloria, qtd. in Lawson xvi).

As a young girl, Dakota writer and scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn recalls watching “the unleashing of the river’s power from banks which

had held it and guided it since before any white man was seen in this country" (*Aurelia* 5). This experience had a profound impact on Cook-Lynn, who firmly states: "It is because of these losses that I write" (*Anti-Indianism* x). Cook-Lynn's 1999 book, *Aurelia: A Crow Creek Trilogy*, draws much-needed attention to the Pick-Sloan Project and the atrocities committed against the author's tribal community. As literary scholar Kathleen Danker points out, the consequences of the Pick-Sloan Project are "an aspect of history not widely known among non-Indian readers, who are generally more familiar with land losses sustained by Indian tribes in the nineteenth century than in the twentieth century" (86). On the Crow Creek Sioux Indian Reservation, the Fort Randall and Big Bend dams flooded approximately sixteen thousand acres of reservation land and displaced 40 percent of the tribe's population (88).

Cook-Lynn's trilogy centers on Aurelia Two Heart Blue, "a unique modern Indian woman character (reservation-based)" who is grappling with the tremendous cultural loss of the river (*Anti-Indianism* 134). Eventually, Aurelia, who embodies what Tateyuskaskan describes as Dakota resilience and adaptability, "moves from loss to life" by maturing into a contemporary Dakota historian and storyteller (134). In many ways, *Aurelia: A Crow Creek Trilogy* is an extension of the Dakota oral storytelling tradition, because the content and structure of the book are based upon the sacred river. According to Cook-Lynn, the river "share[s] its destiny with a people who have survived hard winters, invasions, migrations, and transformations, unthought of and unheard of" (6). Cook-Lynn, like other members of the OLWS, reinforces this shared destiny through the eponymous narrator, who often mirrors the river's emotions and thinking. The river spans all three novellas, often reflecting Aurelia's demeanor and that of her tribal community. Mnisose / the Missouri River plays such a significant role in these three tribal river stories that literary scholar James Stripes accurately likens the river to a main character in the trilogy.

In the first novella of the trilogy, which is set in the late 1950s, the Fort Randall dam halts the river, which swells and seems to overflow with grief. Perhaps one of the most memorable images in this novella is that of Aurelia on horseback gazing at the desecrated river, "sob[bing] deep and terrible" (Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia* 139). Like the river, Aurelia is overcome with grief at these harsh and sudden changes to her environment. Initially, she copes with this grief by rebelling and acting out.

Cook-Lynn describes the river, like Aurelia during this rebellious phase, as dark and self-destructive. As an angry rebellious teenager, Aurelia has an affair with a married, much older man named John Tatekeya, a tribal historian and storyteller who is also grieving the loss of the river and his traditional lifeways. To cope with this grief, the two lovers isolate themselves from their families and friends and “with great arrogance, dr[i]nk whiskey and laug[h] and ma[ke] love,” thus neglecting their traditional roles as tribal historian and storyteller (188). Both John and Aurelia, who remember life before the flood, are meant to share their traditional knowledge with the rest of the community. However, their affair prevents them from fulfilling their traditional roles in Dakota society. Traditionally, tribal historians and storytellers play critical roles in Dakota society because they use the oral storytelling tradition to help preserve and perpetuate Dakota culture, language, and lifeways.

After nearly a decade together, Aurelia and John realize that they cannot simply ignore the devastation caused by the Pick-Sloan Project, and they end their affair so they can resume their traditional roles in the community and continue telling river stories—as well as other stories that will help perpetuate the Dakota way of life. In effect, Aurelia and John decide to adapt and modify their old traditions to fit their “new colonized, culturally-suppressed environment” (Cook-Lynn, *Anti-Indianism* 134). Cook-Lynn suggests that the river adopts a similar approach. At the end of the trilogy, more than three decades after the Fort Randall dam flooded the Crow Creek Sioux Reservation, Aurelia observes that “even the river itself had to learn new ways of being” (Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia* 404). This observation reemphasizes the intimate connection between Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota people and the sacred river and seems to point out that future generations will also have to learn new ways of being.

Ultimately, Cook-Lynn wrote *Aurelia: A Crow Creek Trilogy* to help honor and celebrate Mnisose / the Missouri River, which is a crucial piece of the Dakota oral storytelling tradition. According to Cook-Lynn, “Everything originates from the oral traditions of . . . indigenous peoples on this continent. . . . [T]here is [a] tacit theory in the mythologies of origin . . . that [when] defined in the appropriate way, unifies, and motivates the people from whom the knowledge originates” (“Who Stole” 10–11). Mnisose / the Missouri River is an important “mytholog[y] of origin” that Cook-Lynn reimagines in *Aurelia: A Crow Cree Trilogy*. Like

This Stretch of the River, Aurelia is a new tribal river story that challenges mainstream narratives that attempted to capitalize on and commodify the river. Instead of challenging Lewis and Clark, Cook-Lynn examines the negative impact that the Pick-Sloan River Basin Project, the second assault on Mnisose / the Missouri River, had on her tribal community. She firmly states: "I write because such days and places are unforgettable, and because the colonial dictatorship imposed on the very private lives of a very private people festers still and contaminates the life of a whole country" (*Anti-Indianism* x). *Aurelia*, like *This Stretch of the River*, is a new collection of tribal river stories that seeks to reclaim and decolonize Mnisose / the Missouri River for future generations.

In 1993 Cook-Lynn and Charles Woodard established the Oak Lake Writers' Society. As one of the founding members of the tribal writers' group, Cook-Lynn often emphasizes the importance of preserving and perpetuating Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota oral storytelling traditions. She firmly believes that the "mythologies of origin" have the potential to guide future generations and strengthen and empower the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota nations. This belief also compelled her to establish the *Wicazo Sa Review*, one of the first academic journals on American Indian studies, an intellectual platform that she has used often to adapt and expand upon the oral tradition. On more than one occasion, Cook-Lynn has reimagined Mnisose / the Missouri River, both explicitly and implicitly, to remind a new generation of Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota people "where they came from, who they are, and what is expected of them" (Wilson, "Grandmother" 13).⁹ Clearly, many of these young Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota writers and scholars have been paying close attention to Cook-Lynn's advice, as many of these young writers and scholars recently honored Cook-Lynn in the *Wicazo Sa Review* special issue, "Essentializing Elizabeth Cook-Lynn." Additionally, in 2016 several of these young people, as well as many others, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, young and old, gathered in solidarity to try to protect Mnisose / the Missouri River from a third assault on the river: the Dakota Access Pipeline.

THE THIRD ASSAULT ON THE RIVER:

THE DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE

Our Elders foretold of a Black Snake and how the Water of Life—"Mni

Woc'oni," which is our first medicine—would be affected if we did not stop this oncoming disaster. Mni Woc'oni is part of our creation story, and the same story that exists in many creation stories around Mother Earth.

—Chief Arvol Looking Horse, "Standing Rock Is Everywhere"

After the second assault on the river, Vine Deloria Jr. firmly denounced the Pick-Sloan Missouri River Basin Project as "without a doubt, the single most destructive act ever perpetrated on any tribe by the United States . . . *and the end is still not in sight*" (Deloria, qtd. in Lawson xv, my italics). More than three decades ago, Deloria accurately predicted that Mnisose / the Missouri River would be subjected to further assaults that would strip the river and its people of their natural resources. In 2014 Energy Transfer Partners (ETP), a gas, propane, and oil storage/transport partnership, announced plans to build a major pipeline that would cross beneath Mnisose / the Missouri River to transport crude oil from the Midwest to the East Coast. The overall goal of this extensive pipeline was to increase domestic crude oil production, create eight to twelve thousand new jobs, and generate millions of dollars for the American economy (dapipelinefacts.com/). In a settler colonial narrative that is all too familiar to the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota nations, corporate America once again transformed Mnisose / the Missouri River into a commodity, an exploitable resource, with little regard for the impact the pipeline would have on twenty-first-century tribal people and communities.

Today, the tribal nation most threatened by this third assault on the river is the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, a tribe of approximately ten thousand people located on a reservation in North and South Dakota. The Dakota Access Pipeline, which crosses under Mnisose / the Missouri River, is just a half mile from the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation. From the very beginning, the tribe has vigorously opposed the Dakota Access Pipeline, fearing the negative effect it would have on the river and its people. In 2014 ETP applied to the federal government to build the pipeline and in less than two years received permission to route a twelve-hundred-mile-long pipeline adjacent to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's reservation. Less than a month later, "opponents establish[ed] a camp at the confluence of the Cannonball and Missouri rivers in southern North Dakota for peaceful protest. [In a matter of months],

camps in the area . . . swelled to thousands of people” (Associated Press). Although the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and its allies fought valiantly for nearly a year to protect the sacred river, the US government continued with its original plans, and oil began flowing through the pipeline on May 27, 2017 (Associated Press). Almost immediately, the pipeline “leaked 84 gallons of oil in South Dakota,” and it has experienced several other small leaks that once again threaten the river’s natural environment (Nicholson). At this time, the long-term impact of the Dakota Access Pipeline on the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations is unclear, as this new river story is still being written.

Although the Dakota Access Pipeline was eventually built against the tribe’s wishes, the “water protector” movement opposing the pipeline has had a profound impact on Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota youth, serving as a reminder of our early ancestors’ intimate connection with the sacred river. Opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline began online as #NoDAPL, a Twitter hashtag and social media campaign that began in early 2016 and was used more than five million times by year’s end (Petronzio). This hashtag and social media campaign led thousands of people to Cannonball, North Dakota, to protest the pipeline. Fitzgerald convincingly argues that these social media campaigns are “a new form of storytelling” with the potential to (re)unite tribal people and communities (21). Further evidence that social media is a new and innovative way to communicate tribal river stories is the fact that many “water protectors” (i.e., #NoDAPL protestors) often invoked the phrase “mni wiconi,” which means “water is life,” during the protest as a social media hashtag to mobilize the community. For centuries, this phrase has been used by tribal elders to demonstrate their deep respect and appreciation for the river. “The old people use that phrase in their prayers and everyday conversation,” recalls Whirlwind Soldier. “‘Mni wiconi’ which means water is life . . . also means respect for water—respect for the river. As long as you have water there is life” (Howe and Tall Bear 82).

Nearly a decade before the #NoDAPL Movement, Whirlwind Soldier wrote a short poem entitled “Mni Wiconi.”

Source of eternal energy
 Spiritual law, ancient Lakota teachings
 Tell us the water is wiconi
 Life everlasting (Howe and Tall Bear 105)

Whirlwind Soldier's poem, which connects the phrase "mni wiconi" to ancient Lakota teachings, alludes to the longevity and, more importantly, the resilience of the river and its people, who have learned to adapt to the many hardships imposed by a seemingly endless cycle of settler colonialism. In many ways, the #NoDAPL movement and the rallying cry "mni wiconi" are the start of a new set of tribal river stories. This story does not look or sound like "Mnisose / the Missouri River," the ancient and sacred creation myth told by our early ancestors, nor does it look or sound like the countless poems, memoirs, essays, and books published by contemporary Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota writers just a few short years ago. These new tribal river stories are being shared electronically online through social media, blogs, and online journals. Although these online tribal river stories did not halt the Dakota Access Pipeline, for a brief period they did successfully (re)unite many Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota people along the edge of Mnisose / the Missouri River and have subsequently sparked many other grassroots movements to protect and defend the sacred river and its people.¹⁰ From April 2016 to February 2017, thousands of people gathered together to confront this latest example of settler colonialism, thereby proving that this ancient and sacred creation story is still important and relevant to contemporary Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota nations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Many Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota people believe that words are powerful, and "words have consequences" (Cook-Lynn, "An Origin Story" 18). In this article, this philosophy has been expressed by Cook-Lynn, Westerman, Wilson, and the OLWS and includes other Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota writers and scholars such as Ella Deloria, Vine Deloria Jr., Joseph Marshall, Delphine Red Shirt, and Albert White Hat, and the list goes on and on. Words and stories are powerful because they shape and impact how we see ourselves and the world around us. As an oral story, Mnisose / the Missouri River is an ancient and sacred creation myth that told the Dakotapi "where they came from, who they are, and what is expected of them" (Wilson, "Grandmother" 13). It is an uplifting story that reminded Dakota people about their intimate connection to each other and the world around them. In 1851 Christian missionaries colonized these sacred river stories in a well-meaning attempt to preserve

them for future generations. However, they filtered these stories through a European American and largely Christian lens that diminished and devalued Mnisose / the Missouri River and replaced them with a new set of colonized river stories that privileged the American nation at the expense of tribal nations, thus momentarily silencing the modern tribal voice. However, because words are powerful, and because Mnisose / the Missouri River and its people are resilient and resourceful, a new set of tribal river stories eventually emerged from these colonized ones. As Wolfe points out, settler colonialism is paradoxical. It does not simply lead to “the erasure of indigeneity” but instead creates a new space for Indigenous expression (388–89). Over the past two hundred years, Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota storytellers and writers have reimagined Mnisose / the Missouri River in oral, print, and electronic forms that have been used to (re)unite the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota nations and rally hundreds of other Indigenous people and communities worldwide to protect and defend the sacred river.

SARAH HERNANDEZ is Sicangu Lakota from the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and holds a doctorate in English from the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU-Boulder). She is an adjunct instructor at CU-Boulder, where she teaches courses on American Indian literature and film. She is currently revising her dissertation on the Dakota literary tradition into a book manuscript, and she is also the executive director of the Oak Lake Writers' Society (<https://olws.squarespace.com/>), a tribal writing group for Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota writers.

NOTES

For the purposes of this article, I use Mnisose / the Missouri River to refer to the river and its many tributaries, as well as the vast collection of oral stories that accompany this immense flowing body of water. Mnisose / the Missouri River is part of a hydrosphere and thus flows into countless brooks, streams, creeks, and smaller rivers, each of which contains its own oral stories. Therefore, I often employ the phrase “river stories” (plural) to refer to the many different variations of Mnisose / the Missouri River that exist among the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota nations. Although the Dakota nation views Mnisose / the Missouri River as an ancient and sacred creation myth, many different versions of this oral story exist from tribe to tribe, vary from generation to generation, and diverge from one waterway to the next. This article does not seek an “authentic” representation of this oral story, because every tribal nation embodies “different types of values . . . histories . . . and creation stories . . . [that] are all equally important. And there’s no right way or wrong way among them” (qtd. in Westerman and White 16). Instead of simply trying to capture

an “authentic” representation of the river, this literary analysis seeks to examine how both European American and tribal representations of Mnisose / the Missouri River have been used to colonize and decolonize the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota nations.

1. Benedict Anderson’s seminal book *Imagined Communities* argues that the printing press (i.e., books and newspapers) has long been used to promote nationalism and colonialism. Although Anderson fails to examine the effect that the printing press has had on tribal nations, other scholars have started to investigate the impact that literature and literacy have had on tribal nations. For example, see Fitzgerald; Cook-Lynn, *Anti-Indianism*; Mignolo; and Fear-Segal.

2. Following the Dakota War of 1862, Dakota people were exiled from Minnesota to reservations in South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, and Canada.

3. This article focuses primarily but not exclusively upon the Dakota nation’s intimate relationship with Mnisose / the Missouri River. As explained by Cook-Lynn in *Aurelia: A Crow Creek Trilogy*, Dakota people believe that their early ancestors, the Star People, emerged from the river’s water, which makes Mnisose / the Missouri River their tribe’s creation story (374). Although this creation story is specific to the Dakota nation, many other tribes, including the Lakota and Nakota nations, also feel an intimate connection with the river. Initially, this article focuses solely upon the Dakota nation’s relationship with the sacred river, but it eventually expands to include the Lakota and Nakota nations, which are considered “sister” tribes of the Dakota nation. These three tribes, which consist of several subbands, comprise the Oceti Šakowin, or the Seven Council Fire.

4. For more information about the Dakotapi’s complex relationship with Mnisose / the Missouri River, see Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia* and *Anti-Indianism*; Westerman and White; and bdotememorymap.org.

5. When discussing Mnisose / the Missouri River, the actual river, I will not use quotation marks. However, when I discuss the oral stories associated with the river, I will try to use quotation marks to refer to a shorter story within a larger collection of oral, written, and electronic stories. As mentioned in the unnumbered note, there are many different variations of this oral story. This article does not seek an “authentic” representation of this river story; instead, it uses the phrase “Mnisose / the Missouri River” to refer to all variations of this oral story.

6. In 1851 Gideon Pond published the first translation/transcription of “Mnisose / the Missouri River” in his article “Gathering from the Traditionary History of the Mdewakantonwan Dakotas.” Stephen Riggs reinterpreted Pond’s translation in his 1881 book *Dakota Text with Grammar*, which has been published multiple times over the past two hundred years. For more information about Riggs’s publishing history, see Murray.

7. For a further exploration of how literature and literacy were used to colonize various tribes and tribal people, see Fear-Segal.

8. Thomas Slaughter notes that Lewis and Clark only recorded one tribal river story in their journals, which was relayed by the Mandan. It is unclear if the two explorers ever heard the Dakota’s oral creation story. Regardless, they did not value tribal stories / land narratives enough to record them in their journals. See Slaughter (6–7).

9. Cook-Lynn explicitly and implicitly references Mnisose / the Missouri River in *From The River's Edge*, *Aurelia: A Crow Creek Trilogy*, *That Guy Wolf Dancing*, *Anti-Indianism in Modern America*, *This Stretch of the River*, *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner*, and many journal articles published in the *Wicazo Sa Review*.

10. A quick survey indicates that the #NoDAPL Movement sparked at least four new grassroots movements, including the Mawkwa Camp, the White Pine Camp, and the new Green the Rez and Reclaiming Native Truth campaigns. Without a doubt, the events at Cannonball had an even more significant impact on Indigenous people and communities than these four new campaigns; however, such analysis is beyond the scope of this study.

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Straight Talk

Two Spirit Erasure as the Price of Sovereignty
in James Welch's *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*

LYDIA R. COOPER

James Welch (Blackfeet) is widely recognized as one of the luminaries whose works comprise the “Native American literary renaissance” of the late twentieth century, following N. Scott Momaday’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *House Made of Dawn*. Alan R. Velie includes Welch alongside Momaday (Kiowa), Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), and Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) as one of “four Indian literary masters.” In 2000 Welch published the last book he would write, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, a novel based on a historical incident in which a Lakota man was left behind by the Wild West Show in late nineteenth-century France. That novel “confirmed [Welch’s] status as one of the major Native novelists of the past forty years” (Krupat, introduction ix). This indisputably masterful novel, however, poses a singular challenge to the writer’s reputation as an author deeply concerned with human rights. That challenge lies at the novel’s violent climax, when gay chef Armand Breteuil rapes the Lakota protagonist, Charging Elk—a rape that Charging Elk counters with murder. This depiction of a predatory gay man is even more troubling given the novel’s concurrent silence regarding Lakota winkle identity.

Craig Womack (Creek) notes a troubling erasure of queer or Two Spirit identities in many contemporary Native American texts, and this particular scene in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* provides Womack with some of the clearest evidence of the traumatic consequences of that erasure in the cultural and literary output of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Native authors. Womack describes his visceral reaction as a gay Native man to *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*’s violent same-sex rape and murder scene. The novel as a whole, he says, “sets up stereotypes, it may subvert them.” But the brutality of the scene in which the novel’s only explicitly gay character rapes the protagonist and is then violently

murdered, Womack says, makes him want to “run for [his] life” (“The Fatal” 240).

