

ABSTRACT

NATIVE AMERICAS: A TRANSNATIONAL AND (POST)COLONIAL STUDY OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN WRITERS IN CANADA, THE UNITED STATES, AND THE CARIBBEAN

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In the current age of globalization, scholars have become interested in literary transnationalism, but the implications of transnationalism for American Indian studies have yet to be adequately explored. Although some anthologies and scholarly studies have begun to collect and examine texts from Canada and the United States together to ascertain what similarities exist between the different tribal groups, there has not yet been any significant collection of work that also includes fiction by indigenous people south of the U.S. border. I argue that ongoing colonization is the central link that binds these distinct groups together. Thus, drawing heavily on postcolonial literary theory, I isolate the role of displacement and mapping; language and storytelling; and cultural memory and female community in the fiction of women writers such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Pauline Melville, and Eden Robinson, among others. Their distinctive treatment of these common themes offers greater depth and complexity to postcolonial literature and theory, even though independence from settler colonizers has yet to occur. Similarly, the transnational study of these authors contributes to American Indian literature and theory, not by erasing what makes tribes distinct, but by offering a more diverse understanding of what it means to be a Native in the Americas in the face of ongoing colonization.

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NATIVE AMERICAS: A TRANSNATIONAL AND (POST)COLONIAL
STUDY OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN WRITERS IN CANADA,
THE UNITED STATES, AND THE CARIBBEAN

BY

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INTRODUCTION

“The term post-colonial...re-reads colonization as part of an essentially transnational transcultural global process--and it produces a decentered, diasporic or global rewriting of earlier, nation-centered imperial grand narratives... It obliges us to re-read the binaries as forms of transculturation, of cultural translation, destined to trouble the here/there binaries forever.”¹

“Although our diversity remains, there is more intertribalism among the Native nations of this continent today than at any other time in our histories.”²

“Rather than stand on the periphery, Native women are at the center of how our nations, both tribal and nontribal, have been imagined.”³

In the current age of globalization, it is no small wonder that scholars have developed a recent interest in transnational studies, which encourages attention for “forms of cultural production that occur in the liminal spaces between real and imagined borders” (Jay 1). For indigenous groups, these real and imagined borders include national borders and reservation borders, but also the borders of cultural expectations and stereotypes. The movement across these borders, especially in cases of cross-cultural contact, has tremendous implication for identity as customs and ideas are exchanged, but for indigenous people who have had additional borders imposed on them against their will, the implications for cultural identity are that much more pressing.

¹ Stuart Hall 247.

² Bruchac 9.

³ Goeman 2.

The combined interest in literary transnationalism in the scholarly community and the implications for Native American studies has prompted some scholars to suggest the need for a transnational study of indigenous writers in the Americas. Inés Hernández-Avila, for example, asserts that "One of the specific ways that boundaries need to be remapped, or better still transformed, in the study of Native American literature is in the si(gh)ting of 'Indianness' and 'Americanness' with respect to this hemisphere rather than simply with respect to the United States and Canada. Connections should also be renegotiated regarding issues of identity and mixed-bloodness that is of other combinations besides native and white" (173). Similarly, Simon Ortiz argues that "*Throughout the Americas*, issues and concerns about land, culture, and community abound especially where Indigenous communities have resisted physical removal and annihilation, destructive assimilation and acculturation, and the outright loss of land, resources, and human capital" (xii, emphasis added). Ortiz goes on to speak about the commonality among indigenous people "throughout the Americas from North to Central to South America," namely that they are "wealthy with many languages, Indigenous tribal histories, experience; [they] have no lack of cultural resources; [they] are enduring and resilient communities," and that colonialism has affected them in serious ways (xiii). Despite an apparent agreement that a transnational study of indigenous literature in the Americas is justified and important, until now there have been only small steps in the direction of that work. A number of scholars have collected creative work by indigenous writers from Canada and the United States into anthologies⁴, but there has not been any significant collection of work that also includes

⁴ *Reinventing the Enemy's Language* edited by Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird is one such example. It anthologizes indigenous women writers in North America, taking survival as its unifying theme. *Native North American Literature* edited by Janet Witalec, Jeffery H. Chapman, and Christopher Giroux is another example.

indigenous work by people south of the U.S. border. Similarly, there have been some scholarly studies⁵ published in the last twenty years about indigenous writing in Canada and the United States, yet despite the call for a hemispheric study of indigenous literature, none exists yet at this time.

Extending the theoretical work on Native North American literature to include the work of indigenous people in the Caribbean is a natural beginning point for a hemispheric study of the creative work of indigenous people: it was in the Caribbean that conquistadores first met indigenous people in the Americas, and colonization there was so violent that the Native people were nearly annihilated. Furthermore, as J. Michael Dash argues, the Caribbean is, on one hand, a “frail, delicate umbilical cord that holds the Americas together” (3); on the other hand, Dash suggests that “there can be...no possibility of grasping the collective identity of the Caribbean without its insertion in the Americas” (14). The Caribbean becomes a connective force between Native North America and Native South America, and such a pan-American study also clarifies what is distinct about the Caribbean. Although the potential exists for a transnational or pan-American study of indigenous literature to inadvertently ignore or erase distinctions between particular tribal groups or smaller regions, this study intends to acknowledge distinctions while also demonstrating that there are significant similarities in the literature across the Americas.

Because there is a significant amount of indigenous literature that comes from this large geographical area, I narrow the scope of this project by focusing on novels and short stories written in the last thirty years. Fiction, as opposed to poetry or drama, gives writers the opportunity to creatively explore at length and in depth the issues most important to them in

⁵ See Punyashree Panda’s *Contemporary Native Fiction of the U.S. and Canada: A Postcolonial Study*, not as a model, but as an example.

ways which the sparseness of poetry or the strictures of performance do not allow. I further narrow the scope by focusing on indigenous fiction written by women. Paula Gunn Allen argues that one of the major themes or issues that pertain to American Indians is that “Traditional tribal lifestyles are more often gynocratic than not, and they are never patriarchal” (2), and the same can be said for indigenous people in Canada and the Caribbean as well. Allen further asserts that “The physical and cultural genocide of American Indian tribes is and was mostly about patriarchal fear of gynocracy...The colonizers saw (and rightly) that as long as women held unquestioned power of such magnitude, attempts at total conquest of the continents were bound to fail” (3). If Native women were and are doubly colonized, first as indigenous people and second as women, their creative work will tell a distinctive story about their cultural identity as it exists in tension with colonizing forces. Simply put, “the parallel between the situation of post-colonial writing and that of feminist writing is striking” and worth consideration (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* 7). Therefore, as a beginning point in the transnational study of indigenous writing in the Americas, a focus on women’s writing is a natural and productive way in which to narrow the scope of an otherwise expansive project.

Theoretical Framework

The Native American Renaissance, beginning in the late 1960s and 1970s, was a period wherein young Native American writers began publishing significantly more works of poetry and fiction for large readerships than they had been previously.⁶ Since that time, scholars in

⁶ Kenneth Lincoln coined the term “Native American Renaissance” in his 1983 book by the same name. Lincoln identifies N. Scott Momaday’s 1969 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *House Made of Dawn* as the genesis of the renaissance. In contrast to early writers like William Apess, Pauline Johnson, Mourning Dove, and D’Arcy

history, politics, literature, and other disciplines have been publishing a considerable number of books and articles regarding indigenous groups in the Americas. One critical perspective that some of these scholars have taken is that of postcolonialism⁷: just as other colonizers have made themselves governing powers in foreign countries and subjugated the people native to those countries, so have Euro-Americans forced their way into a colonizer-colonized relationship with Natives through genocide, stolen land, and attempts at wiping out native languages. Furthermore, many of these scholars have identified similar themes in indigenous literature and postcolonial literature, including place and displacement, language, and cultural memory that maintains a link to pre-colonial times and provides strength for the present or courage for the future.

Although postcolonial theory has been used to help analyze, explain, and understand Native literature, others firmly deny the categorization. Scholars like Declan Kiberd⁸ suggest that “postcolonial writing does not begin only when the occupier withdraws: rather it is initiated at the very moment when a native writer formulates a text committed to cultural resistance” (6), but others like Louis Owens continue to find the “post” problematic, especially for Native Americans. Owens rightly differentiates between people in postcolonial contexts whose colonizer has left, and the “indigenous inhabitants of North America [who] can stand anywhere

McNickle who published with little critical reception, Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, James Welch, Louise Erdrich, and Paula Gunn Allen among others have been successful among Native and non-Native readers.

⁷ See, for example, Kevin Bruyneel’s *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations* or Julia V. Emberley’s *Thresholds of Difference: Feminist Critique, Native Women’s Writings, Postcolonial Theory*. Emberley focuses specifically on Native women writers in Canada, but much of the theory applies seamlessly to Native women in the United States and the Caribbean, as I plan to show.

⁸ Although he focuses on the postcolonial situation in Ireland, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin corroborate Kiberd’s assertion in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Remarkably, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin do not discuss the colonization of Natives in North America in any depth, focusing instead on the relationship between white settlers and the British Empire. They only mention that “the relationship between the indigenous populations in settled areas and the invading settlers” is one of the tensions that the settler colonies faced (133).

on the continent and look in every direction at a home usurped and colonized by strangers who, from the very beginning, laid claim not merely to the land and resources but to the very definition of the Natives” (14-15). Even after centuries, native people in Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean alike have not regained their homeland or independence, and only recently is Native American literature “gradually finding a niche within academia” (Owens 13). This injustice positions First Nations people, Native Americans, and people indigenous to the Caribbean squarely in a colonized subject-position, rather than a postcolonial subject position wherein the oppressed would likely seek to reestablish power and autonomy in the wake of a now-absent colonizer. In fact, Owens asserts that “America never became postcolonial” because the American Revolution was not fought against the threat of colonization from England, but rather was fought “to determine who would be in charge of the colonization of North America, who would control the land and the lives of the indigenous inhabitants” (14). Owens suggests a revision of American history that changes the way we read contemporary Native American literature: as texts emerging from an ongoing colonial context. Furthermore, though Owens only focuses on Native Americans in the United States, the same could be said of those in Canada and the Caribbean as well. Conflict with the British and Spanish Empires have ended, but the Euro-American settlers of North America and the Caribbean continue to exert colonial power over indigenous people.

Likewise, Thomas King assertively identifies a number of false assumptions inherent in the term “postcolonial” that could lead to unjust readings of Native American literature. King argues that the term “postcolonial” “assumes that the starting point for that discussion [of Native American literature] is the advent of Europeans in North America”; it “assumes that the struggle

between guardian and ward is the catalyst for contemporary Native literature”; it “cuts [Natives] off from [their] traditions, traditions that were in place before colonialism ever became a question”; and “it supposes that contemporary Native writing is largely a construct of oppression” (11, 12). Owens and King represent important Native voices in the Americas, but Anne McClintock, born in colonial Zimbabwe, also confronts the problems with the term postcolonialism, arguing with Owens and King that it “confers on colonialism the prestige of history proper; colonialism is the determining marker of history...In other words, the world’s multitudinous cultures are marked, not positively by what distinguishes them, but by a subordinate, retrospective relation to linear, European time” (86). Time, McClintock asserts, becomes a new binary axis that simply replaces the one of power, as in colonizer/colonized.

McClintock asks us to rethink the implications that the term “postcolonialism” carries, and more specifically, Owens’s and King’s persuasive arguments force us to reconsider the ways in which we define and discuss texts by Native Americans and about Native Americans, as well as literature written by other indigenous groups in the Americas. Despite the important concerns that these scholars raise regarding the term postcolonial, the theory by the same name is arguably useful in understanding Native literature. Issues of language, cultural identity and memory, and land and displacement from that land figure prominently in postcolonial literature, and the same is true for a number of Native American novels, including those under examination in this study.

David Murray offers the term “resistance literature” to describe that which is written by exiled and/or subjugated colonized people and which made a significant impact in the development of the colonized people. As accurate as this term might be in describing some of the literature written by indigenous people, not all of that literature expressly resists colonial power.

Other scholars refer to “new literatures in English,” but this invites comparison to the well-established standards and traditions of the “old literatures in English” in Britain. Therefore, until a new term is invented that more clearly reflects the connection to the existing body of research in postcolonial studies and also acknowledges the ways in which indigenous people in the Americas have distinct experiences from people in postcolonial contexts, I will use the term (post)colonial. The parenthetical “post” suggests a clear link to well-established postcolonial discourse while also recognizing that indigenous people in the Americas continue to live in tension with colonial forces—the colonizer has not and will not return to his metropolitan center.

Although there are a number of scholars using postcolonial theory to discuss Native American literature, there is little scholarship which uses it to discuss transnational indigenous literature. Punyashree Panda is one of the few scholars who begins to tackle the subject, focusing on contemporary Native fiction in the United States and Canada from a postcolonial theoretical perspective. However important her work is in beginning a study of this kind, scholarly work of a higher caliber is needed in order to adequately respond to the call from theorists like Murray and Ortiz. Moreover, Panda discusses only four of the most canonical of novels by some of the best known authors in Canada and the United States⁹. In order to come to more convincing conclusions than what Panda offers, a transnational and (post)colonial study of indigenous literature in the Americas should consider a greater variety of texts by a greater variety of well-known and lesser-known authors, a variety which would be more representative of the literature of indigenous women writers.

⁹ Panda discusses *Tracks* by Louise Erdrich, *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko, *Green Grass, Running Water* by Thomas King, and *Halfbreed* by Maria Campbell.

Reading the fiction of indigenous women writers from across the Americas together rather than separately through the lens of (post)colonialism raises and addresses a number of questions. Is a transnational approach to indigenous women's literature an appropriate, fair, and productive way of reading the texts? What kinds of similarities become evident between the texts with a transnational approach? What might these similarities mean? How can distinctions and differences be honored in a study that is interested in the similarities between texts? As a white Euroamerican whose ancestors almost certainly participated in or profited from colonial expeditions on personal or national levels, what right do I have to interpret indigenous literature at all?

As an answer to these questions, this study reveals that issues of identity commonly raised in postcolonial literature also recur in the fiction of indigenous women writers across the Americas. These issues include relationships to native land, relationships to native and colonial languages, and the significance of cultural memory and female community in light of double colonization; together they reveal that a transnational reading of these texts is, in fact, productive and important considering the current gap in scholarship. Although these broad themes exist across a variety of tribal groups in the Americas, the expression of and focus on those themes is different in each text. Furthermore, some texts address transnationalism alongside these issues, reinforcing the need for this kind of study, while others are more insular in nature, but regardless of the differences, each are acknowledged when they arise. Finally, as Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill argue, "As with other unjustly ghettoized fields like ethnic studies, black studies, and black feminist studies, Native feminist theories are meant to have a much wider audience and active engagement" (11-12); that is, although I am a white Euroamerican, I am part

of the wider audience of these texts and theories and am actively engaging in the critical attention that they deserve.

In short, I argue that ongoing colonization is the central link that binds these distinct groups together. Their distinctive treatment of these common themes offers greater depth and complexity to postcolonial literature and theory, even though independence from settler colonizers has yet to occur. Similarly, the transnational study of these authors contributes to American Indian literature and theory, not by erasing what makes tribes distinct, but by offering a more diverse understanding of what it means to be a Native in the Americas.

Chapter Outlines

The following study is divided into three chapters that, while addressing distinct issues of identity for women from different tribal groups, work together to illuminate the common concerns of ongoing colonialism, even in contemporary works of fiction. That is, while the specificity of experiences are unique to each tribal group represented, this study highlights the underlying issues of (post)colonialism present in all texts. Each chapter includes at least one piece of fiction from each of the three regions under discussion here: Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean. The transnational nature of each chapter further clarifies and reinforces the notion that (post)colonialism continues to impact indigenous people in the western hemisphere in similar ways. As much as possible and for the same reason, I also attempted to select texts whose novels include characters from different indigenous groups.

Although many of the novels and short stories address more than one thematic category, I arrange them according to the issues of identity that are most pressing and recur most frequently

in the text. The novels and short stories in chapter one, then, emphasize the fundamental relationship between the land and the indigenous women and men who live on it, as well as the issues related to borders constructed by colonizers that keep native people localized on reservations or removed from their ancestral land. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, “place and displacement demonstrate the very complex interaction of language, history and environment in the experience of colonized peoples and the importance of space and location in the process of identity formation” (*Postcolonial Studies* 177). Because these concepts are foundational for colonized people, including the native people of the Americas, they are addressed first in this study through an analysis of four texts. I argue that, despite the diversity represented in the works in this chapter, an undeniable link exists between the various indigenous groups in regards to the land: each author reveals the severity of psychological trauma associated with colonial displacement, with crossing physical and metaphorical borders defined and enforced by Euro-American settlers, and each author also explores the possibility of drawing new maps determined by her indigenous characters.

I selected the allegorical short story “Ovando” by Jamaica Kincaid (Antigua) for its value in presenting the relevant issues in such a vivid manner, but also because it is grounded in some of the earliest history of colonization in the western hemisphere, providing a broad context for each literary analysis that follows. As historical fiction, the *Pushing the Bear* series by Diane Glancy (Cherokee, United States) not only offers further historical context for the (post)colonial situation of native people in the Americas, but the inclusion of these texts is further justified as they include maps and trace the route of forced migration of Cherokee people on the Trail of Tears. I included a second Caribbean text, “The Migration of Ghosts” by Pauline Melville

(Wapisiana, Guyana), as a more concrete example of how colonial practices enacted centuries ago continue to impact indigenous people in the present day. Finally, *Monkey Beach* by Eden Robinson (Haisla, Canada) uniquely engages readers with cartography and anticipates the issues in chapter two.

The second chapter analyzes fiction that raises questions about the act and authority of naming, storytelling and the relationship between native and colonial languages, including translation and mimicry. Next to the significance of the land, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin see language as an extremely pertinent issue for colonized people since “Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth’, ‘order’, and ‘reality’ become established” (*The Empire Writes Back* 7). The cultural identity of many native people in Canada and the United States was radically disrupted through schools in which students were punished for speaking their native tongues rather than English. The combined removal from families and requirement to speak English indeed helped to reinforce the colonial structure of power that positioned indigenous men and women at the bottom of the hierarchy. I argue that, while each text treats a different aspect of the issues surrounding language, voice, and the oral tradition, the common underlying concerns with the impact of colonization on these identity markers suggests not only the complexity of the issues at hand, but also the importance of joining forces for greater power in the face of ongoing colonialism.