Nor is *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* the only notable Native American-authored novel to present such troubling signs of queer erasure. Lisa Tatonetti lists Welch’s novel alongside Silko’s masterpiece *Almanac of the Dead*, claiming that both novels depict gay men as “the site of seemingly unrelenting evil” (“Sex” 201). In her masterful book on the subject, *The Queerness of Native American Literature*, Tatonetti identifies a “markedly heteronormative ethos” in “Native newspapers, journals, and literary collections of the Red Power era” (4), an ethos that led to the perception that either there *was* no queer Native literature being written or the “queer” designator diminished the authenticity of the “Native.” In the cases of Welch’s and Silko’s novels, two of the most strident calls for tribal sovereignty published in the latter part of the twentieth century, that ethos seems to have borne its strange fruit. Tatonetti’s book focuses on queer Native short story and poetry collections and film, genres in which positive depictions of queer Indigenous people are more common, and have been since the 1970s. She notes that these queer Indigenous writers have perhaps been overlooked because of a “scholarly . . . preoccupation with full-length fiction” (2), although she does not expound on the reasons why queer Indigenous authors might be underrepresented in full-length fiction.¹

Mark Rifkin offers a possible diagnosis. He describes what he terms the “self-editing” of nonheteronormative identities from Native texts as evidence of a “bribe of straightness” (164)—an implicit acceptance of the “straightness” imposed by Euro-Western social-sexual norms in order to assert individual and national sovereignty against US colonial claims. That “bribe of straightness” emerges as a revelatory interpretive key to *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, in which performances of straight masculinity become the price for legal personhood. Specifically, the novel depicts Charging Elk as the hypermasculine “savage”—the primitive innocent abroad—and that straight masculinity becomes the price of his citizenship. More broadly, the erasure of nonheteronormative identities parallels the erasure of the sovereign Lakota nation; yet just as the Lakota continue to exist, albeit in the early twentieth century without legal citizenship in the United States, the novel’s narrative is shot through with glimpses of nonheteronormative behavior, desires, and fantasies, suggesting that colonial *erasures* of Two Spirit identity are

implicated in the novel rather than homosexual attraction or behavior. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* thus representationally enacts the consequences of that “bribe of straightness.” This article examines that enacted erasure and then contextualizes the novel within a discussion of the traumatic effects of settler heteropatriarchy, evident still in attempts to deny gender and sexuality diversity in Indigenous nations’ histories.

Of course, Womack’s reluctance to read the homophobic sentiment in this novel through any positive lens may very well be justified. It is certainly true that there is no explicit evidence of positive depictions of same-sex identity or desire, nor is Breteuil’s rapaciousness explicitly categorized as colonial rather than homosexual. Yet Womack provides a helpful method by which one might approach *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* through a queer lens: he describes what he calls the act of “suspicioning” same-sex desire in Joy Harjo’s poetry. “Suspicioning,” he says in his article “Suspicioning: Imagining a Debate between Those Who Get Confused, and Those Who Don’t, When They Read Critical Responses to the Poems of Joy Harjo, or What’s an Old-Timey Gay Boy like Me to Do?,” “foregrounds subjectivity and intuition,” nonempirical instincts that may seem out of place in scholarly studies (133). In that same article, he discusses the challenges in offering queer readings of oblique texts, such as Harjo’s poetry—texts in which explicit or even easily identifiably implicit approbation of queer relationships and identities is absent, yet which nevertheless create doubt, ambiguity, and sensations of “queerness” with which queer readers may engage (135). As a queer reader of *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, “suspicioning” feels to me, too, like a necessary act of survival. However, I argue that a queer reading of this novel offers an interpretation that resonates powerfully for queer and nonqueer readers alike and is far more consistent with Welch’s corpus. In this reading, the novel’s rape scene symbolizes racialized colonial violence. In addition, the novel’s refusal to explicitly name winkte identity implicates colonial erasures of Indigenous sexualities and genders through ghost-like nonprocreative images and expressions of queer desire that haunt the text. Such a reading uncovers a silenced narrative lying just underneath the surface of the novel: the traumatic history of institutionalized “bribes” of cultural legitimacy at the cost of assimilation—specifically at the cost of the erasure of Two Spirit and other gender-variant and nonheteronormative sexualities.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TWO SPIRIT IDENTITY

Before analyzing the “bribe of straightness” in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*’s sovereignty claims, it may help to contextualize the discussion within a brief overview of the history of queer Indigenous identities and their relationship to Indigenous sovereignty. Early European accounts of contact with Indigenous Americans often emphasize sexual deviance (Wilson 172). For Europeans steeped in a tradition that separates the body from the spirit, Indigenous views of the world seemed foreign in their emphasis on sexuality and eroticism, often depicted in ways that did not recognize Europeans’ discrete categories of genders and human/creature divisions. Melissa K. Nelson (Anishinaabe/Cree/Métis) describes the pansexuality in many Indigenous religious traditions, in which sexuality and “carnal knowledge” are depicted as integral aspects of intimacy between living beings, human and nonhuman (237). For European discoverers, according to Trista Wilson, sexual “deviancy,” particularly gender fluidity and homosexuality, were “viewed . . . as evidence of Native Americans’ moral inequity”; therefore, it was sexuality that was used as a primary “justification for the conquest of North America” (172). And with conquest came the “normalizing” of gender and sexuality. The cumulative effects of massive cultural rifts and enforced assimilation through boarding schools, widespread missionary work on tribal reservations, and the pervasive presence of Euro-Western Christian media and cultural practices did much to silence and force underground these nonheteronormative identities or relationships, making any systematic study of them challenging, to say the least.

Reliable historical information about gender-variant identities, third or fourth genders, and/or nonheteronormative sexuality in Indigenous nations in the Americas is therefore difficult to come by. And interpreting what information can be gathered is fraught with the interpretive challenges posed by the contemporary lenses through which such information is viewed. In general, however, there is ample evidence of gender-variant identities, third- or fourth-gender identities, and/or the acceptance and practice of nonheterosexual relationships in many Native nations. Wilson estimates that “at least 155 Indian tribes embraced Two Spirit individuals within their tribal communities” prior to the assimilation push in the late nineteenth century, although she admits that it may have been even more widespread (169; Roscoe 4).

The first published attempt at a systematic documentation of nonheteronormative identities practiced openly or embraced by North American tribal nations prior to conquest was performed in 1968 by Sue-Ellen Jacobs, who undertook a literature review of the term “berdache.” “Berdache,” a derivative of a French word roughly equivalent to “catamite,” was employed first by French explorers and applied to female-dressing assigned-male persons in certain Plains nations and adopted later to refer to queer-performing Indigenous people. Jacobs cites the earliest use of the term in an issue of *Jesuit Relations* from the 1700s, where “such individuals were condemned” (Jacobs et al. 4). The term “berdache” is not exactly “the most positive term,” as Chelsea Vowel (Métis) claims, given its etymological connection to European forms of pederasty (108). It is also problematically imprecise, as gender identity and sexual relationships between different and same-gendered people varied across tribal cultures, just as polygamous or polyamorous relationships were normative in certain cultures but not others.

More recently, there have been efforts to study and understand those gender-variant identities and nonheteronormative sexual practices in certain tribal nations and to contextualize those attitudes within pantribal concerns of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In 1990, during the third Native American / First Nations gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg, the decision was made to adopt the term “Two Spirit” as an umbrella term for referring to gender-variant, trans, or gay, lesbian, or bisexually identified Native people, replacing the problematic “berdache” (Vowel 108–9; Jacobs et al. 3).² In general, while there may not have been language that correlates precisely to our contemporary definitions of trans, gay, or otherwise queer people in Indigenous languages, Vowel says, “one belief is very clearly shared by most [Indigenous nations]: there *was* acceptance of fluid genders/sexual orientations and so on” (109, italics hers).

For example, Lang ends her chapter in *Two Spirit People* with a brief overview of some of the distinctions between different tribal nations’ understandings of what is now termed Two Spirit identity. Such distinctions include, she says, the Lakota nation, which had only “the Siouan word *winkte*” with which to refer to gender roles that would not be easily categorized by Euro-Westerners (103). “Winkte” is a name for a specific social class of male-bodied people who lived and performed as women in Lakota society prior to 1877, the end of the Great Sioux War.

Winkte identity, of course, is the silent and invisible pivot around which Welch's *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* turns.

Arnold Krupat, in a meticulously detailed chapter on history, language, and culture in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, points out that, based on historical data from European American as well as Lakota sources, it is "almost impossible, that a Lakota of Charging Elk's generation" could have been ignorant of the term "winkte." Furthermore, he says, Charging Elk describes Breteuil as "evil in something like the way in which the Catholic René Soulas considers homosexuals evil"—an even more improbable cultural assumption on the part of a nineteenth-century Lakota man.³ Krupat underscores the oddity of this anachronistic attitude on the part of Charging Elk by pointing out that the Lakota dictionary that Welch used while composing the novel in fact has that word in it and defines it rather accurately ("History" 250). There is therefore not even an argument to be made that the twentieth-century author would have been uninformed about the term. The missing term ("winkte") erases Charging Elk's capacity to demonstrate acceptance of gender variance or sexual preference. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* thus presents a version of nineteenth-century Lakota culture that mimics, or at least assumes the appearance of, the heteronormative horror of gender fluidity and homosexuality characteristic of mainstream US and French culture at that time. Why does Welch erase the word, historical reality, and cultural implications of winkte identity from his novel? This question is more complex than it may seem.

Welch, after all, is a writer characterized by his championing of civil rights and by his commitment to Indigenous sovereignty.⁴ Some scholars, concerned that charges of homophobia may undermine the otherwise deeply humane literary output of a widely respected author, read the novel as subversive. Womack, for example, cites evidence that the novel evokes and subverts simplistic assumptions about and depictions of nineteenth-century Native America in both the ever-popular "autobiographies" of American Indians (narrated, of course, to white authors) and nineteenth-century romances. He also notes that *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* seems to practice an "intricate balancing act around the issue of including stereotypes that might attract readers to his story as well as attempting to debunk those same stereotypes" ("The Fatal" 232). Even so, Womack says, the novel remains "problematic" because Charging Elk's larger-than-life heteromascularity is not counterbal-

anced by any other gay or nonheteronormative, positively depicted characters (232).

Yet this “problem” in the novel reflects a much deeper and more profound problem: *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* depicts in narrative form the disturbing effects of Rifkin’s argument, that “U.S. imperialism against native peoples over the past two centuries can be understood as an effort to make them ‘straight’—to insert Indigenous peoples into Anglo-American conceptions of family, home, desire, and personal identity” (8). That is, Rifkin points out that the “straightening” or “queering” of a colonized population is a matter of enforcing the social and cultural norms of the settler state on the occupied nation. Jodi A. Byrd (Chickasaw) describes this process by which the settler colonial state “govern[s] bodies, rights, and access through state-sanctioned normativities that expand access only to ensure incorporation as non-transformation” (208). That is, the state’s interest is served by containing colonized bodies, marking them as deviant unless they conform to (and become invisible in) the settler state’s paradigm. Deviance from the settler state’s social codes becomes evidence of tribal nations’ failure to “deserve” autonomy or sovereign status. It is not surprising, then, that in Indigenous communities in the continental United States, the control of sexual relationships and gender roles became one of the key media through which assimilation was enforced. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* acts out that process of cultural erasure in settler colonial “bribes” of sovereignty.

INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

For Welch, the issue of Indigenous sovereignty is clearly significant. In addition to profound, complex, and affecting thematic treatments of issues related to tribal sovereignty and Indigenous rights in his poetry, essays, and fiction, Welch’s personal papers reflect a consistent focus on the issue, a focus not untinted with frustrated anger, with passion, and with pathos. In a folder titled “American Destiny—Manifest Destiny,” there is a draft of notes for a speech on “European attitudes toward Indians.” On one sheet of notes, he wrote with no small amount of outrage, “The fact remains that Indians are still second class citizens in their own country” (James Welch Papers, box 1, folder 21). During the time that he drafted these notes, Welch was also drafting essays based on his meet-

ings with Vine Deloria Jr., the political activist and writer whose legacy in the American Indian Movement, the Red Power movement, and the creation of American Indian studies programs at universities is unparalleled. Welch later met with and wrote about his meetings with Bill Means, actor and American Indian Movement activist Russell Means's brother. Welch's self-education and his essays written on this education reflect a deep and affective sense of the urgency of issues related to sovereignty.

The Heartsong of Charging Elk's action is precipitated by Crazy Horse's surrender in 1877, and the central narrative events pivot around the denial of US citizenship to tribally registered people after the landmark US Supreme Court decision *Elk v. Wilkins* (1884), in which the Court held that the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of citizenship to all individuals born within the United States did not extend to Native peoples (see Wilkins xxiii). The Citizenship Act of 1901 granted citizenship to members of the "Five Civilized Tribes," but it was not until 1924 that the Indian Citizenship Act formally conferred US citizenship on all American Indians. Charging Elk's release from prison comes in the spring of 1904 (Welch 359), so the novel structures Charging Elk's captivity in France around his nation's surrender to the United States and the denial of US citizenship to his people.

In her analysis of the implications of *Elk v. Wilkins*, Carole Barrett quotes Senator Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts, (in)famous for sponsoring the General Allotment Act of 1887, as defending the right of Native Americans to be awarded US citizenship "as a reward for leaving the tribe and adopting 'the habits of civilized life'" (190).⁵ At the beginning of his exile in France, Charging Elk recalls a vow he made after a transformative religious experience during a Sun Dance at the Stronghold, a vow "to always live in the old ways, to participate only in Lakota ceremonies" (Welch 67). Yet by the end of the novel, not only has he adapted to French cultural practice and language, but also, when he is given the chance, he does not return to Pine Ridge. Andrew Little Ring, the Lakota man offering him a chance to return to Pine Ridge, even tells him that his mother still lives and would want to see him again, calling on his familial duty, a powerful cultural and religious obligation (430, 436). *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* is not a triumphal depiction of one Lakota man's survival and flourishing against all odds; it is instead a story about the price of Charging Elk's survival: his adoption of heter-

onormative cultural and religious practices at the expense of the models of relationship he knew as a child.

THE “BRIBE OF STRAIGHTNESS” IN
THE HEARTSONG OF CHARGING ELK

Any attempt to unravel the knot of the rape/murder scene in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, then, must be read in light of this thematic focus on the attempt to force the assimilation of Native peoples in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The novel’s prologue describes Crazy Horse’s surrender to General Miles at the Red Cloud reservation near Fort Robinson in 1877 as witnessed through the eyes of eleven-year-old Charging Elk (Welch 3). The young boy watches the surrender, his mother and younger sister and brother crying, and wonders “what would become of them” (3). When the band begins to sing a “peace song,” the boy realizes that something momentous has happened (4). That song initially seems like an assertion of life, of personal freedom in the face of capture and cultural rupture. Yet it is telling that if the song presents a claim to sovereignty, it is one of *personal* dignity—of peace, and not resistance—rather than communal identity. Later, after his parents have settled on the Pine Ridge Reservation and adopted Christianity, Charging Elk reflects that it is odd that his father, once a fierce fighter at Little Bighorn, had “become a peacemaker” (17). He calls his father a “peacemaker” while picturing his father drinking coffee and fingering a rosary (17).

Peacemaking, in other words, is not an image paired with survival, to use Vizenor’s term for dynamic, adaptive, strategic, and triumphal life lived in the face of attempted cultural and ethnic genocide. Rather, “peacemaking” is predicated on surrender and assimilation (referenced by the coffee), particularly conversion to Catholicism (the rosary). Charging Elk, of course, resists assimilation and adaptation. He refuses to be sent to a white boarding school, and he runs away with his childhood friend Strikes Plenty to a “place in the badlands called the Stronghold,” which white settlers and even other Oglala are afraid of. “The Indians out there were considered bad Indians, even by their own people who had settled at the agency,” the narrator claims (Welch 14). Strikes Plenty and Charging Elk live there for eleven years, “continuing the old ways with the help of two medicine people” (14). The refusal to

assign a gender to these medicine people is provocative: the people who teach young Strikes Plenty and Charging Elk the “old ways” may not be easily categorized as “men” or as “women.” It is not a stretch to imagine that these medicine people reflect traditional Lakota relationships, in which one or both of them may have been winkte (male-bodied “would-be women” who assumed women’s work and sacred duties) (see Little Crow et al. 24).

At first glance, it may seem a minor point that the medicine people are not (cannot be?) categorized by a Euro-Western gender binary. Yet the contrast between the largely silent and invisible practices and performances of identity in which the boys engage in the Stronghold is notable. Later in the novel, Charging Elk reflects that he never really experienced a *childhood*, since he and Strikes Plenty had left their community so young. “[T]hey had lived a strange life together for eleven winters—no family, no friends,” Charging Elk recalls. “Occasionally they were invited into another lodge for a feast or a council, but for the most part, they had lived away from others” (Welch 164). The Stronghold, in other words, was sparsely populated, and those who lived outside the reservation lacked the full social integration of Lakota kinship-oriented society.⁶ Rather than experiencing the full kinship of their society, Charging Elk and Strikes Plenty instead bond exclusively with each other.

Their time at the Stronghold ends when Strikes Plenty hears about the Wild West Show and wishes to join it. Life together in the stronghold, Strikes Plenty says, is pleasant for the moment, but when they are old they will “have nothing but memories of bad winters and no meat and no woman” (Welch 33). His comment surprises Charging Elk, who does not expect to “hear his *kola* talk like this” (33). The term “kola” remains undefined in the text, although its usage indicates affection. Kola is used in male-to-male speech in Lakota. In traditional usage, it seems to have held a much stronger sense of kinship and connection than the current use, to indicate a friend or companion. One Lakota language teacher, David Little Elk, claims that the word “kola” traditionally indicated that “each [warrior] would die for the other.” In a kinship society, nonsexual partner bonds can be as significant as sexual coupling, since a hetero-bond is not the apex of social relationships. Charging Elk is, then, pair-bonded with Strikes Plenty, but there is no indication at this point that his feelings for Strikes Plenty are sexual or romantic. However, a queer

reading of their final scenes together suggests the possibility of a sexual component to their bond, first through Strikes Plenty's assumption that Charging Elk will necessarily leave him in order to have children, and second by Charging Elk's contemplation of sexual relations that are not procreative in nature.

The boys' bond breaks when the Wild West Show rejects Strikes Plenty's application but accepts Charging Elk. Initially, Charging Elk decides not to go, choosing to stay instead with his kola. Strikes Plenty tells him he must go, and in their disagreement, "something crackled in the air between them" (Welch 35). Their decision to separate from each other is charged with tension. Strikes Plenty explains that he does not want to stay at the Stronghold because he is convinced that one day Charging Elk will marry, and he, Strikes Plenty, will be left alone (36). In other words, Strikes Plenty believes that because they cannot reproduce, Charging Elk, at least, will inevitably return to their community, a community into which assimilation to Christian social mores has already sunk its teeth.

Charging Elk's departure from Strikes Plenty is rife with intense emotional distress, but the scene concludes with one of the most jarring images in the novel. When he leaves the Stronghold, Charging Elk feels a "great emptiness, as though Strikes Plenty [has] taken away half of him" (Welch 37). As his train leaves the station in Nebraska, heading east, Charging Elk thinks about Strikes Plenty and expresses that grief, likened to the splitting of his own person. He thinks that the "idea of having a wife and a life of peace" had seemed distant, impossible, out at the Stronghold (33). By implication, marriage and procreation now seem inevitable. As he thinks this, Charging Elk looks out the train window at a herd of milk cows. "One of them [the cows] was trying to mount another," the narrator informs readers, "even though both had bags full of milk" (39). On the one hand, the milk cows suggest the incursion of settler American culture. Charging Elk's departure from the train station represents his rupture from not only the Stronghold but also the changing and evolving Lakota community on the Pine Ridge Reservation. On the other hand, this scene's placement, directly following Charging Elk's retrospective musings about life with Strikes Plenty at the Stronghold, encourages readers to make an analogous leap: the visual reference to same-sex coupling intrudes on Charging Elk's undisclosed memories of

life with Strikes Plenty in that place where the “idea of having a wife” was so impossible.

In other words, what emerges from these early passages is a prelapsarian image of two boys who formed a close bond, one that takes precedence in the protagonist’s young mind over marriage and his own family, as well as assimilating to English language and culture, to Christianity, and to the enforcement of Euro-Western cultural traditions. That transition, from the (at least) homosocial bond of his childhood off the newly formed reservation of Pine Ridge to the heterosexual and confident French Lakota citizen by the end of the novel, is a narrative journey that demonstrates the “bribe of straightness” Rifkin describes as the cost of sovereignty.

In Charging Elk’s case, his adoption of French cultural norms is quite literally the cost of his legal freedom in France, but even when he is given the chance to return home, he remains, having adopted a familial structure predicated on French customs. At the end of the novel, Charging Elk encounters a young Lakota couple, Andrew Little Ring and his wife, Sarah, along with their infant daughter, Rose, and a nephew named Joseph. Andrew has somehow escaped the fate of boarding schools and enforced assimilation, although Joseph was sent to boarding school and forbidden to speak Lakota or even to return home for two years in a row because of his refusal to assimilate fully (Welch 432), a fact that Sarah relates with horror. When Charging Elk exclaims that even after news of the massacre at Wounded Knee, their presence and their young family give him hope that the Lakota people will “go on because we are a strong people,” Joseph looks uncertain (435). Joseph then follows Charging Elk out, urging him to return with them to Pine Ridge. When Charging Elk explains that he cannot, that he has a French wife and unborn child, they say their farewells, and Charging Elk hugs Joseph briefly. He feels “the strength in the youthful body” and then steps back, “suddenly shy at such a gesture” (437). That brief return to a sensual expression of fraternal—at *least* fraternal—affection is here pitted against Charging Elk’s new French life—a life that he reckons more “exciting” even than life at the Stronghold with Strikes Plenty (422–23). It is here that the reader recalls that Charging Elk’s release from prison and acceptance into legal French citizenship is a freedom of movement predicated on his reclassification as a political prisoner due to the US Supreme Court decision

rendering him a noncitizen in the United States and on his legal marriage to a French citizen and cis-woman.