These issues are raised in the three texts I selected for analysis: “The Parrot and Descartes” by Pauline Melville (Wapisiana, Guyana), *The Hollow* by Cathy McCarthy (Anishinaabe, Canada), and *Almanac of the Dead* by Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo,

United States). Melville's short fiction is a playful story that nevertheless directly addresses the serious issues of mimicry, naming, language, and voice for colonized people. I selected McCarthy's novel in part because it is set in a different part of Canada than Robinson's is, but more importantly, it engages with a different aspect of the issue of language than Melville's does, focusing on the tension between the oral tradition and the written word, and it also features characters who move back and forth between native and white communities in both Canada and the United States, thus offering further evidence for this transnational study. Although it was written earlier, Silko's expansive novel seems to extend the ideas in *The Hollow* by spanning continents and bringing together characters from various tribal groups for similar political goals. In the midst of this ambitious cast of characters from different parts of the world, Silko offers a distinct perspective on the relationship between the oral and written traditions for modern-day indigenous people.

The issues raised in chapters one and two are characteristic themes in works of postcolonial literature. Issues of gender, on the other hand, transcend postcolonial studies and studies of Native literature in the Americas; however, feminism and female community are, nevertheless, significant concerns in the fiction of many of these authors: a study of them would be incomplete without a discussion of the ways in which cultural notions of gender shape identity. Chapter three, then, delves into texts that highlight the particular struggles associated with double colonialism, that is, the oppression that indigenous women often face due to their ethnicity and their gender. I argue that the texts illustrate some of the ways in which double colonialism continues to affect Native women in the Americas, but that they also suggest an answer to that double colonialism: building or reclaiming women's communities, forged through

family ties or common experiences, fosters strength to fight for equality and sovereignty, so the absence of such communities poses additional challenges to Native women.

I selected *Daughters are Forever* by Lee Maracle (Sto:lo, Canada) for its nuanced treatment of the relationships between women and men in light of political goals for sovereignty and its interest in community between women who are blood relations or who simply share common experiences. *Unburnable* by Marie-Elena John (Antigua) offers a different perspective on female community, emphasizing the spiritual bonds and cultural memories that persist beyond the grave between a woman and the female predecessors in her family. Finally, I included two short stories from the collection *Women on the Run* by Janet Campbell Hale (Coeur d'Alene, United States): "Women on the Run" and "Claire." On the surface, these stories suggest value in the solitary life, which makes their inclusion here a necessary counterweight to the fiction by Maracle and John.

As a group, these texts reveal common concerns and experiences that indigenous people across Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean share, particularly in relationship to contemporary colonial powers. These concerns include land, borders, and displacement; language, naming, and oral and written traditions; and for women in particular, feminism and female community as a site of strength and cultural memory in the face of colonial and patriarchal systems and power structures. Not only does indigenous fiction from across the Americas share these characteristics with postcolonial literature, but those texts which are written by women also reveal the distinctive ways in which their identity exists in tension with patriarchal systems and political or cultural colonizing forces.

CROSSING BORDERS AND DRAWING NEW MAPS

“For a colonized people, the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread, and, above all, dignity.”¹

“Didn’t the soldiers know we were the land?”²

According to Paula Anca Farca, “Indigenous people around the world regard their relationship to place as an integral part of their identity” (1), though that relationship is complicated by the fact that “places are social and cultural constructions that regenerate themselves as a result of their inhabitants’ active participation; at the same time, the inhabitants’ experiences in specific places aid them in renewing their relationships with their tribal and national histories and cultures” (Farca 1). There is a reciprocal relationship between people and place wherein the significance of a specific location can change for people depending on the social and cultural events that occur there. At the same time, a specific location can help people reconnect with their nation’s history and culture on a deeper level.

Paula Gunn Allen extends Farca’s assertions, arguing that “We *are* the land...that is the fundamental idea that permeates American Indian life; the land (Mother) and the people (mothers) are the same” (119, emphasis added). Allen articulates a common thread in the worldview of many Native people, which suggests that, as part of the natural world, people are equal to all things in the natural world, as opposed to the western perspective which generally

¹ Fanon, 44.

² Glancy, *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears* 4.

understands humans to be hierarchically superior to the rest of the natural world. Diane Glancy incorporates that worldview into the first of her *Pushing the Bear* novels; in fact, the epigraph above can be found within the first few pages of the novel, indicating that the special relationship that Maritole enjoys with the land will continue to play a significant role as the story unfolds.

As important as the land is to these writers and other indigenous women and men in the Americas, European colonialism may have intensified that relationship. Illegal land claims and forced relocations meant that thousands of indigenous people lost—sometimes gradually, sometimes suddenly—the places that were integral to their national histories and cultures, the places with which they had strong spiritual connections. Although categorizing indigenous people from the Americas as postcolonial is contentious, the theoretical application is clear. Franz Fanon, a prominent theorist in postcolonial studies, boldly argues that “the most essential value” for colonized people around the world is the land, as the first epigraph illustrates. Indigenous people had always valued the land deeply; colonization simply compounded the significance of the land as a central element to their identity and experience. Even if “contemporary Indigenous women [can] adapt their community’s traditions to new contexts and reinvigorate their ethnic identities and tribal roots” (Farca 1), something is lost when they are separated from land that is sacred to them and which records the history of their people.

An important related colonial practice that impacts native people in the Americas is cartography. On the surface, mapping might appear to have little or no consequence on the lives of colonized people, including indigenous people in the Americas. However, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin convincingly explain that

Colonization itself is often consequent on a voyage of ‘discovery’, a bringing into being of ‘undiscovered’ lands. The process of discovery is reinforced by the construction of

maps, whose existence is a means of textualizing the spatial reality of the other.... The blank spaces of early maps signify a literal *terra nullis*, an open and inviting (virginal) space into which the European imagination can project itself and into which the European (usually male) explorer must penetrate. (*Postcolonial Studies* 31, 32)

Early maps supported the idea of the Americas as a “New World,” empty and open to settlers to use however they might like. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s gendered description of the European colonizers’ relationship to this so-called New World, made possible through maps, reinforces the injustice and highlights the fact that the project of colonialism is a male-oriented one. Thus, the perspectives of colonized women on the effects of the scientific mapping of their traditional homelands is particularly important to understand, as we will see in the texts discussed below. However, Graham Huggan contends that a nuanced view of cartography is necessary, explaining that its role in postcolonial writing

cannot be solely envisaged as the reworking of a particular spatial paradigm, but consists rather in the implementation of a series of creative revisions which register the transition from a colonial framework within which the writer is compelled to recreate and reflect upon the restrictions of colonial space to a post-colonial one within which he or she acquires the freedom to engage in a series of ‘territorial disputes’ which implicitly or explicitly acknowledge the relativity of modes of spatial (and, by extension, cultural) perception. (135)

As we will see, those writers who push beyond the restrictions of colonial space to reveal something about the relativity of spatial and cultural perception do so in a variety of ways, yet they all explode the colonizer-colonized paradigm and offer fresh commentary on the indigenous (post)colonial relationship to land in the Americas.

In exploring the shared concern of the indigenous peoples’ relationship to the land, care must be taken so that distinct tribes and nations are not conflated into one generic tribe or hybridity celebrated uncritically. Jamil Khader criticizes “Cosmopolitics theory [which] promotes moral visions of world citizenship...as a blueprint for world peace, by virtue of our

membership to the larger ‘family of man,’ or world community of the human race”; within that post-national vision, cosmopolitics “conceals the specificity of the economic, cultural, and historical conditions that leave the postcolonial subject especially, the postcolonial female subject, no choice but to leave his or her homeland” (2, 3-4). Concealing such specifics about a particular indigenous group would simply be another form of colonization, manipulating people and information about them for an unrelated purpose.

With these cautions in mind, an undeniable relationship to the land does permeate many indigenous nations in the Americas on a cultural and spiritual level; specifically, this relationship finds expression in the fiction of several contemporary Native women, including Jamaica Kincaid (Antigua), Diane Glancy (Cherokee, United States), Pauline Melville (Wapisiana, Guyana), and Eden Robinson (Haisla, Canada). Kincaid, Glancy, Melville, and Robinson each explore nuances of that loss in their fiction. Despite the diversity in the respective indigenous groups represented in the works by Kincaid, Glancy, Melville, and Robinson, an undeniable link exists between them in regards to the land: each author reveals the severity of psychological trauma associated with colonial displacement, with crossing physical and metaphorical borders defined and enforced by Euro-American settlers, and each author also explores the possibility of drawing new maps determined by her indigenous characters. Furthermore, understanding these shared concerns in a (post)colonial context allows for a deeper appreciation for the distinctive features of each text and each indigenous group.

“Spreading sickness of the empire”: Home Invasion by Blind Skeletons

In “Ovando,” Jamaica Kincaid paints a vivid picture of the horrific destruction that colonial powers exacted on indigenous people in the Caribbean when they stepped over the threshold into their homeland. The title character is a skeleton who crosses the threshold and makes himself comfortable in the narrator’s home, so comfortable in fact that he soon invites his own relatives from all over Europe to join him without asking the narrator’s permission. Ovando crossed into the home and then crossed an ethical line by essentially claiming the home as his own to be shared only with his European relatives. Ovando assumes possession of the land and violently disrupts the natural surroundings as he mines resources.

Although the narrative is an allegory, Kincaid grounds the story in history with her allusion to Nicolás de Ovando, who, in 1501 was appointed governor of the Indies by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain. Ovando’s commission “invested him with virtually absolute authority in the New World,” but he was supposed to “assure the native chiefs that they and their people were under the crown’s especial protection” and treat them with “mildness, and for the labor must be given reasonable wages” (Haring 147). According to Bartolomé de las Casas, a Franciscan friar who accompanied Ovando to Santo Domingo in 1502, Ovando was initially a man of “prudence, integrity, and justice, untainted by avarice. He was courteous and affable, but of great firmness and ambitious to command” (Haring 148). However, Ovando’s policy “toward the natives who still lived in semi-independence under their own chiefs was harsh in the extreme; the system of *encomiendas* [wherein Spanish settlers “protected” a specified number of indigenous people in exchange for labor, gold, or other goods], became merely a cloak for heartless exploitation to which he opposed no effective restraint” (Haring 150). Sadly,

Ovando's actions went unchallenged from Spanish authorities who "showed themselves less tender of the fate of the aborigines" after the queen died in 1504 (Haring 150). During his reign, the mining of gold also rose dramatically; this in concert with his harsh treatment of the indigenous people led to his legacy in West Indian history of "tak[ing] the law into his own hands," being "responsible for massive genocide" (Ferguson 136), and for "the beginnings of a depletion of the islands' natural resources" (Soto-Crespo 359).

Unfortunately, as harsh a ruler as Nicolás de Ovando was, he was not the only one. De las Casas documents the atrocities enacted by several other Spaniards against the indigenous people—the Caribs, Tainos, and others³. These atrocities include separating indigenous families to prevent the possibility of offspring; making sport of killing natives; murdering natives when they could not deliver gold, even if none was found in the region; and burning hundreds of villages to the ground. Because Kincaid's short story is allegory and not historical fiction, all of these events, in addition to those surrounding the historical Ovando, provide context for the narrative. Moreover, Moira Ferguson suggests that "Kincaid conflates Columbus's and Ovando's separate entries into Hispaniola" in this story, which further broadens the scope of the destruction enacted by the colonizer (133).

Despite the haunting imagery and fierce critique of colonial ventures in "Ovando," few critics have examined the story in depth. In his article, Ramón E. Soto-Crespo provides some

³ Samuel Wilson observes that colonizing Europeans noticed differences between the people in the Greater and Lesser Antilles and "joined these observations with half-understood stories the Taino told them about other islanders. What emerged was a view of the Caribbean as having two kinds of people—Caribs and Tainos (Arawaks). What now seems more likely is that in 1492 the Caribbean contained many different ethnic groups, spread out through the Lesser Antilles, Greater Antilles, and Bahamas...[N]early all of them were descendants of Saladoid immigrants" (7). *The Indigenous People of the Caribbean*, edited by Samuel Wilson, includes essays that discuss the Taino and Island Carib societies; however, little is known about the other ethnic groups that likely lived throughout the region.

context for the story with a brief account of Ovando's reign as governor before exploring images of death in the story. According to Soto-Crespo, Kincaid "represent[s] colonial power through images of putrefaction" (362), and in his brief analysis of the story, he dissects those images and reveals the impact on both Ovando and the narrator. Diane Simmons spends even less time examining "Ovando," focusing instead on rhythm and loss in Kincaid's oeuvre. Strangely, Simmons argues that "At heart Jamaica Kincaid's work is not about the charm of a Caribbean childhood...Nor is it about colonialism" (466). Simmons is right that Kincaid's writing is rhythmic and deals with loss; however, the loss that Simmons identifies in "Ovando" is *due to* colonialism. Without Ovando's presence in the Antillean narrator's home, nothing would have been lost, and there would not have been a fall from "a state of wholeness in which things are unchangeably themselves and division is unknown" (466).

Furthermore, a (post)colonial reading of Kincaid's work becomes even more pertinent when we consider the large piece of paper Ovando begins carrying, on which "Ovando had rendered flat the imagined contents of his world" (6). This map is not an accurate representation of the world, but instead a representation of what Ovando *wants* to see in a world that he has called his own. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's description of the (post)colonial practice of mapping aligns perfectly with what Ovando has created: something "into which the European imagination can project itself and into which the European...explorer must penetrate" (*Postcolonial Studies* 32). Ovando lovingly pores over the map for months, but the narrator, on the other hand, finds it "ugly...for the lands and the seas were painted in the vile colors of the precious stones just ripped from their muddy home!...It looked like a fragile object that had been dropped on a hard surface and its pieces first swept up in a dustpan and then gently but

haphazardly placed on a tabletop” (6). The narrator sees only ugly chaos and a broken caricature in the map, especially when she compares it to the beautiful order of the landscape which she experiences daily, a landscape that is treasured by her and her people, rather than used carelessly for financial gain. This mapping scene occupies less than a full paragraph of the narrative, but its significance must not be overlooked; in fact, it crystalizes the (post)colonial impulse that drives “Ovando,” even from the beginning of the story.

The indigenous narrator welcomes Ovando, a stinking skeleton with a “body [made] from plates of steel...[that] was stained with shades of red, blood in various stages of decay” (3), into her home. However, the invitation is lost on Ovando, who makes himself comfortable before the narrator can finish inviting him in, and goes on to declare that “this is the new home I have been looking for, and I already like it so much that I have sent for my relatives in Spain, Portugal, France, England, Germany, Italy, Belgium, and The Netherlands. I know that they will like it here as much as I do, for they are just like me” (4). Ovando’s eyes are shut, perhaps purposefully, perhaps for reasons out of his control, so he cannot see the narrator or her relatives or friends (4); he sees only a place prime for settlement for himself and his colonizing friends. Whatever the reason for Ovando’s shut eyes, readers are left to wonder how Ovando’s actions might have been different if he would or could only open his eyes. In this moment, Kincaid “acknowledge[s] the relativity of modes of spatial (and, by extension, cultural) perception,” which Huggan describes as part of the post-colonial framework (135). Something as small as opening eyes could completely change Ovando’s perception of the land. Yet Ovando’s eyes are not open. He does not see the West Indies as our narrator does, what Kincaid “represents...as a home that is already domesticated—far from an ‘empty’ landscape. Thus Kincaid reverses the

accounts found in historical chronicles” (Soto-Crespo 360). People had not only been living in the Caribbean, but they had made it a home and invested it with meaning so that Ovando and all the colonizers he represents were, in fact, doing “irreparable harm” (4) as they invaded the place.

Before long, Ovando’s relatives arrive as promised, and “[a]s they entered the earth they kissed the ground, not as a sign of affection but rather as a sign of possession” (11). These relatives do not simply land on shore: significantly, they “enter” the earth, penetrating it in the way that Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin describe. Moreover, the attitude of the European colonizers toward the land is starkly different from that of the indigenous people. Here, Ovando’s relatives symbolically claim the land as an object to be owned as one might own a wagon or pot. Euro-American readers might view the narrator’s early hospitable actions as naïve, especially considering the claims on the land that Ovando’s friends make, but Joseph Bruchac explains that indigenous people have a very different view of land ownership than the European colonizers we meet in “Ovando”: “Giving someone else the right to also live [on the land] did not exclude us from continuing to rely on that land for our survival. It was more as if we were owned by the land and were cared for by it. The land was not like an ear of corn or a deerskin or a flint arrowhead, something that could be traded away” (28). Bruchac refers specifically to his own Abenaki Indian nation, but similar attitudes toward the land exist among native groups across the Americas.

Ovando justifies his presence and the forthcoming presence of his relatives by divine invocation: “A power outside and beyond me has predetermined these unalterable events” (4). Existing narratives of Natives as naïve simpletons who did nothing to prevent colonizers at first arrival are turned on their heads when we see the narrator’s response to Ovando: “I could have

brought a stop to what was an invasion to me, a discovery to him; after all, I too knew of divinities and eternities and unalterable events. But I looked closely at him. He was horrible on a scale I did not even know existed before. I sat at his feet and helped him take off his shoes” (4-5). The narrator assumes a position of humble service in the presence of one who so obviously needs care, attention, and pity.

Although physical appearance and sense of self mark a clear distinction between Ovando and the indigenous narrator, their attitude toward the land is perhaps the most striking difference between the two characters. The narrator “accept[s] [the world] in its flatness” and is “not tempted to transgress its boundaries” (6), including the border the sea creates. She is content to remain in the land which bore her and with which she is familiar. In stark contrast, Ovando transgresses the physical border of the Atlantic Ocean with devastating results, quickly seeking to dominate the “newly discovered” land and using his colonial map as a reinforcement of that ideology. European explorers consider the land a new paradise, and a highly desirable one at that. However, what the newcomers don’t realize is that perception blinds them. The narrator sadly realizes that “To the stranger’s eye (Ovando’s) my world is a paradise. To the stranger’s eye (Ovando’s) everything in my world *appears* as if it were made anew each night as I sleep, by gods in their heavenly chambers” (6-7, emphasis added). Her world is beautiful, but as an insider, as one who is deeply familiar with the land, the narrator knows that her world, her land, is more complex than Ovando’s initial perceptions can let him understand. Furthermore, the term “paradise” suggests that Ovando sees this world as not only beautiful but also bountiful with resources and heretofore untouched by humanity. We do not meet other aboriginal people in the

narrative, but at the very least, the narrator's presence should alert Ovando to the fact that the space is, in fact, already inhabited.