Charging Elk's journey from a preadolescent Lakota boy raised in a kinship-oriented society to heteronormative, monogamously married Lakota French man is predicated on his capacity to achieve a version of masculine identity that verges on—and, indeed, in some respects surpasses—the straight masculine ideal of nineteenth-century European culture.⁷ Throughout his sojourn in France, Charging Elk is described as more than merely “masculine”: he is a paragon of masculinity; a “big man,” tall, dark, and muscular; a man physically distinct for his hyper-masculine physiology even among his own tall-statured people (Welch 25, 42). Charging Elk identifies his dark skin and height as evidence that he is descended from the “purest of the *ikce wicasa*,” the purest of the original people (42). In France his stature and masculine form render him exotic, essentially “other” because of his dark skin tone. However, his darkness *in addition to* his physiologically “male” features (e.g., his height and musculature) renders him more desirable and attractive to his French audience, not less. For instance, when he walks into a brothel, his stature and skin color make French observers there assume him to be a “prince of the Orient” (222). His French foster father figure, René Soulas, thinks that Charging Elk is “a beautiful human being” and, again reflecting the incredible power of that physicality, thinks that he is “like a prince, a very dark prince” (134).

Charging Elk's appearance, then, marks him as the exotic “other” in France, but it also marks him as capable of transcending the denigration of the “darker” races by dint of his hypermasculine appearance. After all, as Rifkin points out, the “processes of racialization and the (re)production of white privilege” have historically centered around a compulsory heterosexuality and patriarchal social formation in which the male person is dominant and the straight white male person is at the nexus of power, prestige, and wealth (32). Because of this gendering of power and privilege, Charging Elk's performances of an exoticized, straight masculinity assigns him the outsider status of the racially different while orienting him on the social hierarchy above the effeminate white male person, women, and other racial minorities in his social milieu.

If Charging Elk's physical stature marks him as a “man” in a man's world, capable of surviving his exile in the racially and sexually hierarchical France, then his sexuality also becomes a fraught site upon which

his excision from or inclusion in that society will be determined. Not surprisingly, then, his sexuality is expressed within constricted parameters: after he wakes up in France, he expresses *sexual* interest—as opposed to his earlier homosocial or sensual interest—in women only. Moreover, his sexual expressions are explicitly connected to his attempts to survive and to thrive in France. For example, with his first (hetero) sexual experience, the object of his fantasies is directly linked, in his mind, to a refusal to be haunted by grief. He counters the weight of his own people's loss—of land and, in his prophetic dream, of life—by focusing instead on fantasies of a heteronormative relationship with the prostitute with whom he had intercourse.

In fact, the narrator points out that Charging Elk's infatuation with a prostitute is meant to be understood as just that, a sexual infatuation, not love or any of its constituent qualities: "Charging Elk still didn't know much about love, its complications, heartaches, and rewards, but he had learned enough to make life almost bearable," the narrator explains (Welch 233). In addition, that expression of sexual infatuation is one that Charging Elk forcibly transmutes into an expression of middle-class morality. He invents a narrative about a working-class girl from a good family for the Soulasses. As he fictionalizes this normalization narrative, Madeleine Soulas rewards him by teaching him how to tie a "gentleman's tie" for his mysterious "lady love" (234). Then, while Charging Elk invents a fantasy in which his one sexual encounter turns into a formalized courtship and then marriage in the Catholic French cultural tradition, he is visited by a prophetic dream about his family lying dead at the bottom of a cliff. This event transpires roughly in December 1890, referring obliquely to the massacre at Wounded Knee. After this vision-dream, Charging Elk realizes that "his heart was not here [France]; nor was it there [Pine Ridge]" (235), and he tries to forget his vision of his dead relatives on the reservation, but "the only way he could think of to combat the persistent dream was to crowd it out with thoughts of the girl in the blue robe" (236).

Thus, for Charging Elk, heterosexual relationships function as surrogates for French middle-class normalcy—for his survival in that world—and mask the loss of his home and kin. However, it is important to note that Charging Elk's heterosexual relationships are *surrogates*. The narrative in fact underscores a connection between an aggressive, crass expression of appetitive lust separate from emotional connection.

This appetite for sex is connected to Charging Elk's growing knowledge of and acculturation into first the English language with the Wild West troupe and then into French and to France as a nation.

That acculturation, expressed through heterosexual appetites, mirrors Charging Elk's shifting interpretation of Armand Breteuil. Shortly after René Soulas agrees to house the young Charging Elk, the two are at the wharfs; Soulas notices that Breteuil has cornered Charging Elk. "Damn that Breteuil!" Soulas thinks, "with his effeminate ways and haughty manner" (Welch 143). He mentally describes Breteuil and his cohort of well-known rascals as just that—"polissons"—but he adds that Breteuil is "evil beyond compare" and "bound for perdition in the next life" (143). It is unclear what marks Breteuil as so evil—his "effeminate ways" or some latent threat, later realized in his raping Charging Elk. By contrast, Charging Elk initially senses no evil in Breteuil. He notes Breteuil's "pale skin, the slender body, the spectacles" and concludes that the man is a *heyoka*, "come to show him the way" (144).

Dakota Santee *winkte* people held a distinct status from Lakota *winkte* people. While Lakota *winkte* were fully assimilated and revered (Little Crow et al. 25), among the Dakota Santee, *winkte* people were considered "inassimilable" and held a peripheral social position; in this liminal yet holy status, they were considered *heyokas* (23). Breteuil's social marginalization (demonstrated by Soulas's warning Charging Elk away from Breteuil) seems insufficient to warrant Charging Elk's assumption that the man plays the role of the sacred clown. It is possible that Breteuil's effeminacy, his sartorial "elegance," and his preference for the company of men, in combination with his peripheral social position, put Charging Elk in mind of the Dakota society's treatment of *winkte heyokas*. *Winkte* status was conferred not on sexual preference but on preference and/or a vision calling the individual to a non-masculine gender role in society, although "*winktes* most often would engage in romantic relationships with non-*winkte* men" (Rifkin 174). *Winkte* identity was primarily a *social* identity associated with submissive behavior and a desire to adopt "women's work"—work that includes cooking meals.⁸ When Charging Elk reads Breteuil, a socially marginalized, effeminate chef, as a sympathetic person and, moreover, a spiritual aid, the novel indicates that Charging Elk does, in fact, recognize Breteuil as something familiar in this foreign land.

By the fourth year of his exile in France (1893), Charging Elk still assumes that “the pale man with the spectacles” is a *heyoka* (Welch 170), but he chooses to keep company with the Soulasses and avoids Breteuil. Sometime later, his written and spoken French having improved to the point that he can now read street signs, Charging Elk wanders the Old Port of Marseilles near dusk and sees Breteuil again, sitting inside a disreputable bar (connected, readers later discover, to a brothel). This time, Charging Elk has “given up the notion that this spectacled one . . . was really a *heyoka*” (208). He considers whether to act on his first instinct and speak to the man; then, noticing the man’s “slender fingers” holding a cigar (209), he recalls that Soulas “called the *heyoka* many bad words and made a bad face while doing so” (208). Charging Elk suddenly interprets Breteuil as “a *siyoko*, an evil spirit” (209). That evil, he believes, is what seduces men to enter the place of ill-repute. He is about to leave when he sees one of the working women wearing only a corset, shift, and black stockings with shoes. Upon seeing the “nearly naked girl with the big thighs,” he gets an erection (211). The narrator then observes that Charging Elk feels “an overwhelming need to taste her and fuck her” (212). That word, “fuck,” is repeated, Charging Elk contemplating it with a laugh. “Fuck,” readers are told, “was one of the words he had learned in Paris” (212). This critical scene exposes Charging Elk’s performance of heterosexuality as explicitly transactional and as performatively hypermasculine; it also foreshadows Charging Elk’s violent confrontation with Breteuil.

Thus, as Charging Elk grows more fluent in French, he adopts Soulas’s French Catholic belief that Breteuil and men like him are “evil beyond compare” (Welch 143, 209). Charging Elk also emphasizes those aspects of his Lakota identity—such as his martial masculinity—that fit the paradigm of Euro-Western cultural norms. At this point, Charging Elk perceives the “evil” to be connected to the sale of sexual acts, but rather than rejecting the brothel’s services altogether, Charging Elk determines to pursue sexual intercourse with the woman in the corset. Significantly, his arousal in this scene is described in language that is almost parodically hypermasculine and heteronormative: he learned the word “fuck,” he thinks, with other young Lakota men who “talked about fucking,” but “[i]t was all bravado” (212). It is no surprise, then, that when he gathers the courage to enter the brothel, he introduces himself

as “François” (222). Charging Elk’s pursuit of a monetized sexual transaction is prefaced by his adoption of the male version of the name of his new nation of occupation, if not yet citizenship.

Charging Elk’s pursuit of the young French prostitute, named Marie, represents his pursuit of French citizenship—at this point in the novel, citizenship in the most symbolic sense only. His pursuit of heteronormativity, however, brings him to his fatal encounter with Breteuil. The French chef sees Charging Elk with the young prostitute and coerces her into a plot to drug Charging Elk so that Breteuil can rape him. In that scene, Charging Elk awakens from a drugged state to the sensation of a person performing fellatio on him. He fuzzily realizes that the person performing fellatio has different-colored hair from Marie, yet he does not immediately react in terror. He “felt both lazy and excited” (Welch 276), but then the drug wears off, and he realizes that a rape is in progress. He reaches for his knife and stabs Breteuil in the back and then slits his throat (277). On the one hand, the justifiable rage that Charging Elk exemplifies, waking to find himself being raped, seems to demand no particularly nuanced interpretation. What does require nuance, however, is the direction of the anger. Charging Elk’s previous adoption of Soulas’s belief that Breteuil is evil because of his effeminacy and association with sex work *rather than* because of the rape evokes the specter of the predatory homosexual trope.

Closer scrutiny, however, suggests that the rape symbolizes something else entirely. In the scene directly after the murder, Charging Elk lies in his cell, and readers are told that he “felt strong about killing the *siyoko*” (Welch 297). His belief that the killing was justified is born not from a desire for vengeance but from his belief that Breteuil represents something “evil” rather than “dangerous.” Charging Elk clarifies for readers that a merely “dangerous” creature ought not to be killed unless necessary in Lakota custom (297). Instead, Breteuil deserves to be killed because he represents the “broken circle” of balance in the world, the infection of white settlers who mined the sacred Black Hills and dammed streams and killed the Lakota (297). The implication here is that Charging Elk implicitly connects Breteuil—and, more specifically, the terror of being taken against one’s will—to the devastating seizure of Lakota land and resources by white settlers. Charging Elk, in other words, understands the act of rape as a specifically *colonial* act; furthermore, he expresses that understanding in the paradigm of the settler

state, in which the rape represents a fundamental imbalance in divine order, in state order, and in nature. Andrea Smith claims that sexual violence is an integral part of colonialism, and the “connection between the colonization of Native people’s bodies . . . and Native lands is not simply metaphorical” (55). The attitudes that sustain colonial enterprise require a racialized reading of hierarchies of human value. In the case of the Americas, “Indian bodies,” she says, were described as “dirty” and so as “sexually violable and ‘rapable,’ [as] the rape of bodies that are considered inherently impure or dirty simply does not count” (10). Charging Elk’s lack of remorse for killing Breteuil, in other words, is connected not with the sex act itself but with the violence of an act that read Charging Elk’s body as “rapable.”

The trial scene underscores this distinction between same-sex behavior and the act of rape. During his trial, the French defense lawyer emphasizes Charging Elk’s innocence, his naive belief in a meaningful romantic connection with the prostitute Marie (substantiated by his fictional accounts of their relationship to the *Soulases*), and the heinous nature of Breteuil’s act. The lawyer calls upon the jury to exercise some compassion; while “we all, as God-fearing men, frown upon the nature of the homosexual act,” he says, the act was performed in a brothel, where such acts are common, and thus is unremarkable (Welch 326). His intention is to show that the conditions of the European state (that homosexuality is “frowned upon”) are unfamiliar to the accused, whom he paints as an innocent and, by implication, a dupe amid the “depravity” of the brothel (327).

Charging Elk is ultimately condemned, of course, but the crime for which he is condemned is an even more critical failure, in the French state, than murder: Charging Elk fails to be white (Welch 329). That is, the judge expresses sympathy for Charging Elk’s violent reaction to the rape but issues his judgment because Charging Elk is “not of a civilized race of people” and so poses an existential threat (341). In other words, the rape represents colonial acquisition of Charging Elk’s body. Under-scoring this association, the judge sentences Charging Elk not for the murder alone but for committing murder while being “uncivilized.”

The novel thus implicates French racial hierarchy and colonial history but in its final act turns its attention to the even more egregious violations of personal and national Indigenous sovereignty enacted by the United States. In the penultimate chapter, Charging Elk is freed from

prison when he is reclassified as a political prisoner. The progressive journalist Martin St-Cyr fights for Charging Elk's reclassification based on the US Supreme Court's denial of citizenship to American Indians. A person cannot be held accountable to the laws of a society in which he retains no legal status, St-Cyr argues. Once freed, Charging Elk completes his transformation from exile to landowning citizen through heterosexual marriage to a young French woman. That marriage grants him French citizenship and, because of France's patriarchal inheritance laws, ownership of her ancestral property (Welch 410).

It is important to underscore, however, that Charging Elk's transformation is not depicted as a triumph of Lakota sovereignty but rather as one individual's survival in a world bent on denying his most basic rights. Charging Elk's commitment to Lakota life, language, and religious orientation to the world erodes gradually but consistently throughout the novel. During a Christmas celebration while he is living with the Soulasses, for example, he reflects that he purchased small gifts for the Soulas children because he spent the majority of his discretionary income on clothes for himself, violating the Oglala virtue of generosity (Welch 243). In short, Charging Elk leaves his home at a young age while his home culture undergoes radical transformation. His isolation at the Stronghold in certain ways may have brought him closer to a "traditional" life, but since it lacks the social organization of Lakota society, it fails to bind him to Lakota religious and ethical communal practice. Charging Elk's choice to remain in France becomes a critical moment of survival—but survivance is not the same as survival. Charging Elk's life, citizenship, and even sexuality are predicated upon his mimicry of French cultural norms and French law. He accepts the "bribe of straightness," given the alternative options of prison and death. Charging Elk thus represents the devastating consequences of young people cleaved from connection to their cultural traditions, and his story becomes an implicit indictment of the consequences of settler heteronormativity, the "bribe of straightness" that Rifkin describes as the price of sovereignty.

The Heartsong of Charging Elk, then, is perhaps as misleading a title as it is a tricky, layered novel. In one interview, Vizenor, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, says that "if a Native American text is embraced too warmly, too generously, and is something like a bestseller, there might be something wrong with the interpretation" (Isernhagen 80). Indeed, Welch's award-winning and best-selling novel seems to substantiate

that claim. It pacifies a settler American and European desire to preserve the noble savage in his quintessential glory yet assimilate that man into the broader cultural norms of his new and alien world order. Yet closer examination reveals that *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* is no simple text, and no simple interpretation seems to explicate its problematic violence. Perhaps the point of the novel, in the end, is that very resistance to simplicity. For Charging Elk, a Lakota man in the early twentieth century, this is no authentic song of his heart, and there is no happy ending.⁹

The reclamation of Lakota cultural history that might permit Charging Elk to “remember” winkle identity is not available to him in the early twentieth century. That erasure illuminates a significant problem facing efforts to reclaim or to assert the acceptance of Two Spirit identities in Native communities today. Although tribal nations today are classified as distinct sovereign nations with a right to self-govern, those rights are severely curtailed. The federal government has seized sovereign powers in many areas of criminal and civil jurisdiction, but marriage and family law still fall solidly under tribal jurisdiction (Wilson 165–66). For this reason, in some instances, marriage equality has become a negative proof of sovereignty. Following the landmark US Supreme Court decision *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which found that the right to marry for same-sex couples is protected under the Fourteenth Amendment, several tribal nations renewed or introduced legislation that prohibited same-sex marriage. Although many tribal nations voted to allow same-sex marriage prior to the US Supreme Court decision, and many more nations do not specify the genders of partners seeking to marry, the Cherokee and Navajo nations—the most populous within the borders of the continental United States—reacted to the Supreme Court decision by enforcing heterosexual marriage only. Although the attorney general for the Cherokee nation did reverse that decision in 2016, the nation’s refutation of the Supreme Court decision marks one of the only ways in which tribal nations *can* exert sovereignty; it also reflects many Indigenous communities’ complicated relationships with Two Spirit and queer identities.¹⁰ Rifkin points out that scholarship on people of color in general “foregrounds the role of compulsory heterosexuality in processes of racialization and the (re)production of white privilege, understanding racial differentiation and hierarchy as key components of heteronormativity” (32). This theoretical explanation

extends to a perceptible resistance to the loosening of Western and particularly Christian sexual mores in many Native nations.

In a lecture entitled “Fiction and Politics,” given in 1998, just two years before the publication of *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, Welch claims that “[w]riters by nature are socially conscious,” that they “write about injustice, about oppression, about fear.” Welch politicizes that assertion, claiming that “the moral Majority [*sic*], are trying desperately to silence such writing. So far they have failed” (James Welch Papers, box 1, folder 23).¹¹ In a profoundly troubling insight into the nature of injustice and oppression, the tragedy marring the otherwise-triumphant end of *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* lies in the story that is *not* told. Charging Elk’s narrative focuses on a Lakota man’s sojourn in France over the turn of the twentieth century. It does not tell the story of those Lakota people *not* in France who were denied US citizenship (and the rights and protections ostensibly afforded by that status), denied access to their own cultural heritage, denied the right to reject settler heteropatriarchy. Charging Elk’s contingent legal identity at the end of the novel requires his geographical, as well as cultural, alienation from his homeland, culture, and familial bonds. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* gives no voice to those silenced stories. And in the most striking silence—the complete erasure of the very word and concept of winkle identity—the word that is not there speaks volumes. If the attempts of a settler state seeking to enforce a heteropatriarchal social organization are to fail, as Welch calls for, then it is dependent upon us as readers to uncover the queer subtexts of this novel that is not, after all, straightforward.

LYDIA R. COOPER is associate professor of contemporary American and Native American literature at Creighton University. Her most recent book is *Masculinities in Literature of the American West* (2016). She has also published a book on Cormac McCarthy (2011) and numerous scholarly articles on American and Native American authors.

NOTES

1. In her article on Sherman Alexie’s positive depictions of gay Native men in *The Toughest Indian in the World*, Tatonetti mentions the excoriating depictions of gay Native men in Welch’s and Silko’s novels, and she points out that Alexie is the only “canonical” Native American author at that time (1999) to have so positively depicted queer-identified Native people in fiction (“Sex” 201–02). More recent fiction that

celebrates Two Spirit identities and Indigenous queerness offers holistic approaches to understanding complex intergenerational, national, and individual traumas. Yet despite novels such as Paula Gunn Allen's little-read but wonderful early novel *The Woman Who Owns the Shadows* (1983) and, more recently, Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998), Womack's *Drowning in Fire* (2001), and David Treuer's *Prudence* (2015), there remain notably few positive representations of queer Native people in full-length fiction by Native authors.

2. The term has its limits, of course, as all umbrella terms do. In translation in certain languages, "Two Spirit" is incorrect as an expression for nonbinary gender or nonheterosexual identities (Greensmith and Giwa 131). In addition, the term's imprecision fails to reflect the enormous diversity of "Two Spirit" social expressions. Some Native cultures, for instance, recognized three genders (male, female, and male performing as female), while others recognized four (those three and also female performing as male). In some cultures that recognized Two Spirit identities, heteronormativity was enforced, so that men living as women only engaged in sexual activity with cis-men and in the reverse for women living as men. In many cultures, Two Spirit individuals were people who expressed some combination of masculine and feminine performance and identity (Lang 103).

3. Krupat also points out that *siyoko*, the term Charging Elk uses to describe Breteuil as "evil" after Breteuil attempts to rape him, does not mean "evil." A *siyoko*, Krupat points out, is a "bogeyman," not "absolute evil," in the Lakota tradition ("History" 253).

4. In a minor yet touching show of his characteristically progressive ethos, Welch's papers include a typed sheet of notes on teaching contemporary American Indian literature and its challenges and opportunities. Welch comments, "I do not consider it Pollyanna-ish to expect people of different backgrounds and cultures to come together, to enlighten each other"; next to this assertion, he handwrote the following note: "They owe it to each other, and to themselves" (James Welch Papers, box 1, folder 21). Welch's consistent calls for authentically liberal exchanges of ideas, his promotion of tribal sovereignty, and his championship of the causes of many minority groups in the United States is consistently demonstrated through his literary career and social activism.

5. It was not until after World War I, and largely in response to Native involvement in the war, that Representative Homer P. Snyder of New York put forward and eventually saw passed House Resolution 6355, the American Indian Citizenship Act, in 1924 (Barrett 192). In other words, some six to ten thousand Native Americans who were not, in 1918, citizens of the United States enlisted to fight in the US Army overseas. It was in response to this overwhelming demonstration of the highest martial and sacrificial demonstration of civic responsibility that the US Congress provided US citizenship to Native peoples without first requiring that they relinquish their own national and cultural identities.

6. Rifkin's description of kinship in Native communities, drawn from Daniel Heath Justice's work on the topic, is of a bond that is grammatically more a verb than a noun; kinship is not based on a "logic of jurisdiction" but rather on an

understanding of social interdependence within a community (9). Perhaps one of the clearest literary depictions of such a kinship society can be found in Ella Cara Deloria's (Yankton Dakota) *Waterlily*. At one point in the novel, for instance, a young man cannot fulfill his vow during the Sun Dance. As the Sun Dance priest performs ritual cuts on the boy's shoulders to help him fulfill his vow, the boy's elderly aunts, overcome with pity, run out and offer their own shoulders for the remaining cuts. They offer money to be distributed to the poor as recompense. As the aunts take the cutting, the boy's two sisters arrive to offer their own money as well (127). The community marvels, "'This day will never be forgotten. For on this day we have seen the loftiest expression of kinship affection'" (128). Although Lakota culture is a "warrior" culture, in this scene, readers recognize expressions of kinship bonds being privileged over the valor of a single warrior's endurance. It is clear that, however traditional the Stronghold's medicine people were, the cultural traditions could not have carried on intact without the contributions of the rest of the society.

7. In *Gendering European History: 1780-1920*, Barbara Caine and Glenda Sluga describe the emergence of theories of race hierarchies from the mid-nineteenth century in Europe (87). In addition to distilling race as a hierarchical structure justifying the civilizing effects of European colonialism, these racial theories were also gendered. "Depictions of women as psychologically inferior," they explain, "... made femininity an important metaphor for describing racially marginalized groups like Jews and blacks" (89-90). Charging Elk's skin identifies him on the ineradicable racial hierarchy of France, his inferiority to white French men assumed. However, his physiological "superiority" over other minorities is asserted through French men's perceptions of him as hypermasculine, that is, *not* feminine. Thus, Charging Elk's status on that racial ladder hinges on his performance of a martial, heteronormative version of masculinity.

8. In an essay on his background researching winkle identity as an adult in order to make sense of his own experience as a gay Sisseton/Wahpeton Dakota man, Doyle V. Robertson recalls that his uncle, who identifies as winkle, "fulfills [his] role in his way by cooking the community meals for the annual wacipi" (233).

9. As Krupat points out, the word "heartsong" does not appear in the novel proper, is a nonstandard word in English, and does not appear in the Lakota dictionary Welch used while drafting the novel. The word's etymology came about through a rather circuitous editorial process, and Krupat acknowledges that the word, and indeed the novel's title, is literarily "good" because, although there is nothing "authentic" about it, "while we may *think* 'heartsong' conveys something Lakota, we nonetheless *understand* it entirely in Western terms" ("History" 246, 248, emphasis his). In other words, for Krupat, the title works on the same ambiguous lines as the novel, evocative, authentic-seeming, yet subversive in its refusal of sense-making paradigms for its most problematic elements. In the ways in which the novel seems most "authentic," in other words, it is at its most constructed.

10. It is worth noting, in terms of the limits of tribal sovereignty, that recent movements have brought those precise issues to the center of national attention. Late December 2016 witnessed some of most intense pantribal resistance, most notably

during the historic Standing Rock Sioux-led protest of the Dakota Access Pipeline, during an era of equally intense backlash against a perceived progressive social agenda at the US federal level. It remains to be seen how that resistance to federal social and political shifts will shape individual tribal nations' policies and pantribal movements in the future (see "Cherokee Nation's Attorney").

11. Welch deliberately names three conservative "Moral Majority" political leaders, two of whom were consistently outspoken antigay activists. The quote in its entirety reads: "We know that the Jessie Helmses of this country, the Newt Gingriches and the Dick Armys, the moral Majority, are trying desperately to silence such writing. So far they have failed" (James Welch Papers, box 1, folder 23).

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“I Got This AB Original Soul / I Got This AB Original Flow”

Frank Waln, the Postmasculindian, and Hip Hop as Survivance

SARAH KENT

The colonial construction of the *indian* is not arbitrary; the racist assemblage of the *indian* is part of circulating economies of violence and racism that capitalize on Indigenous erasure. As Chippewa scholar Gerald Vizenor posits in his seminal text *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance*, the *indian* is produced from the settler-colonial imaginary with no original referent. The *indian*, as Vizenor asserts, is a simulation that is part of the physical and cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples. Drawing from Vizenor's theoretical terminology, settler scholar Sam McKegney advances the term *masculindian* to speak to the triangulation of the bloodthirsty warrior, the drunken absentee, and the noble savage simulations that haunt settler preconceptions of Indigenous masculinity. Caught in the oppressive matrix of patriarchal colonialism and constructed as an inhuman category of being, the *masculindian* is not intended as a viable subjectivity for Indigenous men but is a simulation predicated on impending death. This dehumanization evidences itself in the real world through the disproportionate number of Indigenous men who are incarcerated, missing and murdered, and brutalized by police and state institutions.¹ The state-sanctioned murder of Indigenous peoples exposes colonialism's reliance on necropolitics, which postcolonial theorist Achille Mbembe defines as the governmental determination of the disposability of certain subjects. Deemed expendable by settler-colonial logics, Indigenous men are living the discursive and material ramifications of this racist construction. Life is what is at stake for dismantling and reworking the settler-colonial fantasy of Indigenous masculinity, yet if settler colonialism necessitates the *masculindian's* death, what possibilities are there for life? How are Indigenous men

(re)imagining, embodying, and mobilizing viable subjectivities that counter the death drive of the *masculindian*?

Through his hip hop poetics, Sicangu Lakota artist Frank Waln proposes a livable ontology for Indigenous masculinity. He refutes the death drive of the *masculindian* via his subversive creative expressions, which employ survivance as the point of departure. Waln revisions Indigenous masculine identity by shedding light on the production and fetishization of the *masculindian*. In this way, I assert that Waln's praxis aligns with what Vizenor terms the *postindian warrior*—the Indigenous subject who disrupts colonial logics and refutes the simulation of the *indian*. Drawing on Vizenor's *postindian* and McKegney's theoretical development of the *masculindian*, I propose the term *postmasculindian* to speak to the subject who disrupts the toxicity of white heteropatriarchy by crafting, (re)inventing, and living viable modes of Indigenous masculinity. The "post-" of the *postmasculindian* denotes the movement beyond the restrictive confines and corrosive quality of the colonially constructed *masculindian*.² By reading Waln's hip hop poetics as survivance anthems of Indigenous masculinity, I suggest that Waln illuminates this new mode of Indigenous identity—a *postmasculindian* subjectivity—an identity that moves beyond the death drive narrative of the *masculindian*.

Using Indigeneity as his ideological framework, Vizenor reshapes Jean Baudrillard's theoretical considerations of simulacrum to engage with the settler-colonial production of the *indian*.³ As Vizenor suggests, the *indian* mistakes and substitutes itself for the real, erasing the presence of Indigeneity, evolving into hyperreality, and concealing its own production: "*indian*, misgiven here in italics, insinuates the obvious simulation and ruse of colonial dominance. Manifestly, the *indian* is an occidental misnomer, an overseas enactment that has no referent to real native cultures and communities" (vii). The *indian* obscures its own genesis by entangling the real and the imaginary in an unparseable knot, yet as Vizenor asserts, there is only an absence behind the sign of the *indian*. The *indian* is thus the presence of an absence. Static, contained, and readily knowable, the *indian* is archived, only existing within the colonially constructed narrative of dominance but also always relegated to the past. Produced through willful misrepresentation, the *indian* encodes an uninhabitable subjectivity onto Indigenous peoples; this is not an identity to be lived but an identity to die. This is the bonding

of abjection to subjectivity. The *indian* attempts to incite the death of Indigenous peoples by valuing narratives of hypotragedy that gesture to the “inevitable erasure” of Indigenous culture, which in turn permits the seizure of Indigenous lands as part of settler-colonial capitalism.

Building upon Vizenor’s theorizations of the *indian*, McKegney addresses the intersections of toxic masculinity and settler-colonial fantasies of the *indian* through advancing his term *masculindian*: “Built from a collision between the floating signifiers ‘masculine’ and ‘Indian,’ the term draws attention to the settler North American appetite for depictions of Indigenous men that rehearse hypermasculine stereotypes of the noble savage and the bloodthirsty warrior” (“Into the Full” 1).⁴ Imbued with a surplus of gender as a means of dehumanization, the *masculindian* is a technology of settler-colonial violence that incites and normalizes the disposability of Indigenous men through imposing an identity that is always fettered to death. The racializing gaze of colonialism fixes and frames Indigenous men within a bounded matrix of representational possibilities. Addressing the limited representations of the *masculindian*, McKegney contends: “[T]he restrictive triangulation of ‘noble savage,’ ‘bloodthirsty warrior,’ and ‘drunken absentee’ [are] each deeply invested in the trope of the vanishing Indian that would naturalize the demise of Indigenous nations” (“Warriors” 255). There is no futurity for the figure of the *masculindian*. The invention of the *masculindian* is designed to sever Indigenous men from feeling their bodies as their own by projecting a simulation onto their subjectivities. This disembodiment is tied up with shame but is also politically motivated. Colonial ideology attempts to ensure that the *masculindian* is not recognized as human, which in turn disallows Indigenous men from gaining the political and social capital to assert bodily and territorial sovereignty. Indigenous erasure is settler colonialism’s endgame. Highlighting the inevitable death of the *masculindian*, Kanien’kehá:ka scholar Taiaiake Alfred states, “[T]here’s no living with it because it’s not meant to be lived with; it’s meant to be killed, every single time. They’re images to be slain by the white conqueror” (79). The continuing discursive and material violence of the *masculindian* is an extension of these necropolitical impulses. The *masculindian* is always dead before he arrives. Waln’s reworking of the *masculindian* via hip hop is thus a significant intervention in the colonial discourse circulating around Indigenous men.

Attending to Indigenous masculinities is not an attempt to divert

discourse away from the lived experiences of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and queer subjects who suffer from the violence of settler heteropatriarchy that privileges the hypermasculine. Indigenous masculinities are undeniably guided by, indebted to, and acting in solidarity with Indigenous feminisms, as work by Kim Anderson (Cree-Métis) demonstrates. As Anderson suggests, “[W]hen we do our Indigenous feminist work, we’re seeking insight into the gendered issues that underpin the violence against all of our community members, including men” (“Remembering” 95). Work by Indigenous feminist, Two-Spirit, and queer scholars, activists, and artists has engaged in vital knowledge production on emancipatory trajectories for Indigenous gender representations, but “a lack of theoretical and applied scholarly work about Indigenous men and masculinities” fails to account for the way in which this gender expression can be harnessed for Indigenous liberation (Innes and Anderson 3).⁵ Indigenous resurgence also relies on healing the colonial violence enacted on Indigenous men, as Mi’kmaq scholar Bonita Lawrence states: “[E]mpowerment for women means we need to talk about empowerment for communities. . . . [W]e need to talk about empowering our men” (qtd. in Anderson, *Recognition* 276). If masculinity continues to be shaped around the destructive prescripts of settler colonialism’s heteropatriarchy, then masculinity will continue to be complicit in sustaining colonial gender systems. Studies of Indigenous masculinities seek to address “how men find their place in a non-patriarchal society” (Anderson, “Remembering” 92) and how the “regeneration of positive masculinities . . . will assist in the restoration of balanced and harmonious relationships” (Innes and Anderson 4). Black / Saginaw Anishinaabe scholar Kyle Mays approaches Indigenous masculinities “as a site of potential” (74), which echoes how the work of Indigenous artists like Waln revitalizes the decolonial futurity of Indigenous masculinities.

Through his hip hop track “My Stone,” Waln embodies and performs how healthy Indigenous masculinities can contribute to healing relationships that have been fragmented by settler colonialism. Written as a birthday present for his mother, “My Stone” honors the sacrifices made by Waln’s mother and expresses gratitude for how these sacrifices have contributed to Waln’s success:

You kept me on the Red Road
Away from the wrong way

Forever I'm grateful
 For the life you gave
 Tears that we cried
 Sacrifice you made

Waln attributes his healthy masculinity to the guidance and sacrifice of his mother. He acknowledges that his success as an artist and a young man is indebted to his mother's sacrifices, and he enacts reciprocity by gifting his mother this creative expression.

Addressing the violent targeting of kinship systems, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg artist and scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson articulates that settler colonialism attempts to "destroy our relationality by making it difficult to form sustainable, strong relationships with each other" ("Not Murdered"). Through his song, Waln counters the dismantling of intimacy by paying tribute to his strong relationship with his mother and modeling how Indigenous men can express love in ways that counter toxic masculinity. As Mays expresses, "Frank Waln's 'My Stone' is an example of what womanhood can teach and also how it can shape Indigenous manhood, in very material ways" (77). Waln enacts praxis by performing a healthy masculinity that has roots in Indigenous feminisms, proudly declaring he was "[r]aised by a woman who made me a man" ("My Stone"). Nested within Lakota intellectual traditions, Waln's lyrics venerate his mother by naming her as his sacred stone in the chorus: "I can let it rock, you will be my stone / Forever in my heart you will be my stone / My stone." Explaining the linguistic interplay between the Lakota words for "woman" and "rock," Severt Young Bear and R. D. Theisz state, "The word *winyan* (woman) is also made up of *wi* (sun) and then *inyan* (rock). A woman is the foundation of the home, so she combines the great power of the sun and the rock, the beginning of creation and the foundation" (19). Waln's expression of his mother as his stone thus draws on the Lakota linkages between woman, place, and sacred knowledge of creation. While Waln dedicates the song to his mother, the track also pays homage to Indigenous feminisms and the essential role of women in Indigenous families.

By honoring Indigenous feminisms through his lyrics, Waln enacts what Simpson terms "co-resistance," community making that is fueled by Indigenous men and women reciprocally uplifting and supporting one another ("Not Murdered"). In an introduction to his live performance of "My Stone" for Sing Our Rivers Red, a series of events that

raise awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women, Waln dubs this track his “greatest decolonial love song.” Waln further articulates that “when we’re talking about decolonial love especially as men, we need to look at the way that we treat and interact with our women” (“My Stone at SORR”). Rejecting the colonial gender dynamic that produces and is produced by toxic masculinity, Waln voices that honoring Indigenous women does not threaten his masculinity. Mays asserts that Waln’s lyrical homage to his mother “opens up the possibility that Indigenous masculinity can be restored through the efforts and stories of our mothers and great-grandmothers” (77). Expanding the expression of masculinities through Indigenous men’s artistic imaginings performs a first step toward moving away from the constrained category imposed by settler-colonial heteropatriarchy. This suggests that new narratives of Indigenous masculinities can be illuminated that escape the imposition of the *masculindian*’s inevitable death. For Waln, hip hop is the vehicle for voicing these new narratives.⁶

With its genesis in emancipatory knowledge building, hip hop is underpinned by affirmations of collective identity, critical consciousness, and an ethics of radical truth telling. Hip hop is a weapon against colonial necropolitics that has been crafted in the fires of emancipatory struggle. As creative expression, hip hop has the potential to enact, disseminate, and intensify the artist’s identity, agency, and sovereignty. For Waln, hip hop is synonymous with survival. Writing on the significance of hip hop in his article “Indigenous Hip Hop and Performance as Resurgence,” Waln states, “The founders of Hip Hop were coming up out of slavery. We were coming up out of genocide. Disconnected from our language, ceremonies and culture through genocidal government policies, many of us were a generation searching for anything that would help us survive while we try to reclaim our culture and language. Hip Hop was one of our answers.” Within Waln’s conception, hip hop is a counternarrative that uses creative self-expression to resist the dominant archives of history that attempt to erase narratives of struggle. Hip hop provides a vehicle for expressing urgent social and political realities. As Jenell Navarro asserts, “Hip-hop has in fact become such a powerful force for redress and for speaking truth to power that many different communities have found resonance with the genre and adopted it” (103). While Indigenous hip hop as a recognizable genre is a relatively new art form, this creative production joins a longer continuum

of Indigenous expression that includes oral traditions, songs, petroglyphs, wampum belts, birch bark scrolls, earthworks, written literature, and contemporary media. Speaking to new forms of creative expression that Indigenous artists are experimenting with, Michelle Raheja articulates: "Native American film, video-makers, and cultural artists are doing more than simply resisting and surviving, they are interrogating the powers of the state, providing nuanced and complex forms of self-representation, imagining a futurity that militates against the figure of the vanishing Indian, and engaging in visual sovereignty on virtual reservations of their own creation" (240). Indigenous hip hop asserts sovereignty over creative expression; it is innately political, as it is a mode of artistic expression that voices Indigenous presence in the contemporary world and counters the colonial assumptions of erasure.

Indigenous hip hop unsettles colonial understandings of Indigenous ways of being in the world that fetter Indigeneity to "tradition" and "authenticity" and relegate the *indian* identity to the past. Speaking to the generative potential of Indigenous hip hop in complicating colonial conceptions of "traditional" Indigeneity, Lauren Amsterdam asserts, "Practicing hip-hop is political because it shatters the benchmark of authenticity, a standard of quantifying *real* indigeneity" (56). Destroying colonialism's fetish object of the *indian*, Indigenous hip hop iconoclasts, such as Apsáalooke artist Supaman, Ojibwe artist Tall Paul, and Cree artist Drezus, open up new terrains of subjectivity for Indigenous men. In his song "Somewhere," Supaman encodes Indigeneity into the DNA of his hip hop practice through traditional singing, drumming, and fancy feather dancing. Within this same vein, Tall Paul raps in Anishnaabemowin in "Prayers in a Song" as both a practice of individual cultural communion and part of communal language revival. Drezus situates himself as part of Idle No More, a movement premised on the political resurgence of Indigenous peoples, through his song "Red Winter." These artists, as well as a multitude of other Indigenous hip hop artists across Turtle Island, employ hip hop as a methodology for expressing and performing Indigenous presence, political and social consciousness, (alter) native masculine identities, and cultural empowerment.⁷ As Mays articulates, "Indigenous hip hop might be one of the most important cultural forces that has hit Indigenous North America since the Ghost Dance movement in the late nineteenth century" (3).

Hip hop as an activist cultural production becomes a site of daily

resistance that “can enliven everyday people with a passion to work for social justice” (Navarro 117). Indigenous activist artists employ hip hop as a wide-reaching creative expression that subverts colonial ideology, declares subjectivity, fosters critical consciousness of injustice, and functions as a call to action. As Karyn Recollet articulates, “[T]hese creators present a ‘new activism’ as these artists bear witness to injustice and use hip-hop as a strategy of resistance” (424). Hip hop mobilizes social theory to critique hegemonic ideology in a way that reaches youth who can become the active agents of social and political transformation. It has the ability, as Mays suggests, to “get people—especially the seventh generation—moving to change their existing social conditions” (23). Waln’s work provides a vehicle for cultivating consciousness among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous subjects in order to foster a collective density against white supremacy, colonial ideology, and violent projects of homogeneity. Addressing the ability for hip hop to communicate the urgency of activism to non-Indigenous subjects, Liza Wallman states, “Indigenous hip hop engages me because of the outlet it provides for Indigenous peoples and the capacity it creates in me, a settler, to listen in a space of not knowing. Hip hop is a form that creates a receptive listener in me” (2). Receptive listening creates the possibility for transforming critical consciousness of settlers into praxis-oriented actions. While audience members may include settlers, Indigenous hip hop decenters whiteness by “speak[ing] primarily to [Indigenous] communities” (England 15). This is forefronted most explicitly in tracks that employ Indigenous languages or embed culturally specific knowledge that necessitates “cultural initiation” to parse meaning (Ruffo 7). Waln’s activist cultural production, underpinned by a call for social transformation, speaks to Indigenous youth and, more specifically, young Indigenous men who are exposed to the colonial misrepresentations of the *masculindian*.