Not only do Ovando's perceptions of the narrator's land blind him to the reality of the situation, but his "Sheer Might" (8) and, perhaps more specifically, his greed lead to drastic changes in the physical landscape, as well. The narrator reports the following apocalyptic scene:

my own world in its flatness heaved up and down in the way of something alternately freezing and thawing out. I looked at my world: its usually serene and pleasing contours began to change before my eyes. The roots of trees were forced out of the ground. The grasses were ablaze with a fire that I did not know how to put out. The streams dried up, and the riverbeds became barren tracks. The birds all hovered overhead and blotted out the light of the sun. (8)

All at once, these changes occur, heightening the drama and intensifying the shock at what is lost. Of course, these kinds of changes *did* occur all over the Caribbean as the earth made way for domineering colonizers from Spain and Portugal. And it is precisely a passage such as this that might lead scholars to an ecocritical reading of "Ovando." The shared interest in land does leave room for environmental studies' place in postcolonial studies, but scholars interested in ecocritical readings of indigenous literature must tread carefully: a spiritual and traditional aspect cannot be separated from indigenous relationships to the land, and this often leads to conflict between the two fields: "ecocriticism has tended as a whole to prioritise extra-human concerns over the interests of disadvantaged human groups, while postcolonialism has been routinely, and at times unthinkingly, anthropocentric" (Huggan and Tiffin 17).

Furthermore, scholars must take care to avoid reductive claims about indigenous people as environmentalists. As David Waller argues, that categorization is "damaging to Indians of the past, present, and future" because it trivializes American Indian cultures and tends to "disappear" important concerns of contemporary Indians" (277). Shepard Krech III suggests

even more serious ramifications for this kind of categorization: the images of American Indians as environmentalists or ecologists “are ultimately dehumanizing” (26). Krech acknowledges that some American Indians and other indigenous people embrace the stereotype of the Ecological Indian, but he maintains that this stereotype “distorts culture. It masks cultural diversity. It occludes its actual connection to the behavior it purports to explain. Moreover, because it has entered the realm of common sense and as received wisdom is perceived as a fundamental truth, it serves to deflect any desire to fathom or confront the evidence for relationships between Indians and the environment” (27). Some indigenous people may well be environmentalists, and environmental concerns regarding the land do exist in some contemporary fiction by native women. However, scholars must carefully consider the context of literature which might be read ecocritically. For example, while Kincaid’s allegory does speak to concerns regarding the conservation of the earth’s resources and restoration of the land after humans’ irresponsibility, those concerns are secondary to those of (post)coloniality. The ecological impact that Kincaid describes here has occurred in the context of colonial pursuits, and any ecocritical reading of the story should take that context into account.

Out of the ecological destruction that Ovando enacts, disparate points of view emerge between the colonizers and the Tainos and Caribs who had been living on the land for centuries prior to their arrival. When the narrator sees a “large vein of gold” and other “glittering stones” in her path, she does not immediately excavate those resources, but not because she is ignorant of what they could do for her: “I can fashion for myself bracelets, necklaces, crowns. I can make kingdoms, I can make civilizations, I can lay waste” she thinks to herself (7). What separates the narrator from Ovando and his fellow Europeans is what they do with that knowledge. Whereas

Ovando chases the immediacy of wealth that can be gained from plundering the earth, the narrator “sees the destruction of [her] body, and [she] can see the destruction of [her] soul” (7), suggesting that the land *is* her body in the same way that Diane Glancy’s character does when she asks, “Didn’t the soldiers know we were the land?” (4). The ramifications of irresponsibly taking from the land would extend beyond the earth to her very body and soul. Ovando’s body has already suffered significantly before he meets the narrator, but his decaying body, little more than a skeleton, may be a result of his former exploits in “mak[ing] kingdoms” and “mak[ing] civilizations” with the resources he has mined. At the very least, in the short time he has been in the narrator’s home, Ovando has wreaked extensive havoc on the land, destroying what had been used responsibly for centuries by the indigenous people in the region.

Rather than feeling remorse, Ovando, now depicted as a devil by the narrator, takes pride in the destruction that occurs at his hand. He asserts that “he could reduce these precious trees to something held between the tips of two of his fingers but that he also held in his hands the millennia in which the trees grew to maturity, their origins, their ancestry, and everything that they had ever, ever been, and so too he held [her]” (9-10). Significantly, as Ovando exercises power over the trees, an important element of the land, so too does he exercise power over the narrator, power that eventually renders the narrator non-existent: “since I came from nothing I could not now exist in something, and so my existence was now rooted in nothing, and though I seemed to live and needed the things necessary to the living such as food and water and air, I was dead; and so though I might seem present, in reality I was absent” (10).

Rather than revealing inherent weakness in the narrator, this scene exemplifies what Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin describe as a devastating result of the clash between indigenous

and colonial views of the land: “The idea of not owning the land but in some sense being ‘owned by it’ is a way of seeing the world that is so different from the materiality and commodification of a colonizing power, that effective protection of one’s place is radically disabled when that new system becomes the dominant one” (*Postcolonial Studies* 179-80). The narrator is similarly disabled from protecting the land and herself. She tries to reason with Ovando, explaining that his attitudes and actions are dishonoring to him, but her speech is “extremely long and incoherent” due to the shock at “such cruelty, such barbarism, such harshness” (10). Even if the narrator could produce coherent speech at this moment, Ovando has already rendered the speaker non-existent through his twisted logic; Ovando is deaf to her arguments now and always.

Soto-Crespo suggests that the story “ends with the narrator’s acknowledging a fear of becoming possessed by her own allegory, as if being obsessed by the subject of imperial conquest were itself another form of colonization” (362). The narrator does finally admit that she has “exhausted [her]self laying out before [Ovando] his transgressions. [She is] exhausted from shielding [her]self so that his sins do not obsess and so possess [her]” (13), a rather bleak end to the destruction enacted by Ovando and his friends. However, even in her fear and exhaustion, the narrator has, in fact, laid out the blunt truth of the colonizer’s transgressions, and in doing so, has stripped away the lies Ovando tells himself to justify his actions. Ovando may not recognize these truths, but at least readers can.

Consequences of Forced Removal from Indigenous Land

Whereas Kincaid imagines an allegory to illustrate the devastation to the land that occurred when European colonizers settled down in the Caribbean, Diane Glancy focuses

primarily on the social devastation of forced displacement from indigenous lands at the hands of American colonizers in her *Pushing the Bear* series. Specifically, Glancy emphasizes the Cherokees' social, emotional, and spiritual connection to the land and traces their gradual alienation from the earth during the Trail of Tears in the wake of betrayal by the United States government and a minority Cherokee faction. Thousands of Cherokee were forced from their homes and removed to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River, in what is present day Oklahoma, from 1838-1839 along the Trail of Tears. Leading up to this historic event, however, were several unsettled interactions between the Cherokee on the one hand and on the other hand, white settlers who were moving into the area, backed by their United States government.

In 1791, the United States negotiated the Treaty of Holston with the Cherokee Nation, which should have ensured “perpetual peace” between the two parties; unfortunately that peace did not last long, and beginning in 1808, bands of Cherokees voluntarily emigrated west of the Mississippi River, away from their ancestral lands, likely foreseeing the trials that would be coming in the near future for those who remained. Cherokee leaders began ceding land in 1817 and 1819, and in 1828, the Cherokee Nation's new Principal Chief, John Ross, began building a capital city for the Cherokees in New Echota, Georgia. The state of Georgia became increasingly invasive of the Cherokee Nation, nullifying Cherokee laws, passing their laws restricting Cherokees, and trespassing on Cherokee land to search for gold (Sturgis xvii-xxii). In many ways, these actions echo those of Nicolás de Ovando 300 years earlier. Neither party expressed much interest in developing equitable relationships with the indigenous people they met, but focused almost exclusively on the economic possibilities that mining gold and other natural resources might afford.

Then in 1830, the Indian Removal Act was passed under Andrew Jackson's administration. Although he had a low view of Cherokees and other indigenous groups in America, "Andrew Jackson neither originated the policy contained in the 1830 Indian Removal Act nor created Indian Territory as an expression of race and geography. Instead, Jackson inherited from his predecessors [including Presidents Thomas Jefferson, John Monroe, and John Quincy Adams, and Secretaries of War John C. Calhoun and James Barbour] an already fully formed geographic idea" (Ronda 744). Despite these existing strained relationships, the 1835 Treaty of New Echota ultimately precipitated the forced removal of the Cherokee to Indian Territory: an unauthorized group of pro-removal Cherokees, including Elias Boudinot, Major Ridge, and John Ridge, ceded the Cherokee homeland for five million dollars and land in Indian Territory, which "the president was satisfied to use the document as an instrument for removing the Cherokees, and no amount of protest could alter his course" (Vipperman 540). Once the Senate ratified the treaty, the Cherokees had two years to move to Indian Territory, but thousands were moved forcibly when they failed or refused to meet the deadline, including the characters in Glancy's novels.