Premised on the assertion of presence, Indigenous hip hop is a generative avenue for what Vizenor terms *survivance*, which is “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (*Manifest* vii). Survivance is the resistance to the premature death induced by settler-colonial racism. Waln’s employment of hip hop as survivance speaks to the potential for music to engage in dialectical social justice while also vigorously assert-

ing Indigenous life. Speaking to the life-giving potential of Indigenous hip hop, Amsterdam asserts that “making music fuels the replication of life” (67). She elucidates how hip hop demonstrates “a way of living and not dying” to Indigenous youth by encouraging them to move from toxic urban landscapes into the creative spaces of studios (66).

Hip hop further combats the colonially imposed death drive by dispelling negative affectivity. Simpson articulates the internalization of shame as a method for the success of settler colonialism: “[S]hame [is] an insidious and infectious part of the cognitive imperialism that was aimed at convincing us that we were a weak and defeated people, and that there was no point in resisting or resurging” (*Dancing* 14). Hip hop functions as a tool for reclaiming empowerment. As Amsterdam asserts, “Refusing to forget the past while rejecting a future confined by race and place, artists cast off the shame connected to stolen land and lost traditions by relocating cultural continuity to hip-hop. For these young people, hip-hop is a space for building political power, a space that enables and empowers them to challenge loss and diminished life chances” (68). Through refuting narratives of “dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (Vizenor, *Manifest* vii), Waln’s hip hop poetics are both a site for articulating resurgence and an imaginative praxis that revisions Indigeneity. His lyrics express the ongoing negotiations and contestations of the colonial fetishizations of the *indian*.

In his song “What Makes the Red Man Red,” Waln directly engages with popular representations of the *masculindian* by sampling the Disney song “What Made the Red Man Red?” from the 1953 Disney film *Peter Pan*. The Disney song, which tells the creation story of the *indian*, draws on dominant narratives of savagery in order to entertain a white audience. The *indians*, who self-identify as “Injuns” and are led by a hypermasculine and stoic chief, perform the stereotypes of *masculindian* savagery through broken syntactical statements, chanting, and “wild” dancing. The song locates the “Injuns” as intellectually inferior to Peter Pan and the Darling children, who perform white civility.

The lyrics of the Disney song “What Made the Red Man Red?” reduce Indigenous subjects into flesh—into red skin. Racism operates through imbuing visuals with truth-value in order to make the subject knowable through the quasi-biological differentiation of the skin. The skin as a taxonomic marker of race remains an instituted mode of knowledge in colonial epistemologies. The *indian*’s red skin fixes the

Indigenous subject as a knowable, readable, and thus containable fetish object. The success of settler colonialism hinges on manufacturing and disseminating systemic and systematic racism, which black studies scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore defines as the “state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death” (247). Colonial structures operate through the political exploitation and reproduction of race to maintain hierarchies based on whiteness. Settler colonialism employs racism as a mechanism to dehumanize and denigrate Indigenous peoples, which in turn exacts premature death as a methodology for accumulating land as capital. The political, economic, and sociocultural disciplining of Indigenous peoples is executed through and grounded in racialized differentiation based on skin. This pseudoscience conceals and masks the racist operation of complex systems; race, like gender, is naturalized as an organizing category. By reading skin as inherent to socially and culturally produced identity, colonialism effaces the specificity of Indigenous personhood.

Waln’s lyrical interventions in “What Makes the Red Man Red” disrupt the settler-colonial creation myth of the *indian*’s epidermalization, which Frantz Fanon defines as the levying of race onto the body. As Mays asserts, Waln’s song is a “calling out of the contradictions of racism” (45). By sampling from this racist song, Waln exposes and subverts the colonial fetishism of the *masculindian*’s red skin via his rhetorical play. The title of Waln’s song, “What *Makes* the Red Man Red [emphasis added],” performs a significant reworking of temporality by revising the verb “made” into the present tense. Waln’s lyrics thus function as a list of colonial violence that makes him “red,” riffing off the multiple meanings of “red” as both connoting anger and symbolically representing wounding. He writes a new creation story of why he is red to interrupt the discursive violence of settler colonialism: “You made me red when you killed my people / Made me red when you bled my tribe” (“What Makes”). Waln renders visible the settler-colonial histories rooted in the disembodiment and dispossession of Indigenous peoples but also pivots away from settler-colonial epidermalization.

Waln kills the colonial fantasies in *Peter Pan*’s “What Made the Red Man Red?” by exposing the *masculindian* as the absence of a referent. He undermines the settler-colonial reduction of the *masculindian* to red skin while simultaneously exposing the production of this figure.

He raps, “Hollywood portrays us wrong (like savages) / History books say we’re gone (like savages)” (“What Makes”). Directly engaging with the *indians* of the white imaginary, Waln calls out the machinations of settler colonialism for their reliance on fantasy. Waln does not forgive these simulations as innocent or arbitrary misrepresentations but points to the necropolitical underpinnings of the fetishizations of Indigenous peoples. Disrupting the amnesia surrounding Indigenous genocide, Waln engages in radical truth telling of settler-colonial necropolitics:

Tell me why you think the red man is dead
With a fake headdress on your head
Tell me what you know about thousands of Nations
Displaced and confined to concentration camps called reservations
We died for the birth of your nation (“What Makes”)

The racialized eugenics of colonialism justify the economic and profit-driven accumulation of territory. The red man, as Waln reveals, is dead because of the formation of the colonial nation-state. Through voicing the counterhistories of nation building, Waln confronts settler colonialism as a power structure that targets and engenders the premature deaths of Indigenous peoples.

Rewriting the creation narrative of the nation-state, Waln emphasizes the violent foundations of manifest destiny, which is the rationalization for state-sanctioned murder. Waln challenges the ideological justification of colonialism that posits that settler nations have a divine right to exist:

Manifest destiny arrested what’s best for me
They kill my culture—America made a mess of me
You inherited everything we die for and all we get is a got damn mascot (“What Makes”)

Speaking to the ideological workings of colonial nation-states, Mbembe asserts, “[T]he state, for its part, undertook to ‘civilize’ the ways of killing and to attribute rational objectives to the very act of killing” (23). Manifest destiny, the ideology that “civilizes” and “rationalizes” the genocide of Indigenous peoples, intentionally camouflages settler colonialism as an institution of terror. Referring to the phenomenon of Indigenous iconography being appropriated for sports team mascots, Waln addresses how Indigenous subjectivity has been wrested from

Indigenous peoples by settler colonialism, reshaped and reduced into a symbol, and marketed as a fantasy for the settler colonizer's pleasure. The unequal exchange expressed in Waln's lyrics reveals the extractive economy of settler colonialism, which uses "Indian" iconography as social and economic capital. He exposes the inequity of economic exchange under settler-colonial formations; settler colonialism extracts Indigenous land in exchange for bestowing racist fantasies upon Indigenous peoples.

By exposing settler colonialism's circulating economies of violence, Waln reverses the narrative of savagery. Savagery, which affectively sticks to the fantasy of the *masculindian*, justifies the colonial representations of Indigenous subjects as less than human. Within the discourse of civilization, "savagery" intentionally dehumanizes Indigenous men. Waln raps:

Savages is as savage does
The white man came and ravaged us
Caused genocide
look in my eyes
and tell me who you think the savages was ("What Makes")

The trope of the "savage," as Alfred articulates, is commissioned to incite violence in the interest of settler-colonial expansion: "For the violence of conquest you needed a violent opponent, so you created this image of the Native as violent warrior" (79). Waln engages with radical Indigenous resurgence by pinpointing settler colonialism not as an institution of "civilized" ideology but as an institution steeped in violence. He reverses the dehumanizing gaze of savagery by holding "a mirror to settlers, asking them to accept their past and deal with its consequences" (Mays 46). Cree-Métis artist and scholar Emma LaRocque addresses the urgency of interrupting "White North America's image machine," suggesting that artists must "humanize the 'Indian' by, on one hand, denormalizing the 'savage' view, and, on the other, putting forward Native peoples' humanity" (11). Rejecting the *masculindian* and emphatically asserting his agentic self-expression, Waln takes up this call to action.

Waln's music video for his song "AbOriginal" works within the same methodology of critique as "What Makes the Red Man Red" by engaging with the fetishization of the *masculindian*, exposing its production, and then unleashing creative sovereignty. Set against a dark back-



Fig. 1. Waln crowned with feather headdress. Still from "AbOriginal." *YouTube*. With permission from Frank Waln.



Fig. 2. Bottle of alcohol thrust into Waln's arms. Still from "AbOriginal" *YouTube*. With permission from Frank Waln.



Fig. 3. Red handprint on Waln's chest. Still from "AbOriginal." *YouTube*. With permission from Frank Waln.

ground, Waln is stripped of his hoodie and crowned with a Western feather headdress by white hands. Adorned with the headdress, Waln's body representatively aligns with colonial fantasies of the noble savage. With a bottle of alcohol thrust into his arms, Waln transforms into the drunken absentee. His bare chest is slapped by a white hand covered in red paint, leaving a red handprint on his skin; the bloodthirsty warrior is projected onto his body.

Through settler-colonial violence, Waln's body becomes the material terrain where the consequences of racist ideologies are enacted. In her analysis of Waln's track "Hear My Cry," Amsterdam points to how Waln attends to the micropolitics of the racialized body: "Demonstrating an acute awareness that being Native means his body is always on the line, Waln confirms Wolfe's argument that genocide is what makes him a member of the Indian race, and life itself is a risk" (64). As Waln alludes to in his visual representations for "AbOriginal," hypermasculine and colonial simulations instigate disembodiment, disallowing Indigenous peoples from experiencing their bodies as sites of sovereignty. Within the machinations of settler colonialism, the body is a site of contention in which the loss of bodily sovereignty elapses into the loss of political status and the loss of territory. Simpson gestures to the body as the locus of settler-colonial violence: "Attacking Indigenous bodies, the flesh that houses and reproduces the hubs of Indigenous intelligence networks, is strategic and effective in weakening Indigenous attachments to our homelands, in destroying our capacity to reproduce Indigeneity and therefore makes it much easier [to] physically remove Indigenous bodies [from] the land" ("Anger"). The racist assemblages and corporeal markers of the *masculindian* are intended to shame Indigenous men to ensure that the Indigenous subject lacks the emotional and material capital to mobilize against the ideological domination of settler colonialism. Indigenous hip hop, as Amsterdam enunciates, becomes the conduit through which young Indigenous peoples can dispel these affective impositions.

While engaging the visuals of the bloodthirsty warrior, drunk absentee, and noble savage, Waln's voice, layered over these images, declares:

I'm not
 Their noble savage
 doing damage

to their perception of who I am
 Self-destruct when I self-construct my own plan
 of my identity ("AbOriginal")

The subsequent agentive images in the music video depict Waln struggling away from white hands, smashing the bottle on the ground, and discarding the fake headdress onto the floor. This is the enactment of defiant autonomy. Waln refuses for his body to be a site of colonially inflicted shame. In the stripping of his body, Waln's Sun Dance scars are exposed. In *A Recognition of Being*, Anderson cites Ojibway midwife Carol Couchie, who elucidates how men's experiences of the Sun Dance are nested in the feminine and their collective responsibilities to the community: "One of the things that men try to do in the Sun Dance lodge is tear their flesh. This can be compared to the same way a woman will tear her flesh giving birth. The Sun Dance ceremony allows a man to give to the community with total physical exertion" (165). By visually exhibiting his scars, Waln honors his ties to a ceremonial practice that reinvigorates the ethics of relationality between individual and community. Significantly, Waln does not explicitly discuss the Sun Dance in his lyrics, instead relying upon the visual signifiers of the scars to notify culturally knowledgeable viewers of his spiritual ways of knowing. This respects the protocols of the sacred practice while also presencing the way in which his Indigeneity is agentively encoded on his body. The reclamation of self undoes the colonial abjection of Indigenous men. Waln resists the captivity of settler-colonial discourse by killing the *masculindian*. His agentive self-creation moves beyond simulations that rely on projecting tragedy, victimry, or violence onto the *masculindian* subject.

Through refuting the impositions of the *masculindian* simulation, Waln proposes a new mode of being—an "AbOriginal" epistemological and ontological framework. Waln reworks the word "Aboriginal" in the title and lyrics of his song to emphasize the possibilities for crafting viable Indigenous subjectivities. He declares in the chorus, "I got this AB Original soul / I got this AB Original flow" ("AbOriginal"). The word play simultaneously draws attention to Waln's "first-ness" as part of the original peoples of Turtle Island and riffs on the social capital of "originality" in hip hop culture.⁸ This creative punning emphasizes Waln's agency and self-sovereignty but further foregrounds that his "AbOriginal" ontology cannot be relegated to the past, nor can it exist as

a static singularity. This is the enunciation of continuing presence and the declaration of cultural sovereignty. Waln employs rhetorical play to assert the radical newness and inventiveness of his Indigenous identity. His reformatory creative texts interrupt and reorient the Western fantasies of the *masculindian* but do not claim to uncover an Indigenous “reality”; to uncover a “real” would be to return to the disabling discourse of authenticity. Rather, Waln’s creative texts (re)vision new simulations of masculine Indigeneity that are inhabitable and always in the process of creation. His music functions as a reminder that “living, not dying, is an act of defiance” (Amsterdam 64).

In addressing the need for inhabitable subjectivities, Vizenor proposes the new simulation of the postindian. As a simulation, the postindian draws attention to the space where identity is found but never solidifies into a singularity. Vizenor generates the simulation of the postindian as an absence of the simulation of the *indian*. The postindian identifies what is not; it is a refusal of the position of the *indian*. As Vizenor illuminates, “[W]e are the postindians. That says more about who we are not, which is significant in identity politics, and nothing about who we are or might become as postindians” (*Postindian* 84). The postindian is not a fixed identity; instead, it is a processual and elusive verb, refusing finality or enclosure by remaining kinetic. Although the postindian is always in reference to the fetish object of the *indian*, the term refuses and unsettles the fixity demanded by settler colonialism. Turning to how the postindian is a figure of resistance, Vizenor states that the postindian warrior opens the possibilities for decolonial futures: “[T]he postindian warriors of postmodern simulations would undermine and surmount, with imagination and the performance of new stories, the manifest manners of scriptural simulations and ‘authentic’ representations of the tribes in the literature of dominance” (*Manifest* 17).

Within this vein, I propose the term *postmasculindian* by entwining Vizenor’s theorizations of the postindian with McKegney’s examination of the *masculindian*. Through this neologism, I hope to illuminate Waln’s hip hop praxis, which “undermine[s] and surmount[s], with imagination and the performance of new stories,” (Vizenor, *Manifest* 17) the hegemonic toxicity of the *masculindian*. The practice of replacing the untenable subjectivity of the *masculindian* simulation with the viability of the postmasculindian is an act of survivance. The agentive motion of the postmasculindian gestures to the possibility of

discursively (re)crafting and (re)inventing Indigenous masculinities that remain ever-contextualized by the contemporary moment. It cannot be relegated to the past, nor can it exist in stasis. As McKegney asserts, “[I]t is impossible to define traditional Indigenous masculinity in the singular” (“Warriors” 260). The term provides a necessary reminder that Indigenous masculinities are not readily defined, nor are they rooted in “authenticity.” The term is not premised on the “recovery of a mythic ‘traditional’ or ‘authentic’ Indigenous masculinity” (McKegney, “Into the Full” 4). By retaining *masculindian*, the term centers the imbrications of gender and race that still attempt to confine Indigenous men’s inhabitation and performance of healthy masculinity. My intention in mobilizing the postmasculindian is to engage in and elucidate Waln’s sophisticated decolonial praxis through a vocabulary that acknowledges the complexity of his agentive refusals of the *masculindian*. This term honors Waln’s revolutionary artistry.

The term *postmasculindian* cannot be adopted uncritically; this term is entwined with colonial discourse and expressed in the colonizer’s language, and it poses the risk of existing as a nebulous theorization. This term cannot condense and convey the afterlives and ongoing violence of colonial processes, nor does it fully capture the labor of Indigenous men who are embodying and living healthy masculinities. As Craig Womack suggests in his critique of Vizenor’s neological inventions, new terms have the potential to cloud understandings or remain unattuned to real-world concerns rather than clarify or catalyze Indigenous resurgence. Critiquing the perceived value of intensely theoretical knowledge production, Womack states, “Knowledge for knowledge’s sake is not necessarily an end; knowledge is valued in relation to the degree it makes a return to the tribe” (206). The postmasculindian, as a term, does not mount resistance and is not inherently decolonial; it is knowledge for knowledge’s sake if the term is not mobilized to open up dialogue and participation in positive change for liberatory Indigenous futures. Theory that does not remain attuned to lived realities—theory that is not praxis—creates unnecessary noise.

The term is oriented toward and invested in facilitating dialogue on the ways in which Indigenous men are mobilizing against misrepresentations of their subjectivities. Speaking to the silence surrounding Indigenous masculinities and violence, Tlicho writer Richard Van Camp asserts, “[I]f we’re not talking about it, it’s killing us and it’s wounding us and

it's harming us" (189). McKegney's *masculindian* voices what is killing Indigenous men: the white imaginary's misrepresentation of Indigenous masculinities. The postmasculindian continues this urgent conversation, recognizing that while critique is essential, articulating the alternatives that are already in play for Indigenous men is also life sustaining. Discussions of what is killing Indigenous men need to occur in tandem with discussions of how Indigenous men are asserting sovereignty over their lives, their bodies, and their gender expressions. Simpson voices the healing potential of confronting colonial misrepresentations: "The act of naming stereotypes is a commanding space because it brings my attention to the very personalized violence of colonialism on my internal thoughts and beliefs about myself. . . . I have unconsciously internalized these lies, and it provides a chance to speak back" (*As We Have* 85). The *masculindian* is an act of naming; the postmasculindian is the speaking back. The postmasculindian reflects the ways Indigenous artists challenge ongoing racism and visual colonization by reclaiming masculinity as a space of cultural sovereignty and self-determination. The term expresses how conversations of Indigenous men's lived experiences cannot simply center on them as recipients of colonial violence but must also attend to how they are not the sum of these experiences and are, instead, active agents in Indigenous resurgence. In the context of Waln's music, the term's investment in dialogue also honors sampling practices—the incorporation of audio into a new recording—that create sonic exchanges between artists in the hip hop community. Sampling forefronts dialogue, imaginative reconfigurations, call-and-response traditions, and community. Through remixing McKegney's *masculindian* by returning to Vizenor's postindian, the postmasculindian draws on the same creative framework as sampling to forefront the necessity of conversation.

Individual praxis determines the parameters of the postmasculindian, opening up the space for infinite possibilities, including culturally specific gender practices. Creative expression is a unique site for the performance and embodiment of these alternatives because of the mobilization of the imagination. Waln's work validates and honors Indigenous self-expression and autonomous image making, reminding Indigenous youth that they have the power to reject the white imaginary's *masculindian* by asserting their own truths. Waln's music empowers young Indigenous men to talk back to the *masculindian*; his visual

and sonic artistry directs critical attention to the racist white imaginary at the same time that it uses self-determined representations of Indigenous masculinities to assert alternatives to the *masculindian*. Pointing to a more hopeful future, Anishinaabe artist and scholar Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm articulates: “[M]y sons are going to be able to find a wider range of depictions of Indigenous men that will maybe inspire them, influence them to some extent, and teach them both in the Nanabozho way of what to do and what not to do. . . . They’ll have more to draw on than I think Indigenous men have had in the past few generations” (181). The term provides a useful linguistic and conceptual touchstone that speaks to how artists are redefining and expressing Indigenous masculinity for future generations of Indigenous men.

Waln’s work marks the process of creating radically new and inhabitable subjectivities premised on resurgence, resistance, and survivance. His narrative self-creation offers decolonial trajectories by disrupting the singularity of colonial ideology and opening up the new terrains of the postmasculindian subjectivity. Waln narrates this breakthrough, rapping,

Play cultural red rover and I broke the line
 I blew right past it
 raps spew like acid
 Mind of an activist Lakota Sioux assassin (“AbOriginal”)

Waln exceeds the colonial containment of Indigenous identity, illuminating what Cree-Dene scholar Jarrett Martineau and settler scholar Eric Ritskes call “fugitive spaces of indigeneity: in the critical ruptures where normative, colonial categories and binaries break down and are broken open” (iii). Waln breaks open the oppressive space of the *masculindian*, creating lines of flight for Indigenous masculinities.