Although some might shy away from the difficult task of properly treating in fiction the harsh reality of these events, Sean Kicummah Teuton suggests Native authors should embrace historical frameworks in their writing: "we must begin by recognizing this history of repressive colonial relations. European imperialism has silenced resistant voices—voices without which we are denied a full account of American Indian life...the plea for scholarly self-determination to end critical 'dependence' is not only ethically just but also intellectually necessary" (15-16). This focus on history allows writers to "expose but also correct inaccurate constructions of American

Indian culture neither by appealing to essentialism nor by resorting to deconstruction, but by presenting alternative knowledge built on accounts that adhere to the social facts of Native life” (16). In this way, the land, the community, and the past of indigenous groups become important in supporting the “philosophical and actual recovery of Indian lands, histories, and identities” (16). Although it stands as an excellent example of his theory, Teuton does not discuss Glancy’s *Pushing the Bear* series at all. He very briefly mentions Glancy’s “Who Can Speak as an Indian?” essay, but quickly dismisses it (115), and otherwise lists Glancy in a footnote with other Native writers who identify themselves as mixedblood (249).

Despite the historical and colonial framework within which Glancy discusses issues related to displacement, Kenneth Hada reads the novel too broadly, asserting that it “speaks to all citizens concerning our need to understand and reclaim a lost association with landscape” (134). The Cherokee and other Native Americans have a very specific association with landscape that non-Natives do not have and cannot hope to “reclaim.” Although there is space for an ecocritical perspective of Glancy’s work, as well as that of other indigenous writers including Kincaid, Hada reads Glancy’s work rather narrowly, suggesting that it is “unnecessary to draw an artificial distinction between Native American authors and others, but it is noteworthy that many nature writers and ecocritical scholars recognize worthwhile ecological themes intrinsic to Native American culture” (132). Certainly artificial distinctions need not be drawn, but Hada, consciously or unconsciously, privileges Euro-American literary values when he suggests that some scholars deem indigenous writing “worthwhile” for their own means. This is exactly the kind of reading that Waller cautions against because of the damage it causes to indigenous people (277). Although some might consider this recognition by non-Natives to be a small

victory for indigenous writers, the paradox that Louis Owens identified still exists: recognition is granted to Native texts under the condition that identifiably Western elements exist (22).

Other scholars such as Arnold Krupat and Karsten Fitz have also examined *Pushing the Bear*. In “Representing Cherokee Dispossession,” Krupat discusses Glancy alongside Robert J. Conley, Glenn J. Twist, and Wilma Mankiller, other contemporary Cherokee writers who also present accounts of their ancestors’ removal in their fiction. Krupat focuses his attention on Glancy’s distinctive use of the spoken and written word, some of which is untranslated Cherokee, as well as the power of metaphors and stories in the novel, including traditional stories. Fitz, on the other hand, uses the concept of transculturation to consider the ways in which the tribal culture in *Pushing the Bear* survives relocation to an unknown territory. Fitz briefly mentions the fact that the Cherokee have close ties to the land, but focuses primarily on “the absorption of Christian legends and metaphors into their own tribal stories and the inclusion of new elements and concepts...to articulate, confront, and ultimately understand their suffering from within a tribal perspective and thus to survive as a tribal culture” (225). Despite these important discussions of Glancy’s work, her attention to the land is insistent in the *Pushing the Bear* series, prompting a closer analysis of its relationship to Glancy’s characters.

Attention to the land is perhaps particularly insistent in the first book where each chapter is named for the location of the Cherokee on their journey on the Trail of Tears: North Carolina, the stockade, Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, and finally Indian Territory. Glancy’s systematic reminder about place is particularly interesting when one considers that these places are named and mapped by the colonizers, not the Cherokee or even another indigenous group living in the region, and this colonial mapping does not coincide with

Cherokee ideas about the land. By foregrounding place in this curious way, Glancy alerts readers to one of the central concerns of the novel: the Cherokee task of navigating space and place across borders imposed and enforced by colonizers.

Navigating new spaces and places is particularly difficult considering the intense personal connection to the land in Du'stoyalun'yi—in what readers will know as North Carolina—that Glancy's Cherokee characters express. Maritole, a Cherokee wife and mother and one of the novel's central characters, is initially in a state of denial at being taken captive by white soldiers. She insists that “They couldn't remove us. Didn't the soldiers know we were the land?” (4). In her devastation, Maritole echoes Allen's assertion that “We are the land...the land (Mother) and the people (mothers) are the same” (119). Maritole cannot accept what is happening to her because her identity is inextricably linked to the land on which she lives. Although Fanon makes a convincing argument that land is the most essential value for colonized people, for colonized Cherokee like Maritole, the land has even greater significance: their identity is intertwined with the land to the extent that they consider themselves to *be* the land, rather than just settled on it. Not only this, but Glancy also shows the significance of the land to Cherokee women in particular.

Maritole asserts an inseparable relationship to the land, but her lament at the forced removal continues further when she states that “The cornstalks were our grandmothers...The cornstalks waved their arms trying to hold us. Their voices were the long tassels reaching the air. Our spirits clung to them. Our roots entwined” (4). Maritole's comment about the cornstalks is ambiguous—are the cornstalks her actual ancestors? or do the cornstalks allow ancestors to continue expressing themselves after they die? or is Maritole placing herself in Corn Woman's

lineage?⁴—but it reveals what Geary Hobson describes in his introduction to *The Remembered Earth*: “In many Native American languages the words ‘people’ and ‘land’ are indistinguishable and inseparable” (9). Thus, the experience of losing the land, an integral part of themselves, to the ownership of white men results in disorientation so severe that it unmoors the Cherokee from existing as they have always known how to. Maritole, for example, admits that the “earth was strange to [her] now,” and Luthy, Maritole’s sister-in-law, acknowledges that she “didn’t feel like a part of the earth” (27, 85). Considering that the land was so integral to their sense of self, this removal is not only emotionally difficult, but psychologically difficult as well.

Maritole is not the only Cherokee who mourns her loss of land as a partial loss of self. Lacey Woodard, another Cherokee woman who travels the Trail of Tears with Maritole’s family, later echoes Maritole’s initial claim: “Didn’t [the white men] know the land was not bought and sold? Would they be arguing over the sun next? The stars?...The Cherokee would survive because we were the land...home⁵” (95). Similarly, Alotohee, who we otherwise learn very little about, expresses what might be considered an even more traditional relationship to the land: “If I

⁴ The Cherokee Nation’s official website records several traditional stories, including the “Legend of the First Woman”: The Great One who created the Earth, including plants and animals, also created a Cherokee man to help Him on Earth. After some time, the Great One caused a green plant (a corn stalk) to grow over the heart of the man as he was sleeping, and a woman began to appear at the top of the stalk. When the man awoke, he helped the woman down from the corn stalk, and together, they built a home and planted the kernels of corn. The turkey, a sacred bird, showed the woman when the corn was ready to eat. The first woman was called SELU or Corn Woman. See “Traditional Stories” online at *The Official Site of the Cherokee Nation* for more stories from the Cherokee Nation.

⁵ In addition to an interest in the relationship between Cherokee and the land, Glancy also prompts discussion of language in her novels: the elided word is spelled using the Cherokee alphabet. Several words, phrases, and passages in the Cherokee language using the Cherokee syllabary exist in the first novel, and in the second, the phonetic spellings of several Cherokee words and phrases are represented. Occasionally the Cherokee text is translated within the narrative of the story, though just as often, that text is transliterated, making it difficult for readers to grasp much of the meaning. And, even though Glancy includes “A Note on the Written Cherokee Language” at the end of her first book, some words and phrases simply have no translation at all. Just as the Cherokee are alienated from the land and themselves through the forced removal, so too are many readers alienated from the text through the unfamiliar Cherokee alphabet and language.

open my mouth, sometimes the faraway sounds enter. I can chew the sounds. Swallow...The sound inside me. It brings the land inside, too. I see it when I close my eyes. I feel it in my chest. I carry the cornfields with me. The animals, too” (98). In an ongoing process of chewing and swallowing sounds, Alotohee is able to digest the land in order to carry it with her across state lines, the imposed colonial borders, and allow it to become fully integrated with her being. Of course, digesting the land through specific words and sounds is an incomplete substitute for living on the land they know among the cornfields and animals with which they are familiar; furthermore, separation from the land results in a partial separation of self since Alotohee has digested land that is now taken from her. Not only does colonial control of the land result in grief and bitterness in the colonized Cherokee nation, but also, and more disturbingly, alienation from the land.

As is evident from Alotohee’s experience, and because, as Hobson suggests, the Cherokee are inseparable from their land, their forced removal by non-Native soldiers causes deep grief, and eventually, a sense of alienation of self. Although we see some of this same grief and alienation in Kincaid’s narrator, the depths seem to reach further here, outside of an allegorical world and inside a world based on the historical past. When Maritole waves a final farewell to the North Carolina woods, the “loss and sorrow was so jumbled [she] could hardly walk” (68). The loss is tangible and has physical effects on Maritole and the others. Maritole’s sister-in-law, Luthy, whose “thoughts spin like dried bits of cornstalks in the dust of [the] field” and whose “legs still walk in the spasms of her delirium” is weak from the loss and the difficult travel (87). Maritole tries to lend her strength through encouragement: “We’ve got a new land we’re going to. Not the land of North Carolina with yellow leaves. But a new land. The old land

won't leave us, Luthy. We carry it within us to wherever we're going... You have to imagine it" (87-8). Unfortunately, this is small comfort to Luthy, who simply looks away. She knows that the land now designated for them, comfortably removed from white settlements on the map, will never compensate for what was taken. Maritole fails even to comfort herself, quickly turning to wailing for the baby and mother she lost on the trail, neither of whom received a proper burial.

Significantly, the Cherokee men do not express similar depths of loss of the land.

Knobowtee and Tanner are upset by broken treaties and laws imposed by foreign governments (5, 21, 224), and Him-who-we-see-the-bones-of-his-hand expresses consternation at the white men who "talks as if the land's theirs. Don't they know we been here long?...I part of old earth" (209). However, the utter desperation that consumes Maritole, Luthy, and Alotohee in different ways has no analogue amongst the men. As women, Maritole, Luthy, and Alotohee would have spent countless hours working the land and tending the crops, time in which the men typically would spend hunting or warring⁶. The women's particularly close relationship to the land recalls the gendered relationship between open, virginal space and penetrating colonial explorers that Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin describe (*Postcolonial Studies* 32). The colonial project was such a male-dominated and -interested project that an encounter with women who held real power in land matters was likely equally problematic for Euro-American settlers as indigenous people living where "civilization" was supposed to develop. Furthermore, property rights were defined

⁶ Theda Perdue observes that "Cherokee men and women performed different tasks, followed different rules of behavior, and engaged in different rituals" (17) based on the principles found in stories about Kana'ti and Selu who hunted and grew corn, respectively. According to the Cherokee, "A person's job was an aspect of his or her sexuality, a source of economic and political power, and an affirmation of cosmic order and balance" (Perdue 17-18). Furthermore, Perdue suggests that "The connection between women and corn [through Selu] gave women considerable status and economic power because the Cherokees depended heavily on that crop for subsistence" (25). Not only were women connected to the land spiritually, but they were also connected physically through their work, which gave them power in their community.

very differently by Cherokees than by Anglo-Americans: “Instead of recognizing land as a commodity, the Cherokees developed a bifurcated system of property holding. They individually owned personal items, livestock, slaves, and improvements such as houses or fences that a person erected on the land, but the land itself, as well as natural resources, belonged to the Nation” (Perdue 136). If colonizing settlers could shift women’s power away from the land and shift Cherokees’ sense of land ownership to their own, they would be that much closer to achieving their goals. The forced removal along the Trail of Tears seriously damaged the women’s relationship to the land, as Glancy shows through Maritole, Luthy, and Alotohee, among others.

Although some of her characters experience grief and disorientation at the loss of their land, as one would expect from colonized people, Glancy complicates the novel by also including those who express disillusion regarding the land. At one point, War Club, a character who appears regularly but usually speaks or thinks few words at any given time, complains simply, “Even the snow is white” (73). According to Hada, “These terse words suggest a perceived inversion concerning the roles of nature and the Cherokee, which before the coming of the Europeans had been that of companionship, nurture, and instruction. In this context, to label the snow as ‘white’ establishes a semiotic reminder of the European oppression forcing the Cherokee expulsion” (136-37). A Cherokee, whose identity is so closely intertwined with the land, connects part of the natural world to the oppressive white colonizers, which carries more significance than a mere reminder of European oppression. As the Cherokee march ever onward under the harsh conditions of the Trail of Tears, it seems unlikely that they would need a reminder of who is oppressing them. Rather, Glancy more likely uses War Club at this moment

to reveal the depths of the psychological transformation that some Cherokee underwent as a result of the traumatic removal. Instead of connecting to nature as another part of himself, War Club now sees nature as something foreign and even threatening.

To add another layer of complexity to the novel, Glancy also includes Cherokee who exhibit bitterness and anger toward the soldiers. Lacey Woodard, for example, searches for an answer to explain how the soldiers could drive them off of the land they had lived on for generations: “Maybe it was because we worshiped the earth instead of God, Reverend Mackenzie preached. Maybe it was because some of us had black slaves, Reverend Bushyhead said. Maybe it was because of gold and our cornfields, the men said” (56). Lacey Woodard seems to side with the cynical men, believing that the removal had nothing to do with the Cherokee people in particular but only with white men’s greed for natural resources. Just before reaching Indian Territory, Tanner, Maritole’s brother, and Knobowtee, her husband, recount the decisions that led to their current predicament. Rather than fighting the federal government, they had decided to work towards a unified nation with Euro-American settlers. But eventually treaty after treaty was signed “to settle boundaries once and for all. No more land would be ceded. But our territory had shrunk to a handful of land and disappeared. Now we owned the-land-we-haven’t-seen” (224). The Cherokees had already experienced new boundaries and borders imposed on them by white settlers, but previously, they were progressively restricted on familiar land. Now they were banished to land they had never before visited. What the Cherokees thought would end in a peaceful, unified nation, turned into a cruel joke with the Native Americans on the losing end.

All of the pain that Glancy portrays through her characters is made sharper when one considers how much the Cherokee nation had already compromised, how many metaphorical borders were crossed, in order to maintain peaceful relations with encroaching white men. Sequoyah developed a syllabary in 1821, which allowed the Cherokee language to become a written language in the way that English was, and the first bilingual Cherokee newspaper, *The Cherokee Phoenix* was formed in 1828. In 1822, the Cherokees created a Supreme Court similar to the American one, and five years later in 1827, the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation was written and ratified, modelled after the U.S. Constitution (Sturgis xx). And as Glancy points out, the Cherokee had also begun to build Anglo-style homes and wear Anglo-style clothes to further ease settlers' anxieties about them. During this period, traditional gender roles began to change as well, as American politicians strongly encouraged Cherokee men to become farmers and Cherokee women to become spinners and weavers⁷. Perhaps even more significantly, many Cherokees embraced Christianity, such as Glancy's Reverend Bushyhead, who also, in Indian Territory "worked to establish civilization," whereas Knobowtee and Maritole "worked to establish their daily lives" (*Pushing the Bear: After the Trail of Tears* 155). Establishing civilization recalls colonizers' desire to bring civilization to so-called uncivilized indigenous people across the Americas, so although Reverend Bushyhead never openly admits to becoming

⁷ Traditionally, "women directed and performed most agricultural labor...[M]en generally helped with the clearing, planting, and harvest, but the women did the rest" (Dowd 271). However, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Hawkins "advocated a federally sponsored gender revolution" for American Indian nations as "part of a larger civilizing plan" (267). As part of this plan, Jefferson and Hawkins believed that "[w]hen Indian men farmed rather than hunted, when they wore clothes spun by their women rather than purchased from the unscrupulous trader, they would live well on less land, leaving a surplus they could sell to the United States" (Dowd 270). Furthermore, this gender revolution "would render Indian men less warlike, less dangerous, and less corruptible by European enemies, while it freed women from drudgery" (Dowd 270). However, the gender revolution did not take effect in Cherokee households as Jefferson had hoped, as "Indians took slavery, plows, and spinning wheels and adapted them to their own preferred patterns of culture" (Dowd 280), which were deeply intertwined with their religious beliefs.

a Christian or establishing civilization for the purpose of easing relationships with white men, that sad possibility remains. The Cherokee had crossed several borders into a whole new cultural territory with the hopes of justifying for colonizers their continued existence on the land. Thus, in light of the gradual Anglicization, the U.S. government's betrayal was that much more treacherous.

Although the Cherokee nation had become somewhat more Anglicized even prior to the Trail of Tears, a stark difference between the Cherokee nation and white men remains in regard to their attitudes toward the land. As Lacey and many of the men seem to believe, Euro-Americans view the land, not in a spiritual, psychological, or emotional manner, but only in terms of potential financial gains, similar to what we see in "Ovando." Although Maritole spends less time contemplating the treaties than Knobowtee and others do, she still intuitively feels that white men have a different relationship to the land than she is familiar with. As she crosses into Kentucky and wishes to be taken into the afterlife by the Great Spirit, Maritole thinks to herself, "I felt the white man's presence in the land we crossed. It was a new world that had come over ours. We didn't fit" (121). Not only is the terrain different, but the spirit of the land makes it unrecognizable to Maritole. They have crossed a spiritual border that the white men do not sense or understand. Knobowtee is also disgruntled by the Euro-Americans' attitude toward the land. Even though the Cherokee are not responsible for the route they take to Indian Territory, Knobowtee reflects on the "farmers along the way [who] collect toll when the line passes through their land. They think we will steal their stock. They say the topsoil is disrupted. They want compensation" (91). Not only do these farmers view the horrific removal as an opportunity to make extra money from people who have just lost everything, but their short memories allow

them to forget that the land they now own used to belong to Native Americans. A lack of respect permeates both non-Native soldiers' and civilians' attitudes toward the land.