While Waln reclaims bodily and emotional autonomy for his own well-being by killing the *masculindian*, he situates himself within larger networks of social and communal responsibilities. By declaring himself an “*activist* Lakota Sioux assassin [emphasis added]” (“AbOriginal”), Waln embodies postmasculindian warriorhood. The postmasculindian warrior is a subject whose praxis is oriented toward the ethics of collectivity, reciprocity, and relationality. Waln speaks to a warriorhood that is always conscious of the contemporary conditions of oppression and is underpinned by an ethics of care. He raps,

And so I'm Idle No More rap the plight of the poor
 Cuz educated warriors are vital to war
 And we battling oppression
 got me stressing
 Wondering if I'll ever learn my lesson
 Cuz I can't let me people go ("AbOriginal")

The postmasculindian warriorhood that Waln advances through his lyrics is not aligned with the colonial fantasies of the bloodthirsty warrior. His "educated warriors" employ rhetorical play to dismantle settler-colonial impositions. While colonial fantasies of the warrior emphasize physical prowess, hyperindividualism, and aggression, Waln elucidates the postmasculindian warrior as a subject who fights colonial oppression via lyrical assassinations. By citing Idle No More, Waln situates himself within a specific political collective premised on Indigenous resurgence, a movement that is, significantly, indebted to the leadership of Indigenous women.

Complicating the settler-colonial fetishizations of the bloodthirsty warrior, the drunken absentee, and the noble savage, all of which reinforce individualism, Waln advances a subjectivity centered on community and collectivity. Liz Przybylski points to the importance of collectivity in Waln's work: "Waln's music expresses a commitment to community" (7). Speaking to the power of hip hop to forge relationality, Waln states, "Hip Hop is about family and community and one's place and responsibility in that community" ("Hip Hop"). Colonialism depends on hyperindividualism as a methodology for breaking kinship and community responsibilities. Crafting simulations focused on intensive individualism, colonialism severs individuals from communities. Through his lyrics, Waln posits that relationality is integral to Indigenous ways of being in and with the world. Kinship is a vital life force for continued anticolonial praxis. Waln states,

I got this pain I can't shake
 ties to my people I can't break
 Got this history in my blood
 got my tribe that shows me love
 So when I rise
 you rise
 come on let's rise like ("AbOriginal")



Fig. 4. Indigenous collective. Still from "AbOriginal." *You Tube*. With permission from Frank Wahn.

Collectivity, as Waln establishes by sighting/citing community, is an essential facet of urgent political practices of agitation and disruption that unsettle colonial logics. This ethics of relation assists in emancipatory projects that facilitate rising beyond the constrictions of colonial oppression. Alfred gestures to the necessity of community: “The way to confront [the stereotype of the *masculindian*] . . . is to put the image of the Native male back into its proper context, which is in the family. . . . [I]f you put the person back into their proper context there are responsibilities that come with that, as opposed to just serving the one responsibility, which is as the foil for white conquest in North America” (79). Indigenous resurgence necessitates (re)imagining the role of Indigenous men within communities, as evidenced by the way Waln populates his “AbOriginal” music video with children, women, male kinship collectives, elders, and families.

Through mobilizing imagery of Indigenous collectives, Waln resists the hyperindividualism of settler-colonial power structures and instead demonstrates the significance of kinship for Indigenous resurgence. The collectivity that Waln illuminates situates his music not as an individual performance of creative expression but as part of shared declarations of resistance that are collectively shaped by and embedded in Indigenous kinship. Kinship provides resurgent tension to the negative affectivity of shame and internalized hatred that proliferate from colonial systems of physiological and psychic violence. This points to the crucial ethic of relationality needed to undermine colonial systems for alternative futures. As Amsterdam asserts, “Through music, Waln depicts the reality that he can, and must, rely on himself and his community to build the world they want” (67).

Through the imaginative, affective, and transformative vehicle of hip hop, Waln “talks back” to the necropolitical workings of settler colonialism. Black scholar and philosopher bell hooks articulates that talking back is the “gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible” (9). By talking back to the material and discursive violence of the *masculindian*, Waln champions the possibility of “new growth” for Indigenous masculinity. Waln’s music forges pathways of return and reemergence that recuperate the spirit of Indigeneity and counter the violence of settler-colonial scripts of premature death. “My Stone,” “What Makes the Red Man Red,” and “AbOriginal” practice survivance by disrupting the “Truisms” of the colonial fantasies of the



Fig. 5. Indigenous elder and child. Still from "AbOriginal." *YouTube*. With permission from Frank Waln.

masculindian to create new postmasculindian truths. Waln's creative contention with colonialism is grounded in the social reality and lived experiences of Indigenous men while also engaging with the discursive and imaginative practices of decolonial knowledge. His hip hop poetics reaffirm the radical and restorative potential of Indigenous masculinities not as limited by colonial conceptions of the *masculindian* but as a postmasculindian ethics of care, kinship, and reciprocity. Delinking Indigenous masculinity from settler-colonial fantasies, Waln opens up the inhabitable terrains of postmasculindian subjectivity via his "Ab Original flow."

SARAH KENT is a settler doctoral candidate in the Department of English at Queen's University, situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. Her dissertation employs affect theory to attend to subversive intimacies that unsettle and exceed settler-colonial structures. Her research interests span critical race theory, social justice praxis, and theories of embodied knowledge.

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NOTES

1. For statistics related to the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in carceral institutions, see the Government of Canada's Office of the Correctional Investigator's final report, "Spirit Matters: Aboriginal People and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act." The Office of the Correctional Investigator states, "The high rate of incarceration for Aboriginal peoples has been linked to systemic discrimination and attitudes based on racial or cultural prejudice, as well as economic and social disadvantage, substance abuse and intergenerational loss, violence and trauma."

In the introduction to their seminal collection, *Indigenous Men and Masculinities*, Robert Innes and Kim Anderson provide statistical data related to the horrifying rates of violence in the lives of Indigenous men.

For scholarship on the connection between police brutality and the colonial

devaluation of Indigenous life, see Sherene Razack's article "Timely Deaths: Medicalizing the Deaths of Aboriginal People in Police Custody."

2. Womack asserts, "If one is always reacting *against* Eurocentrism, then Europe is still the center" (242). With Womack's words in mind, I acknowledge that the term *postmasculindian* remains tethered to the settler-produced fantasy of the *masculindian* through its very nominality. The "post-" denotes a persistent relationship with colonial ideology, but it is also a forward movement.

3. Womack critiques Vizenor's mobilization of high theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism as knowledge production that is distanced from the praxis-fueled, Native literary nationalism, which is, as Womack asserts, "part of sovereignty" (72). Rather than detached from what is at stake for Indigenous subjects, I assert that Vizenor's theorizations are powerfully political. While Vizenor employs postmodern and poststructuralist methodologies, his theorizations of the *indian* are anchored to the material terrains of Indigenous lived experience. Vizenor renders visible how the *indian* contributes to Indigenous disembodiment and dispossession. The *indian* oscillates between victimry and savagery, both of which affirm the perceived need for Eurocentric paternalistic interventions to assimilate and civilize the *indian* or to enact violent erasure. His deployment of new language illuminates and expresses the complexity of Indigenous experience.

4. I wish to emphasize that Indigenous men do not interact with the *masculindian* as a theoretical framework; it is a lived experience, made real in their lives by settler colonialism.

5. While more hopeful futures appear on the horizon by imagining gender expressions that exceed the confines of classification, a movement that abandons masculinity does not yet reflect the realities of the contemporary moment for Indigenous men. Exploring Indigenous masculinities, as Innes and Anderson point out, reveals that settler heteropatriarchy does not have to monopolize the possibilities for this identity expression.

6. Although the genre is not immune from the toxicity of patriarchal and capitalist colonialism, hip hop holds the potential for unsettling hegemonic ideologies because of its affective histories, which are tied to decolonial struggles and resistance.

7. There are also a number of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and queer hip hop artists who merit acknowledgment for their powerful artistic expressions. Nehiyaw artist and scholar Lindsay "Eekwol" Knight, Nuxalk and Onondaga artist JB the First Lady, and Musqueam artist Miss Christie Lee engage in language revitalization, cultural empowerment, and celebrations of Indigenous feminisms that counter colonial fantasies that attempt to reduce Indigenous women into objects of colonialism's heteropatriarchal gaze. Two-Spirit artists such as Gabriel Guiboche (Anishinaabe), also known as Strife Asaakezis, and Angel Haze (Cherokee) are creating powerful anthems that honor Two-Spirit subjectivity.

8. Amsterdam engages in the same creative wordplay as Waln to develop a new framework for Indigenous hip hop, identifying "(Ab)originality: a style of being both first and fresh while refusing to be anything other than foremost" (54).

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Revitalization Strategies in Gaspar Pedro González's *A Mayan Life*

REGINALD DYCK

It all began when the gods inscribed their great signs on the stelae of time.
It was on the day Thirteen Ajaw.

Gaspar Pedro González, *A Mayan Life*, 5

The opening of Gaspar Pedro González's (Q'anjob'al Maya) novel *A Mayan Life* takes place in a cosmic context that unites nature, the supreme Ajaw, or Lord, other spirits, and humans in a common life.¹ With fox-howl omens and "specters with unpleasant faces," the material and spiritual worlds are stirred by the birth of Lwin, the novel's protagonist. His night-shattering cry links present life with the ancestors. The timing is propitious, according to the *txolq'in*, or ceremonial calendar (234–35). However, Maya life becomes increasingly disrupted by outside forces, including the genocidal Guatemalan civil war.

Although first published in 1992 as part of the Indigenous response to the Columbian quincentennial, *A Mayan Life* was completed in the late 1970s as the civil war was intensifying in the Guatemalan highlands, where most Maya lived.² It offers a repository of ethnographic insights into Maya communal practices. These have been sustained because the village of Jolomk'u has been partially isolated from Guatemalan society. However, Guatemalan governmental structures, particularly the military, become an increasingly intrusive menace as the novel develops with Lwin growing into adulthood and community leadership. The oppositional guerrilla movement also has a significant impact as characters become caught in the deadly crossfire.

Two Maya responses to the war developed. One was to join with the guerrillas in their struggle for political rights, particularly related to land, labor, and economics. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchú Tum (Quiché Maya) became the most prominent activist within this group. The other response was to reject the leftist guerrillas and instead focus on peaceful efforts for cultural rights. González, a public intellectual and representative of the second group, is a key leader

GASPAR PEDRO GONZÁLEZ

A MAYAN LIFE



YAX TE' BOOKS

Fig. 1. Front cover of the English edition of *A Mayan Life*. The top glyph represents Ajaw, or Lord; below is the Maya numeral thirteen.

working to preserve Maya languages, spiritual practices, traditional law, and other aspects of culture.³ These conflicted responses to the civil war have in turn shaped the two ideological tendencies within the Maya Revitalization Movement (or Maya Movement), popular rights and cultural rights, that developed momentum during the war.

A Mayan Life depicts the revitalization practices of one fictional village as it negotiates the movement's two tendencies for change. Although its author is associated with the cultural wing of the Maya Movement, the novel asserts that cultural revitalization cannot stand alone. It demonstrates the urgency of both if Maya peoples are to claim a distinct and proper place within Guatemala. Villagers find that they must struggle to achieve the economic and political goals of the guerrillas in order to sustain their cultural ideals. Whether depicting the country's civil war, Lwin's education, or strategies for village development, the novel works to reconcile these two tendencies for change as it presents both a multifaceted testimony of oppression and resistance and a manifesto for change.

The first section of this article, "A Troubled Peace, a Devastating War," provides cultural, economic, and political contexts that shape the village of Jolomk'u in its struggle for self-determination. It explicates the opening chapter's depiction of traditional life as it has been maintained. This provides the basis for understanding the postwar revitalization efforts that conclude the novel. The second section, "Two Revitalization Strategies," clarifies the two strategies that the novel in effect debates and finally reconciles.

The third section, "The Education of a Leader and a Village," narrows the focus by analyzing the political and cultural dilemma of Ladino education. Lwin's political awakening begins as he enters the town school, an institution for Ladinos, the non-Indigenous numerical minority that dominates Guatemalan political, economic, and judicial structures.⁴ This section argues that Lwin must transform his Ladino education so that he can guide villagers as they recreate a new Maya model for a postwar, globalized world. The fourth section, "The Transformation of a Village (and a Nation)," elucidates the community's basis for successful revitalization while also identifying the model's limitations: as the village of Jolomk'u gains political and social autonomy, the traditional cultural and spiritual life presented in the opening chapter is in danger

of being left behind. The novel's concluding chapter is then read as a narrative manifesto or model for Maya revitalization.

By analyzing the ways González negotiates the political and cultural challenges in creating a revitalized community and by explaining historical contexts shaping the conflicts that community faces, this article argues that *A Mayan Life* is an important intervention in the Maya Revitalization Movement. The conflicts and solutions the novel presents are relevant not only to Guatemala but to Indigenous struggles throughout the hemisphere.

A TROUBLED PEACE, A DEVASTATING WAR

The opening chapters of *A Mayan Life* establish a problematic common to Indigenous writing: the struggle to sustain a living tradition under adverse sociopolitical conditions. For the Q'anjob'al Maya villagers described in the novel, a long history of Ladino exploitation and discrimination has left them impoverished materially, psychologically, and spiritually. Although their relative isolation allows them to continue many traditional practices, the Guatemalan civil war increasingly disrupts their communal lives. Villagers become inescapably enmeshed in the devastating conflict between the army and leftist guerrillas. This context deeply shapes Maya efforts to revitalize their community politically and culturally.

The novel's opening depicts the divinations and readings of the *txolq'in*, or ceremonial calendar (sometimes called the Sacred Calendar or Almanac), that guide characters through courtship, marriage, house building, other significant life decisions, and finally death. Together with the solar calendar (used for planting and harvesting) and many other calendars, the *txolq'in* shapes Maya spiritual and material lives.⁵ Each of its 260 days has its own energy and special connection to the earth. Thus, parents decide when a child should be conceived so that they will have the right energy for the occupation or role that child will follow. The choice is not merely personal; the needs of the community are foremost, according to Fidel Xinico of the Center for Global Education (CGE) at Augsburg University, Minneapolis.⁶ Lwin's birth date is Thirteen Ajaw, the right day for a leader to be born.

From the beginning of the novel, however, the integrated cosmos represented by the calendar is threatened. Early on, the narrator omi-

nously notes that “Ajaw was aging among the pines and that his hands had lost the ability to sculpt life on indecipherable stelae” (5). If Lwin’s birth comes on “a night of a thousand centuries of history” (5), it is also part of a modern crisis all too common for the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, a moment when the traditional cosmovision or world-view comes to seem ineffective for guiding people through new material conditions. The challenge for the novel and its protagonist is to imagine a plan for revitalization within these conditions.

Even as characters practice Maya lifeways, González shows the increasing limits on their ability to shape their own lives. Because Guatemala’s Western Highland region, the setting of the novel, had historically been remote from centers of power, communities there could sustain Maya practices relatively free from outside control. Even in the 1950s “Maya communities . . . lacked roads, electricity, radio, telephones, TV, and the like” (Montejo, *Maya* 140). However, this relative isolation breaks down as the civil war intensifies. Also challenging the community’s integrity is the fact that the highland Maya population had increased, and so adequate land was no longer available for subsistence farming. As a result, as chapter 3 shows, many Maya had to become wage laborers in the coastal *fincas*, or plantations (Grandin 223).⁷ Intensified national conflicts finally led to Guatemala’s thirty-seven-year civil war (1960–96) as guerrilla groups mounted direct challenges to dominant power structures. The war inevitably involved Maya peoples and changed their communal lives.

Chapter 12 opens with the storm clouds prophesied by the diviner had arrived in Jolomk’u: “The sky was black, loaded with terror and chills that penetrated everywhere” (201). Leading up to the civil war that is coming to the highlands are many incidents of Ladino exploitation and strategic oppression. These include rural police abuse (92), loan fraud (98), discrimination at school (see below), and economic exploitation (124, 144, *passim*). The narrator describes farmers as “drowning in a sea of desperation” as costs rise and corruption “at the very heart of the country’s economic system” intensifies (201). The terror of war first grasps hold of Lwin when, as a young man, he is nearly abducted by the military. When soldiers come to a fiesta to kidnap “recruits,” the community is devastated: “They had come down for a bit of relaxation and amusement. They returned silent, defeated, anguished, cut off from family members, no longer physically and spiritually whole” (177–78).

As Guatemala's civil war shifted its focus to the Western Highlands in the early 1970s, according to Victor Ayala (CGE), the military disruption of village life became traumatic, deadly, and inescapable (201–05). By the end of the war, over two hundred thousand people, mostly civilians, had been killed or disappeared, and 440 villages had been destroyed (Commission for Historical Clarification 1, 25).⁸ Maya people bore the brunt of what the Commission for Historical Clarification called a genocide, part of a “strategically planned policy” known or approved by “the highest authorities of the State” (105, 120–24).⁹ “These horrors of armed conflict deeply shocked and traumatized modern Maya. In many instances the violence eroded economic, social, and political structures, altering the worldview, community life, and traditions of many Maya” (Molwaky-Poz 29). Ceremonies had to be hidden in many regions, and elders were killed (Commission for Historical Clarification 62).¹⁰ This is the devastation that the Maya community in the novel must confront.

“Moved by desperation, many [Maya] took up arms,” the narrator explains (201). Yet readers may be surprised and puzzled to learn that most did not actively support or sympathize with the opposition guerrilla forces. They are described as “[t]he tentacles of other political systems [that] took advantage of the situation.” The narrator further explains, “The Maya not only paid a very high price of many dead, but had no clear understanding of the reasons for the war” (203–04). Victor Montejo (Jakaltek Maya), past Guatemalan congressman and minister of peace, explains the position of González and many others: “The majority did not care about the revolution, and they were afraid of both armed groups” (*Maya* 91). The guerrilla movement's goals were “valid,” but because they focused on class struggle, they failed to address Maya cultural concerns and thus did not gain Indigenous communities' support. From his experiences in the highlands during the late 1970s, Montejo observed that “the Marxists considered the Indigenous Maya to be stubborn, weak people who needed to become revolutionaries” (164). Similarly, González presents the guerrillas negatively, their efforts not potentially liberating but rather disrupting village life (186). Montejo asserts that this was the most common view (91).

Nevertheless, not all Maya leaders have offered a negative analysis of the guerrillas.¹¹ Rigoberta Menchú Tum, for example, called their actions “a just war” (161). And Montejo himself stated, “I want to make clear that the role of the guerrillas in fighting the monstrous Guatemala-

lan army is a positive historical event" (*Maya* 100). Participation in the guerrilla movement did help Maya peoples better understand the structures that dominated and marginalized them even if the revolutionary solutions were unsatisfactory: "[T]he revolutionary movement politicized the masses" (Montejo, *Maya* 165). Much of this awareness is articulated in the final chapter of *A Mayan Life* but without the ideological framework of the guerrillas.

These two perspectives on Guatemala's devastating civil war shaped Maya postwar strategies for revitalization. Some groups called for continued efforts to create structural change through land reform and political rights. Others rejected this confrontational approach and worked for cultural revitalization. As Lwin begins to help the villagers rebuild their lives on a new basis, he states unequivocally that "the development of peoples is not achieved by passing out weapons . . . but rather allowing them access to a liberating education that isn't exclusively for the elites" (219). If the novel rejects guerrilla action as a means of achieving self-determination, however, it does recognize that cultural projects inevitably must confront economic and political injustices in order to succeed. If the village rejects violence, it does engage the political goals of the guerrilla movement.

TWO REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES

Although the civil war did not fundamentally alter power structures within Guatemala, the crisis did create possibilities for change. What developed was the Maya Revitalization Movement. Rejecting the state's assimilationist goals, leaders worked to create "a major redefinition of Maya identity through subsuming traditional community-based allegiances to a unified pan-Maya culture" (Fischer 51). One of the chapter titles in Emilio del Valle Escalante's (K'iche Maya) 2009 book, *Maya Nationalisms and Postcolonial Challenges in Guatemala*, offers a definition of the movement: "From the 'Indian' as Problem to the Indian as a Political and Social Agent."¹²

The debate over how to respond to the war extended to postwar strategies for revitalization. Beginning in the late 1970s and firmly establishing itself in the 1990s as the Peace Accords were signed, the Maya Movement "developed two ideological tendencies." It is important to note, however, that the two are both "complementary, and at times

contradictory” (Valle Escalante 4–5).¹³ The activism of the popular rights or popular Left group (*Maya populares*) continues to use a class analysis to challenge “economic exploitation and political repression” (Warren 107). It advocates direct political action that focuses on land distribution and unjust labor practices.¹⁴ Central to the cultural rights group (*Maya culturales*) has been language revitalization, explains Maya scholar Raxché (Demetrio Rodríguez Guajan) (76). Emphasizing the “vindication of indigenous cultural specificities,” the culturalist tendency also focuses on maintaining traditional dress and religious practices, as well as challenging racism (Valle Escalante 4). González has been an intellectual leader of the Maya Movement (Valle Escalante 16; Montejo, *Maya* 159). Even as he emphasizes cultural revitalization, he also unites the two ideological tendencies, popular and cultural, when he describes his novel as “a staunch critique of the social conditions” and “a testimony to the exploitation and marginalization that is rampant across Mayan society” (González, “Self Determination”).¹⁵

One reason the movement has focused on cultural rights more than land reform is because in a violently dangerous country this issue provided a safer form of activism (Warren 115). Also, because Maya people continue to be largely excluded from political power, they are not in an effective position to address the issues of land reform and economic exploitation (Arias, *Taking* 174). Lwin tries to explain to his mother, Lotaxh, that the nation of Guatemala has refused to “gather the scattered fragments and begin to mould a new society with brown and white hands.” Thus Maya people must “build on the foundations of our own identity, our own patterns, our own style of progress and development” (117). Lotaxh cannot understand her son and accuses him of dreaming (118). In a sense, that is exactly what he is doing and what González is doing as he concludes the novel with an idealized vision of political and cultural revitalization. However, because the novel is deeply suspicious of the Guatemalan government’s desire to change policies, it presents solutions that are local rather than national.

THE EDUCATION OF A LEADER AND A VILLAGE

Although the novel opens with the community’s cultural integrity largely intact, it is clearly under political threat. The first chapter orients readers to a particular culture and cosmovision, but then chapter

2 introduces the economically exploitative Ladino encroachments. Confronting this ongoing threat, villagers face the important dilemma of Ladino education: some young people must acquire this learning for the sake of community survival, yet it is transformative in potentially destructive ways. The scene in which Mekel tries to register Lwin's birth and is cheated by the town secretary, as well as a later market encounter in which his wife, Lotaxh, has the same experience (14–17, 61), prepares readers to understand why Jolomk'u needs someone with a Ladino/Spanish education. Yet González depicts this not as the community's idea but as the assistant mayor's; this suggests its dangers. Because the dominant economic system needs Maya labor and agricultural products, a few Maya children are offered the education necessary to facilitate the unequal economic relations. Education helps reproduce the relations of the marketplace by creating in Maya students a sense of inferiority, their "[s]ubmission and unconditional acceptance" of their status (107).

Nevertheless, González has created a character capable of subverting the purposes of his Ladino education and using it for the benefit of the community. Lwin stands out because of his readiness to think dialectically as he brings together personal reflection, cultural awareness, and structural analysis. It is one of the skills he has developed through his school experience (113–14). He finds himself an outsider and wants to understand why. As the understanding he gains begins to free him from a sense of inferiority, he develops the confidence to speak out against those in power. Also, the authoritarian educational practices he experiences prepare him to develop alternative participatory methods of teaching and leadership. Thus Lwin transforms his education into a tool for revitalization. Important to his resistance of Ladino hegemony is his decision eight years after starting school to end his formal education (113). Chapter 7, in which this occurs, is pivotal for the novel. Through Lwin's reflection on his experiences, González begins to present a strategy for both political and cultural revitalization. Lwin explains to his mother that the struggle against Ladino dominance is fundamentally psychosocial; economic injustice may be the cause of the struggle, but the first line of resistance must be recovering cultural confidence.

It is worth noting that although only Maya boys attend school in town, both women and men play essential roles in the community during the first half of the novel. According to Victor Ayala and Ricardo Sulugui (CGE), Maya cosmovision and social structures, including gen-

der roles, are based on a complementary duality. Within this duality, women characters play central roles in the novel's opening chapters. At Lwin's birth Lotaxh shows more foresight and strength than her husband (6–9). Her competency is further depicted when Mekel leaves for the *finca* and she becomes responsible for the family and farm (57–59). However, when Lwin enters school and his personal life and reflections become central, the novel's focus shifts away from everyday communal life, and women characters become less significant. For example, Lwin's wife, Malin, never becomes the presence in the novel that Lotaxh is.

Similarly, the role of elders is affected by changes in the village. When a Ladino education becomes necessary for making sense of the modern world, the elders' and spiritual leaders' guidance becomes less central. In developing a revitalization plan, Lwin does not consult diviners, as his parents regularly did.¹⁶ Lwin acknowledges that "our cultural values, languages and our clothing are dying out more each day" (214), but his summary of the community's problems focuses much more emphatically on political issues: inadequate agricultural and craft production, failure of the educational system, lack of adequate technology, nonexistent basic services, and others (214–16).¹⁷ As Lwin centralizes leadership and community revitalization progresses, the roles of women and elders are considerably reduced. In positive and negative ways, both the village and Lwin are transformed by the necessity of Ladino education.

As Lwin gains authority, he must find ways to lead the community away from its passive hopelessness to a new empowering understanding of their situation. This is both a cultural and a political effort. His strategy is to first help villagers recognize their problems as rooted in unjust structures rather than as individual dilemmas. The next step is to understand how these structures work. As Lwin helps them achieve this, community members must formulate and then enact solutions that sustain their vision of themselves as Maya and offer alternative forms of modernization. They focus on developing the next generation. Among their actions, they establish a school that is also a community development center (221). "Literacy passed from being a means of alienation and instrument of exploitation to an instrument of progress . . . [and] self-understanding" (222). Also, because past experiences have shown the damage to both their self-respect and self-determination when outsiders impose change (25), villagers decide to control and limit the participation of outside experts while still accepting the usefulness of

their role (221). Lwin is effective in helping villagers develop these new plans for modernization because of his experiences interacting with the increasingly globalized world.

Lwin is described as an organic leader, helping members of the community create plans that arise from their own experiences (217–24). Arturo Arias observes that “without explicitly naming his guerrilla affiliation, Lwin ends up as a successful grassroots organizer, similar to many CUC [Committee for Peasant Unity] activists of the late 1970s.” The CUC was “the major peasant mass organization at the peak of the civil war” (Arias, *Taking* 72, 74). Yet Arias explains that “in the text, the entire initiative is Lwin’s. He does not follow the leadership of radicalized priests, veteran Ladino organizers, or member of the EGP (Guerrilla Army of the Poor), as many CUC members did” (72). Because of González’s commitment to the culturalist wing of the movement and his suspicion of the guerrilla movement’s disregard for Maya culture, we are not surprised that Lwin works independently of outside organizations. Yet González’s analysis of problems and his recognition of the need for unified action support Arias’s claim for an implicit connection between Lwin and the CUC. Leadership does not develop in a vacuum even if connections go unacknowledged, Arias is arguing. González and his protagonist reject the confrontational strategies of the CUC, but they share important aspects of their goals: material, structural, class-based, and human rights–centered change. Only the scale is smaller: the village rather than the nation. In this way, *A Mayan Life* engages key goals from the popular Left and the culturalist tendencies within the Revitalization Movement. This integration is emphasized in the novel’s conclusion.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF A VILLAGE (AND A NATION)

Just before Lwin’s death in the concluding chapter, González presents a transformed community. González gives Lwin the last words of the novel: “Let . . . there . . . not . . . be . . . any . . . group . . . that . . . gets . . . left . . . behind” (236). As a quotation from the *Popol Vuh*, this plea emphasizes the importance of remaining grounded in Maya spirituality. It was also a CUC slogan (Arias, *Taking* 74).¹⁸ This usage gives political significance to the quotation. Although Lwin acts without the support of outside organizations as he mobilizes the Jolomk’u community, his basic effort is to help villagers transform local cultural, social, and

economic structures through concerted rather than individual action. While acknowledging the structural factors causing their poverty, Lwin gives greater emphasis to the resulting internal devastation. To challenge this, Lwin's speech on creating change places the villagers' fate in their own hands.¹⁹ Lwin's vision is an inspiring utopian strategy of cultural and political renewal that is played out in the novel's conclusion. Yet limitations on the village's transformation can be seen.

Significantly, "the darkness of the village" ends when electrification comes. This allows the villagers to leave behind their candles and pitch-pine torches (221–23). There is no room for nostalgia in this modernization project. Neither is there much room, at least at this point, for Maya spirituality. For example, concern for the children focuses on "their intellectual, psychological and social development" (220). No mention is made of their spiritual needs. The celebration of Maya ceremonies is mentioned (223); however, the ritual calendar, central in the opening chapters, does not guide the villagers' actions. Scientific knowledge and experiential learning are what count (221).

These are observations rather than critiques of this concluding narrative manifesto for political and cultural revitalization. In analyzing González's strategy, Arturo Arias rightly emphasizes the importance of community agency, arguing that the novel depicts a sustained Maya cosmovision "as a will to become constituted as subjects through an agency process permeated by the community's cultural values" (*Taking* 75). The novel's conclusion suggests that because of centuries of cultural devastation, spiritual healing can only be effective as the people gain a basic level of security, confidence, and material well-being. Vilma Poz (K'iche' Maya), in explaining the experience of one Maya community, provides a historical example of the development Lwin and his community experience:

During the period of repression we organized ourselves. We studied and developed ourselves culturally and politically in these organizations. We became more conscious and experienced a new solidarity among ourselves. We recognized a new importance of what we had to do; it was not only cultural or political. It was to do with something deeper. We knew it was spiritual. We began to recognize that Ajq'ijab' [spiritual leaders who discern the calendars]

had an important role. *We also understood that it wasn't time yet.*
(qtd. in Molwaky-Poz 29, emphasis added)

For González's village, present work is focused on material conditions.²⁰ Yet his inclusion of an appendix, "A Note on the Mayan Numerals and the Mayan Calendar," suggests that González has a similar understanding as Molwaky-Poz. And the place of spirituality in the process of Maya revitalization is not yet settled. In his history and definition of the Maya Movement, former Guatemalan vice minister for education and a leading Maya public intellectual Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil (Kaqchikel Maya) states that the movement is "secular and democratic." Yet he adds that "Maya spirituality is part of its culture and a source of resistance" (Hale 16; Cojtí Cuxil, "Pan-Maya" 514). The tension between these two comments represents the ongoing process of revitalization *A Mayan Life* implies.

In the final chapters, Jolomk'u is again isolated, but in a way that is different from the isolation depicted in the opening. The contrast is part of the novel's thematic strategy. Because González imagines a community powerful enough to isolate itself from wartime and postwar national politics, the village has considerable agency as it enacts a vision for itself and only then establishes limited but necessary relationships with the nation and the world. The actual situation for Guatemalan Maya peoples is inevitably more complex. And the Ladino-dominated governmental and economic relations that González depicts in the novel's early chapters remain unaddressed by the community.²¹

If the last chapter centers on local conditions, the novel is not oblivious to the national context in which Maya revitalization must take place. Earlier in the novel, Lwin explains that the Ladino education he received has failed to promote national unity. Consequently, Maya people must take the initiative to "build on the foundation of our own identity" not for separatist purposes but rather to gain "full, conscious, and reflective participation" (117–18). Lwin says he is ready to defend the idea of the nation, but only on a new basis. "I hope someday," he states, "we can establish objectives and common goals for equal opportunity, without some superior to others, and work together for progress" (184).

Lwin's concerns are relevant for the Americas: "The central and unresolved question remains that of how to develop a multicultural state that can effectively tackle social exclusion" (Sieder, introduction 15). Achiev-

ing full social inclusion requires Maya self-determination, explains Cojtí Cuxil: “The Maya must be permitted to create a balance between traditional and modern as they modernize their cultures” (“Politics” 28). His essay “The Politics of Maya Revindication” provides a list of human rights that must be respected in order for Maya people to achieve self-determination within the nation of Guatemala. He includes the right to cultural and territorial autonomy based on linguistic regions (“Politics” 31). Maya leader Delfina Mux Caná, past Guatemalan vice minister of women’s issues, emphasizes other issues: “Plurality and tolerance for cultural diversity will have a merely decorative function unless all these issues are addressed [“oppression, discrimination, racism, and social inequality”] alongside plans for the economic, political, and social development of Indigenous peoples. Only then can we build a nation and a state under equal and just conditions” (qtd. in Casaús Arzú 162). Rigoberto Quemé Chay (Quiché Maya)—two-term mayor of Guatemala’s second largest city, Quetzaltenango, presidential candidate, and “highly respected intellectual and politician” (Casaús Arzú 157)—argues that addressing these issues will involve fundamental change for Guatemala: “[F]or the Mayan culture Mother Earth is sacred and man is part of nature, and one can understand why we claim that the complete integration of the Mayas—with all their values and forms of organization—at the level of the state will lay the foundation for a new structure of society that is the precondition for harmonious and environmentally sound development” (30).

This vision of national unity that these Maya leaders present and that Lwin explains, however, is absent as the novel concludes. Lwin’s shift in vision may reflect Maya leaders’ distrust of the Guatemalan state. It also indirectly supports the views of some leaders, particularly Cojtí Cuxil, who argue for autonomy. Maya people have a right to sovereignty, he states, while at the same time recognizing that present conditions do not allow for complete autonomy (Casaús Arzú 153). *A Mayan Life* envisions a practical autonomy on the local level as a village takes significant though partial steps toward cultural and political revitalization.

A CAUTIONARY ADDENDUM TO A UTOPIAN VISION

After a long while, he died.

The day was Thirteen Ajaw. (226)

The novel's final chapter begins with a one-sentence return to the calendar and the coming again of Lwin's special day as the ritual calendar completes its fifty-two-year cycle. Lwin is born and dies according to this calendar, a final reminder of the necessary "unity of spiritual and material development" (Raxché 76). Only in the face of death does Lwin "fix his gaze on the infinite" (223). In his delirium Lwin also reminds us of the past, which seems forgotten in the process of village transformation. The trauma returns as he remembers the abuse and humiliation of his Ladino education and the terror caused by the army. In response to these memories, Lwin speaks his final line about not leaving anyone behind (225–26). Not only does this line reference the Maya cosmivision of the *Popol Vuh* and the rallying cry of the CUC, it is also a cautionary addendum to a utopian vision. *A Mayan Life* cautions that revitalization dreaming needs to be tempered with an awareness of the real danger of exclusion, which can threaten the movement. This was already noted above in relation to women and elders. Ideals can easily create new insiders and outsiders and thus new hierarchies potentially corrosive of community.

Those readers with a grasp of North American Native history and contemporary conditions can, while recognizing differences, find instructive similarities to the Maya situation the novel presents. The novel has many possible uses, including helping us deepen our hemispheric understanding of Indigenous America. Many Indigenous nations and peoples face the challenge of integrating political, economic, cultural, and spiritual strategies for self-determination; of sustaining Native spirituality under difficult material conditions; of developing leadership that effectively confronts contemporary problems while honoring tradition in practice; and of maintaining languages and cultures while participating in national and global structures. González ends with a message of inclusion with multiple resonances: "Let . . . there . . . not . . . be . . . any . . . group . . . that . . . gets . . . left . . . behind" (236).

REGINALD DYCK, English professor at Capital University, has taught *A Mayan Life* in Native American and Latin American literature courses. His previous essays focus on Samson Occom, Greg Sarris, Louise Erdrich, Simon Ortiz, Pedro Gaspar González, and pedagogical strategies. His present project is *Modern Native Literature as Experiential Theology*.

NOTES

1. References to the novel in the text are made parenthetically with only the page number. The novel is available through Yax Te' Books (www.yaxtebooks.info).

2. The novel was first published in Spanish. Its English translation was published in 1995. A year later the bilingual Spanish/Q'anjob'al edition became the first novel published in a Maya language and one of the first Maya language works written since the Spanish invasion (see Dyck). For a biography of the author, as well as a history of the development and publication of *A Mayan Life*, see Arias, *Recovering* 131–34. *A Mayan Life* has so far received limited in-depth critical attention. Along with the works of Arias and the above-mentioned essay, two dissertations by Gail Ament and Hana Muzika Kahn focus in part on the novel.

3. Unlike Africa, Asia, and parts of Europe, ethnic-based organizing is relatively new to Latin America. Since the 1970s organizations and movements have developed in Guatemala and throughout Latin America that call for “group rights and ethnic self-determination” in addition to the demands for equal inclusion that were made by earlier class- and labor-based organizations. Indigenous groups throughout Latin America are making “claims to land, autonomous juridical spheres, and the right to maintain ethnonational identities distinct from, but formative of, a multinational state” (Yashar 3–5). The demands of the Guatemalan Pan-Maya Movement have been moderate compared to Indigenous movements in countries such as Bolivia and Ecuador (Grandin et al., “Maya” 503).

4. Raxché notes that when he refers to Ladinos, he mainly means their leaders (88). In the novel, this distinction is only implied (183). Victor Montejo also makes the point that not all Ladinos are part of the elite (*Maya* 72). His chapter “Toward a Maya History of Guatemala” provides a broad historical context for Ladino domination of Guatemalan economic and political structures (*Voices* 26–41). The novel itself offers no basis for class solidarity with poor Ladinos.

5. Miguel León-Portilla observes, “The Maya of Central America were masters in the art of measuring time since their days of Classic splendor—centuries 2 to 9 A.D.” (3–4). For further explanation of the Maya calendar, see “A Note on Mayan Numerals and the Mayan Calendar” at the end of *A Mayan Life* and León-Portilla, David Drew, or Dennis Tedlock. For an account by a Maya author, see González's *13 B'aktun*.

6. This information was provided by Fidel Xinico (Kaqchikel Maya), leader of the Center for Global Education (CGE) 2010 Travel Seminar, “Education for Decolonization.” During the seminar I met a range of Guatemalan leaders and citizens, both Maya and Ladino. I have occasionally referred to or quoted them in the text. All translations were done by Xinico. Comments are from my notes.

7. Maya peoples are integral to Guatemalan economic production (Raxché 81) on a distinctly exploitative basis. “In Guatemala the state and its security forces—from the whole Army to every last gun man for hire—guarantee that the labor force remains docile in order to meet the demands of an agro-export economy” (Menchú, “Weaving” 47). The land crisis experienced by Meckel and others is part of a national strategy going back to the nineteenth century to insure cheap seasonal workers for the *fincas* during harvest times.

8. The numbers refer to sections in the document's "Conclusions."

9. The war to maintain exploitative socioeconomic structures was waged by the Guatemalan military supported by right-wing, anticommunist dictatorships (and later elected governments), together with the business sector and landed oligarchy. These in turn were supported by US military, CIA, and foreign assistance. The Guatemalan army had become a "modernized, well-equipped" force in the 1960s and 1970s "under U.S. tutelage." When official US military aid was terminated in the late 1970s, Guatemala purchased arms from US allies Taiwan and Israel. US military aid was resumed in 1986. However, Susan Burgerman states that in comparison to El Salvador, "the role of the United States is not as clear or decisive in the case of Guatemala." The peace process that later developed was influenced more by "changing international norms than with U.S. foreign policy" (53).

Challenging the Guatemalan army were four Marxist guerrilla movements unified in 1982 under the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG). With an estimated twelve thousand guerrilla fighters at its strongest, the URNG was at a significant disadvantage. The guerrillas received little international aid (Burgerman 58), although support was given by Cuba (Commission for Historical Clarification 18). McAllister and Nelson state that the USSR only "reluctantly and stingily" supported the guerrillas and that Cuba did not support them because of their "mass organizational strategy," of which the Cubans did not approve (45n3).

10. The Guatemalan state was responsible for 93 percent of the "human rights violations and acts of violence"; 3 percent were committed by the guerrillas (Commission for Historical Clarification 82, 128).

11. Pablo Ceto (Ixil Maya) (CGE) offers an alternative view. He became the highest-ranking Maya officer in the URNG. "They offered an answer," he explained, with their plans for health, education, land reform, and more. He described his participation in the guerrilla movement as "the deepest human experience I could find. It was a commitment to a cause, to the people." Ceto called his work in the URNG "a conspiracy within a conspiracy" (qtd. in Arias, *Taking* 171); that is, he worked to change guerrilla thinking about Maya people as he supported their challenge to political and economic structures. Yet looking back a decade after the Peace Accords were signed, Ceto acknowledged that "sometimes it is very hard to see" what was accomplished. This, however, did not make him change his opinion about his commitment to the cause, past and present. To create change, Ceto stated, both political and social organizations are needed.

12. In Montejo's *Maya Intellectual Resistance*, his chapter "Pan-Mayanism: The Complexity of Maya Culture and the Process of Self-Representation" provides a thorough analysis of the historical roots and development of the "pan-Maya cultural renaissance movement." He argues for a "unique, base Maya culture, shared within the Maya region" that underlies the diversity of its more than twenty Maya language and culture groups (17, 22).

13. Arias offers a more complete taxonomy of four Maya groups (*Taking* 174); however, the two tendencies Valle Escalante identifies predominate. Warren provides historical context for the two tendencies, situating them in their urban and rural development.

14. However, in the 1990s the popular rights group, embodied in the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG), made a significant shift toward cultural issues as it negotiated with the Guatemalan government to establish the Peace Accords, specifically the accord on “Identity and Rights of Indigenous People.” The shift resulted from the guerrillas’ inability to adequately negotiate land reform or other political and economic issues for which they had fought the civil war (Cojtí Cuxil, “Theory” 49). While this accord was much stronger than many Maya had hoped for, it also showed the limits of what structural demands were viable. Not addressed were ethnic inequalities and “autonomy or territoriality as expressly political rights” (Bastos and Camus 80).

15. Nevertheless, Valle Escalante rightly associates González with the culturalist wing of the movement. Along with publishing in a range of genres, he has taught Maya languages, literature, and cultural studies at Guatemalan universities and served as director of art and culture within the Guatemalan government. He has also worked with the Fund for Indigenous Development of Guatemala (FODIGUA), which supports community projects for economic production, human resource development, and institutional infrastructure (Kahn 158).

16. Montejo notes that throughout the continent elders complain that performing ceremonies and maintaining traditional knowledge are difficult as communities modernize (*Maya* 139).

17. The gap between rich and poor in Guatemala is one of the most severe in Latin America, with 1 percent controlling approximately 65 percent of the land. This leaves more than 40 percent of rural people without any land (Loucky 159). Because of racial discrimination, Guatemala’s Indigenous population faces the worst living conditions: 87 percent of Guatemala’s poor are Indigenous; 34 percent of them are extremely poor; only 5 percent have access to healthcare (Eliás 90).

18. The CUC’s “Declaration of Iximché” concludes,
 ALL THE DISCRIMINATED AND EXPLOITED INDIANS OF THE WORLD!
 ALL THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD!
 ALL THE FREE AND DEMOCRATIC PEOPLES OF THE WORLD!
 ALL THE AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANS OF THE WORLD!
 BE IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE INDIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER EXPLOITED PEOPLE OF GUATEMALA!

MAY ALL RISE UP, MAY ALL BE CALLED, MAY NO ONE, NOT ONE OR TWO GROUPS, BE LEFT BEHIND!—*POPOL-VUH* (351)

19. Montejo’s chapter “Theoretical Basis and Strategies for Maya Leadership” provides historical and contemporary contexts for Lwin’s role. It also suggests directions for future leadership in national politics (*Maya* 118–38).

20. This focus continues through González’s next novel, *The Return of the Maya*. His more recent work, *13 B’aktun*, thoroughly addresses Maya spirituality.

21. Rachel Sieder of the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS) in Mexico City explains that a somewhat analogous situation has developed regarding justice and security for Indigenous Guatemalans as a result of the failure of the state legal system. In rural areas Indigenous *auto-*

ridades ancestrales, “supracommunal governance structures,” have been revitalized to provide “community governance and dispute resolution conducted in their own languages.” Working outside the Guatemalan legal system, these Indigenous organizations work to repair human relations and “restor[e the] balance between people and their natural and spiritual environment” (Sieder, “Indigenous” 370). Yet unlike in the novel, this autonomous self-governance takes place in the context of political confrontation with dominant structures, particularly related to megastructures such as the hydroelectric project in Huehuetenango. There Q’anjob’al leaders have been detained, imprisoned, and executed (372).

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Book Reviews

Molly McGlennen. *Creative Alliances: The Transnational Designs of Indigenous Women's Poetry*. U of Oklahoma P, 2014. ISBN-13: 978-0-8061-4482-5. 230 pp.

Kenzie Allen, *University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee*

While works of Indigenous prose have seen a blossoming in literary criticism, Indigenous women's poetry has been long overdue for similar examination. Molly McGlennen's *Creative Alliances: The Transnational Designs of Indigenous Women's Poetry* presents a welcome critical examination of the genre of poetry and its intersections with gender and nation, as well as the way alliance building between Indigenous poets facilitates pushback against settler-colonial boundaries, resistance to imposed binaries and identities, and a renewed creativity.

McGlennen's inquiry is driven by her connection to Indigenous and poetic communities, as well as her own studies and creative work in the field, and she notes that this may lead to an "experiential interpretation" of her peers. Supplemented by her interviews with many of the poets she examines, this leads to a more nuanced understanding of the approaches to craft of each of these poets and the specific inclusion of poets she feels are underrepresented in the attention of the critical field, such as Diane Glancy, Wendy Rose, Kimberly Blaese, Luci Tapahonso, Esther Berlin, Allison Hedge Coke, Elizabeth Woody, Linda Hogan, dg nanouk okpik, and more. McGlennen ultimately settles on a definition of "transnational" that is not tied irrevocably to the settler state (as "trans-Indigenous" proponents such as Chadwick Allen may attest) but that does acknowledge the ways these poets negotiate their own histories and traditions, as well as the ways they experience and move through colonial spaces. In fact, the gray spaces, the ways in which poets move through their world and forge connections across regions and in their communities, inform every step of McGlennen's work, and the potential for coalition is reminiscent also of a kind of nation building, toward a nation both within and beyond one's own tribe.

McGlennen's close readings, coupled with her often intimate knowledge of the work's production or performance from her own experiences and interactions, are rich and expansive, though the inclusion of further theoretical scholarship within the text, such as in areas of Indigenous feminism and anthropology, might have helped to solidify the reader's understanding of the effects of the colonial viewpoint on areas like science, identity, and intersectionality. Perhaps further terms from these disciplines, such as *reterritorialization*, might have proved useful and might have amplified McGlennen's examinations of the rhetoric with which we discuss Indigenous peoples and their work and that rhetoric's effects; likewise, McGlennen's examination of gender might have been enriched by a less binary framework, one that includes nonbinary, Two-Spirit, and transgender peoples. To this end, the inclusion of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* and Smith's discourse on authenticity is illuminating (though the modern dispute of "decolonization as metaphor," a discussion that Smith's work helped spur, is not addressed directly), as is her use of Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Woman, Native, Other*, Lee Schweninger's *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape*, and other critical texts and anthologies. McGlennen does not necessarily include multimodal or visual work, forms that Native writers frequently utilize as a means of representing the layering of time or resisting Western expectations of narrative, within the lens of her close readings, but she does mention other poets she wished to have been able to include, such as Heid Erdrich and Layli Longsoldier, as she implores others to do further work.

All in all, McGlennen's book leaves one with a distinct impression of hope—that the key to what is vibrant and transnational in Indigenous women's poetry lies in the *relationships* they and their work build between each other, between poet and audience, and between Indigenous people and the multitude of landscapes they may love, encounter, and express.

KENZIE ALLEN is a poet, editor, educator, photographer, designer, and literary activist. She is currently a dissertator in the English and Creative Writing PhD Program at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

Elizabeth Kryder-Reid. *California Mission Landscapes: Race, Memory, and the Politics of Heritage*. U of Minnesota P, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-8166-3797-3. 355 pp.

Shanae Aurora Martinez, *University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee*

Efforts to expose California mission history to public scrutiny are finally gaining mainstream momentum thanks to the collective organizing efforts of Indigenous activists, scholars, educators, and allies who work in their respective fields to demythologize this brutal history of colonialism. Elizabeth Kryder-Reid joins this critical discussion as a settler scholar of anthropology, museum studies, landscape history, and heritage studies in *California Mission Landscapes: Race, Memory, and the Politics of Heritage*, cataloged as architecture/history. In the preface, Kryder-Reid explains, “A critical history of the mission landscapes requires understanding them both as Indigenous landscapes and as powerful ideological naturalizations of western conquest and asserted racial superiority” (xi). Failure to recognize the complex history behind the curation of mission landscapes does a disservice to contemporary peoples whose experiences continue to be erased in favor of a romanticized colonial metanarrative.

Kryder-Reid reveals how framing mission landscapes as gardens rather than plantations and ranches erases the enslaved labor of dispossessed Indigenous Californians, simultaneously projecting an image of the Franciscans as peace-loving, prayerful gardeners rather than brutal, slaveholding colonizers. Alternatively, Kryder-Reid suggests that “empowering and including the memories of all people opens up the possibilities for creative and dynamic ways to critique and rewrite the dominant narrative of the mission past” (245). By offering a critical examination of the variegated Eurocentric influences on mission reconstruction, Kryder-Reid questions the foundations of public memory in favor of historical truth telling. Each chapter interrogates how missions have been designed to erase Indigenous presence from ancestral homelands through an insightful analysis of spatially embedded cultural epistemologies and social relationships.

Beginning with “Colonial Mission Landscapes,” Kryder-Reid describes the utilitarian influence on mission design, which was intended to extract labor and obedience from Indians confined within the mission economy. The brilliant white adobe structures with lofty

bell towers represented a prominent display of colonial power visible for miles across the landscape (58–59). This first full chapter effectively affirms mission landscapes as Indigenous spaces in spite of Franciscan invasion, as Kryder-Reid spotlights several symbols of resistance embedded in the interior design of the missions themselves. Creative impressions on the mission walls suggest ongoing tensions over space, including a pictorial celebration of deer hunting; a painting of the deity Tobet; and a depiction of the archangel Raphael with the face of a Chumash leader and iconographic elements of a religious authority (61). Despite architecturally reinforcing hierarchical power relationships along racial, gendered, religious, and cultural vectors, Kryder-Reid locates mission landscapes as sites of Indigenous resistance where physical evidence suggests the coexistence of Indigenous and colonial subsistence practices and social activities. According to Kryder-Reid, “[Exploring] the role of landscape in the everyday brings a humanist perspective to colonialism’s broader theatre of national and ideological agendas” (70). Such agendas lend their influence to inventing California heritage based on an idyllic, colonial garden legacy.

Framed by the first chapter’s historical reconstruction of mission landscapes as heterotopias where Indigenous and Spanish epistemologies contend for space, chapter 2 “examines the ‘invention’ of the mission garden” beginning in Santa Barbara during the late nineteenth century in an effort to celebrate colonial domination over the Edenic but untamed Indigenous Californian landscape (71). The design of the first three reconstructed missions is seminal to the mission architectural genre upon which the Old World charm of the mission mythology is enacted as part of Mediterranean and Iberian horticultural heritages (74, 83, 93). By examining various mission restorations, Kryder-Reid demonstrates how the utilitarian structures of the Spanish mission ruins are slowly transformed to reflect paternalistic, white supremacist “politics of memory” that place the ornamental garden legacy of California into the hands of Anglo-American heirs and bypass Indigenous and Mexican cultivators.

Designing an iconic garden genre while also affecting a sense of European American timelessness is an aggressive demonstration of settler-colonial power set against an ostensibly peaceful backdrop. In chapter 3 Kryder-Reid examines the further development of an invented Californian heritage through the material distribution of

garden images “for tourists seeking to experience a uniquely Californian past” that “helped sell the state as a ‘New Eden’ with a perfect climate and abundant produce” (136). California mission landscapes were the material evidence mobilized to serve the shared “political objectives and ideologies of the Anglo elite,” whose historical metanarrative “[affirmed values] celebrated in Church, state, and national discourses” (177). Furthermore, Kryder-Reid examines the institutional reinforcement of the mission mythology through ritualized model making, since the required “fourth-grade curriculum offers insights into the relationship between state-sponsored educational goals and the influence of the models as purveyors of an idealized materiality that serves a settler-colonial narrative” (172–73). In sum, the mission mythology is the metanarrative shared by several intersecting settler institutions whose discourses “are inextricably bound to social relationships and structures of power” that perpetuate settler colonialism in California (167).

In chapter 4 Kryder-Reid explores the embodied experience of participating in the settler-colonial practice of consuming California’s mission heritage: “In addition to their metaphorical and ideological transposition of colonial history, the missions are also active, living landscapes where stakeholders have sought resources and status within the shifting power relations of California’s political and social structures” (228). The “visual and discursive conventions in the touristic landscape” repurpose agricultural tools—originally used for laundry and tanning—as garden ornaments, and water reservoirs become fountains and ponds that contribute to “the aestheticization of labor” (179, 201). Examining guidebooks, marketing materials, maps, virtual tours, travelogues, and tourists’ photographs, Kryder-Reid agrees with Mary-Catherine Garden that the missions are *heritagescapes* crafted from complex historical contexts by directing the gaze and movements of visitors in a multisensory experience that is “palatable within a settler colonial discourse” (183, 194). Kryder-Reid identifies “philanthropy, labor, Indigeneity, time, gardening, and devotion” as six performative aspects of mission landscapes that contribute to and provide productive avenues for interrogating the embodied experience of its contested heritage (194). Through these analytical avenues, Kryder-Reid reveals how these elemental aspects of mission landscapes are deployed to perform in various institutional contexts with the potential to complicate the settler-colonial historical narrative.

For example, Kryder-Reid's analysis demonstrates how the postcolonial narrative subsumes Indigenous caretaking practices into the Western garden tradition, positioning the missions as sites where "two cultures become one" (204). The performance of social relations on the mission landscape continues to represent colonial politics, in which the "parallel between the domestication of plants and the 'civilization' of the Indian" is inscribed even while some contemporary mission maintenance efforts illustrate collaboration with local tribes (204, 209). Nonetheless, Kryder-Reid considers mission landscapes "handmaidens of amnesia," because the "subtle and peculiar power of the spaces is not so much that they resist critique but that they embrace and neutralize it" at the expense of Indigenous stakeholders (228).

The conclusion of the text relies on Indigenous Californian scholars, artists, and activists to reimagine mission landscapes as Third Spaces that promote shared authority and collaboration between the colonizers and the colonized (233). Kryder-Reid's analysis of activist artists' "[disruptions] of celebratory narratives of erasure" concludes that such work is a catalyst for critical dialogue from multiple perspectives around mission history. Drawing from global examples of the Third Space museum model, Kryder-Reid proposes turning mission heritage sites into "sites of conscience" that use history to address social justice issues in order to "shape a more just and humane future" (234). While the Third Space model appears to level the narrative playing field, any attempts to balance multiple perspectives are largely ineffective when the settler-colonial narrative is pervasive enough to drown out challenges. Kryder-Reid locates the primary obstacle to this critical dialogue with the missions themselves, while the burden of creating cross-cultural understanding often falls on marginalized peoples to do the work of disrupting the metanarrative.

Settlers are the intended audience of this text, since it does little to engage Indigenous studies as a field, but Kryder-Reid recognizes Indigenous peoples like L. Frank, Edward Castillo, Doreen Martinez, Frank LaPena, David Avalos, the late James Luna, Linda Yamane, Gerald Clarke, and Deborah Small among the visionaries of a decolonial future in California. These Indigenous Californian artists do more than dialogue, because they denounce Franciscan authority rather than entertain any notion of parity. Instead of inviting equal perspectives, decolonizing mission landscapes requires a historical narrative that

represents the real effects of Franciscan missionization, not their romanticized intentions or the peaceful idealism of a “humanist approach to history that seeks to transcend divisions,” as Kryder-Reid suggests (242).

In short, Kryder-Reid seeks to promote a social justice-oriented history of the California mission landscape while proposing a Third Space model that is inappropriate for the immense amount of work required to right the dominant narrative of California’s becoming. If history has proven missionization genocidal, then consciously curated Indigenous-centered narratives of survival and resistance must dominate these historical sites until the decolonial narrative is at the forefront of California’s collective memory.

SHANAE AURORA MARTINEZ is a doctoral candidate from California studying Indigenous American literatures in the English Department at UW-Milwaukee. She is the recipient of the Advanced Opportunity Program Fellowship, and her social justice scholarship has been recognized by the Graduate School with the Tomás Garrett-Rosas Research Award.

Heid E. Erdrich. *Curator of Ephemera at the New Museum for Archaic Media*. Michigan State UP, 2017. ISBN-13: 978-1-6118-6246-1. 89 pp.

Molly McGlennen, *Vassar College*

Heid Erdrich’s collection *Curator of Ephemera at the New Museum for Archaic Media* is, in many ways, a grand exploration in collaboration. In so many moments in her clever, urgent, and animated collection of poems, Erdrich’s voice struts and sparks. Poems that connect to artwork, family members, conversations with artists, music, mix tapes, an Ojibwe language speaker (Margaret Noodin), QR codes, video poems, popular culture references, and so on populate the text. If Erdrich is the collection’s custodian, *Curator of Ephemera at the New Museum for Archaic Media* is the documentation of the author’s partnerships with people, artwork (such as Andrea Carlson’s paintings), history, and even language. The on-display poems act as directive museum labels guiding the reader through the exhibition of mediated links, whether textual, aural, visual, or digital, and composed out of what Erdrich calls a “collaborative spirit.”

In true Erdrich form, however, there are fruitful contradictions

from the get-go: what is ephemeral is memorialized; what is archaic is presently mediated. As Erdrich ably calls out in her poem “The Honey Suckers,” “All that we read / we misread” (4). What seems antiquated paradoxically resonates, underscoring Erdrich’s ability to create poetic alloys. Not to be mistaken for resurrecting novelty, Erdrich’s poems evince the meanings of souvenir and trifle by curating a poetic remix of deeply interconnected partnerships. Thus, in poems like “Red Star,” the common becomes uncommonly complex:

Inside the red star of a cottonwood twig
inside the box of the North Dakota map
that is my country

my country as it was. (13)

And in poems like “Boom,” the gimmick of settler progress and righteousness is lit up on fire, exposed:

Used to be there was nothing there
Close it up they used to say
Return it to the Buffalo Forget Indians

Wind churns a million watts
Gas burns ancient marshes off
Coal pits deep and busy like messy little cities. (17)

Indeed, the language of light and spark and flash illuminates Erdrich’s collection, and perhaps that is the effect on the reader, like a dousing of cold water in your face. It’s as if Erdrich, with a huge smile on her face, is shouting at us all to *wake up*. To this point, one of my favorite poems, “Pre-Occupied” (which can also be viewed as a video poem on Erdrich’s site: heiderdrich.com), demonstrates just how much of a life beyond the page Erdrich’s poetry assumes. It is no surprise that Erdrich, upon screening some of her poem-films for an event for the Minnesota State Arts Board grant winners, stated that she has “always thought of my poems as little movies.” And it is no surprise she collaborated with art directors Vincent Moniz Jr. and animator Jonathan Thunder to make the short poem film. “Pre-Occupied” is a poetic response to the Occupy movement to be sure: “A bit pre-occupied, we original 100% / who are also 1%, more or less” (22), and “Occupy Occupy worked for the 99 / Occupy Re-occupy Alcatraz and Wounded Knee” (23). But more than this, Erdrich’s poem asserts the primacy of Indigenous lands:

River river river Our river
 Map of the Milky Way
 Reflection of stars
 whence all life commenced

100% of all life on our planet. (23)

It also asserts the agency of Indigenous ways of seeing, knowing, and teaching.

As an acting curator for Minneapolis galleries, Erdrich is necessarily attentive to space and lighting and experience and narrative all at once. And it seems that through her poems, she borrows those tools of design and creates realities that are future oriented, where the poet imagines worlds through lenses attentive to composition, where the poet acknowledges worlds in which apocalypse is possible and where, for some, it has already taken place. “We walk on the bridge of bones our ancestors left, their bodies fed the great over-bloom of America where we are 1% of the 5% who eat nearly everything. All just as you fear. Yet we are still here,” Erdrich warns in “Curatorial Statement for Apocalyptic Poetics” (26). And in “At the Anachronism Fair” Erdrich continues:

in the great round now
 where our senses grow obsolete
 anachronistic curiosities for other futures
 Wonder of it all child will be how
 you’ll know your *need-to-breathe*. (27)

It certainly seems that Erdrich’s reader is reminded as well of the *need-to-breathe* throughout this imaginative poetic journey. And the *need-to-remember* the humanness of long-standing ways of knowing.

Finally, Erdrich’s collection is about the act of composition and the art of *making*—whether mediated through mix tapes, collage, art exhibitions, or poems. With an X-Acto knife, QR code, or copper coil. No matter. Erdrich draws it all into her artistic kit. If you are a poet reading *Curator of Ephemera*, you’ll be envious of and in love with Erdrich all at once. Heid Erdrich’s latest collection of poems reaffirms just how powerful and necessary her voice and vision are in our world.

MOLLY MCGLENNEN is an associate professor of English and Native American studies at Vassar College. Currently, she is working on a second book of poems about Indigenous Minneapolis.