Although scholars have not critically examined her second novel in the series, Glancy continues to wrestle with the meaning of the land as the same characters struggle to reorient themselves and settle the new land in Indian Territory. Unfortunately for the Cherokee, life in this new space is characterized by conflict: conflict with others over the land and conflict with the land itself. Although the Cherokee were sent to land promised for them, other American Indian nations had already settled it, including Creeks, Osage, and Old Settler Cherokees, who had already been there for twenty years. Despite the deep-seated connection to their original land in North Carolina, many set that connection aside and resort to murders, burnings, curses, and spells against other American Indians in order to claim the right to occupy this new space (10-11). Survival depends on it. As Glancy's narrator explains, "It was hard enough to come to a new land, even harder when that new land was held by others" (11). Even after negotiations to settle land rights among different American Indian nations, there remains the question of "the white settlers, already in Arkansas. How long before they entered Indian Territory and took that land too?" (11). There is no apparent end in sight to the conflict: white settlers had surreptitiously taken their ancestral land already, and experiencing a similar loss with new land seems to be a real possibility for the narrator, who presumably speaks for many Cherokee.⁸

Although Glancy's characters have no spiritual or emotional connection to Oklahoma's land, desperation drives some of them to fight amongst each other, even as members of the same

⁸ Glancy is a master of free indirect discourse, which can make it difficult to discern whose voice certain passages belong to. At various moments in the two *Pushing the Bear* novels, Maritole, Knobowtee, Reverend Bushyhead, and other central and minor characters speak through the narrator's voice.

tribe. Lee Schweninger and Cara Cilano agree that the reason for such conflict is due to separation from the original homeland: “the reservation, a geographical location often at a far remove from tribes’ earlier lands, becomes a vexed site for the grounding of any secure articulation of a ‘national’ identity because of the sense of dislocation it imparts to the peoples contained there” (41). In a new space within arbitrary and artificial borders, the Cherokee have to relearn how to relate to one another and understand themselves as part of the whole, the Cherokee nation. In their history, the Cherokee understood different perspectives among their tribe members as “two parts of the same way of life,” rather than conflicted division (14). However, since their displacement, they “were now divided west from east. There were divisions within divisions. Knobowtee from O-ga-na-ya. Rebuilding and revenge. Those were the divisions between them. Men were divided from women. Men were divided from themselves,” and perhaps most significantly, “Everyone was divided from their land” (14). The artificial borders imposed through colonization have helped create fragmentation and division between members of the Cherokee nation and also within individuals. Knobowtee is determined to attempt rebuilding the life he had in Du’stayaun’yi with his family in this new place, within these new borders, but others like O-ga-na-ya care nothing for this new land. *Their* land, the land in North Carolina, was the only land that mattered, and the only reasonable course of action in O-ga-na-ya’s mind is to seek revenge for the atrocities he and his people endured on the Trail of Tears and in Indian Territory. Not only did the forced removal separate people from their life-giving ancestral land but it also led to discord among family members, and because those wounds had not had time to heal, people were also divided from this new land.

Knobowtee and O-ga-na-ya represent two different attitudes toward those who express differences of opinion when it comes to the new land in which they find themselves, and readers find in Reverend Jesse Bushyhead yet another iteration of the conflict over what to do with the land and how to approach it. Bushyhead, a Cherokee converted to Christianity, feels compelled to encourage the people, but instead he “overpreached, trying to pump faith into the people” (8). Although some, including Maritole, respond well to Bushyhead, friction arises as a result of his preaching. In one sermon, Bushyhead compares the Cherokee to the Israelites who wandered in the desert for forty years:

We didn't wander in the wilderness like Israel but made a straight trail from the old territory to new—well, we followed an arched trail that traveled north of impassable land with its dense woods and ridges. Not forty years, but four winter months. Now we are in the new territory. It is not Canaan. But what had Canaan been like? It was a place where the people worked to drive out the enemy. Don't we do the same here? We work each day to drive away our discouragement. We work each day to plow our unmanageable land. (80-81, italics in original)

However, spiritualizing their work on the stubborn land is frustrating to many, perhaps in part because Bushyhead has adopted a new religion. Tanner, O-ga-na-ya, and Knobowtee discuss the ways in which the people should respond to Bushyhead, especially in light of the traditional conjurers amongst them. Knobowtee finally ends the discussion by cautioning the others to not “get too concerned with religion... We have our fields to plow. That is our direction” (85). At the end of the day, Knobowtee tries to bring peace by refocusing his family’s energies toward the difficult task of establishing a new system of agriculture in their new home.

The human-human conflict grounded in different attitudes toward the land would be difficult but manageable if there was not also a physical conflict between the Natives and the land that prevent them from easily establishing a new home in Indian Territory. As soon as

Knobowtee, O-ga-na-ya, and other men find arable land to farm, they begin plowing. However, they find that “the soil was a shut door that would not open” (25), as though this new land recognizes that they should not be there and resists their settlement. The land is hard, full of rocks that seem to multiply and disrupt plowing straight rows for corn. Knobowtee, exhausted from labor that yields no results admits, “Sometimes I don’t think I can do it. The fieldstones are piled by the field, and I plow more. The conjurers say it is the land fighting back” (36). Although no Cherokee ancestors are buried here, a spiritual boundary exists in this land that the people must contend with, which elevates the conflict between the Cherokee and the land and incites more conflict between the people.

The land was not just full of rocks, but it also became so muddy that “It was as if the earth was eating them, was pulling them back into themselves, or into it. *Mud. Muddy. Mudded.* The object became the action... The language that would build also would unravel, each working to destabilize the other, making resettlement harder, nearly impossible at times, because it set them working against each other” (47, italics in original). Not even the passing of time makes it easier for the people to scrape a living from the land: “The soil protested *each year* they broke the field for planting. Knobowtee felt the resistance as he walked behind the horse...as if the horse, as well as the land, was going against the grain of their inclination” (143, emphasis added). The land is unrelenting and seems to have the strength to continue the fight until the end of time.

Fortunately, after much time has passed, the people come to something of an understanding with the land: “[The stones] did not want to move. Yes, the conjurers understood that. They kept turning the stones in their hands as they dug them from the ground, telling them

they did not come intentionally to move them from their place, but had themselves been removed” (161). Despite the long struggle between Cherokee and the new land, the conjurers identify a point of connection with the stubborn stones in order to map a new, shared existence: they displace the stones only because they had been displaced themselves. Yet not even the shared displacement seems to be enough to resolve the conflict between the Cherokee and the land. Eventually, Knobowtee and O-ga-na-ya come to the conclusion that indolence on their part is justified because “They were overpowered by the new land, by its indolence in not taking the plow, the seed. It was the indolence of the sky not to provide the clouds needed for rain...The Cherokees were just reflecting their situation. They were in a reciprocity to the land” (177). The land’s continued resistance to the Cherokee wears them down to a point of reciprocity, but ironically, this reciprocity fails to produce a sustainable life on the land that the Cherokee so desperately need.

It’s not until Maritole finally accepts Indian Territory as her land and her home that she comes to terms with it: she “looked at the dirt on her hands and under her fingernails. It was the dirt of the new territory...For one moment, she touched the world she was leaving behind. *Good-bye. Good-bye. You were all to me. But I give up remembering. Now I plow the new field. You only get in the way. Move over*— Maritole pushed the rump of the bear. It left the cabin, for that moment anyway” (184, italics in original). Part of the difficulty of living life well in this new land seems to be the refusal of Maritole and the others to fully accept their new home. They continue to consider themselves on the wrong side of a boundary determined by others. After bidding farewell to the memories and old fields which stand in the way of successful life in Indian Territory, Maritole forces herself to push the weight of the loss—the bear—away. It

leaves, but it seems clear that the absence of that bear likely will not last long. There simply is no way to fully, finally sever the ties to the land with which Maritole and her community are spiritually connected.

Despite the despair that permeates *Pushing the Bear*, Glancy's second novel ends with a glimmer of hope as the men dig a well: "The smell of the earth was upon them in the cabin. They brought it in with them from digging the well...Maybe it would be their grave as they dug down and down into the earth. Yes, it was a kind of death. But water would come from the hole. It would come out of their own land. Out of it their lives would return" (185). Fresh, clean water to make life possible is certain to come from the land. The only caveat is that a psychological "kind of death" needs to happen first in which they all recognize this place as "their own land" rather than only the place they now live. Out of this death, conflict between the Cherokee and the land ceases and life returns—at least as long as the bear stays away.

Throughout these two novels, Glancy foregrounds the intensity of the indigenous connection to the land and the tremendous trauma that occurred following forced removal from that land at the hands of colonizers and to space within the artificially boundaries of Indian Territory. Glancy skillfully resists the colonial gaze by complicating stereotypes and thwarting temptations to reductive, essentialist readings of the Cherokee nation by depicting the conflicting psychology that plagued so many. As fiction that tells a different history than the dominant white one, Glancy appropriates the genres of historical fiction and travel narratives to reclaim what colonizers have tried to forget about this period in American and Cherokee history. Although Kincaid's short story, an allegory about European colonizers in the Caribbean, initially seems so dissimilar from Glancy's multi-vocal, bilingual fictional accounts of the Trail of Tears,

significant and common (post)colonial and indigenous concerns with the land exist among the two; such commonality affirms what Inés Hernández-Avila argues: "One of the specific ways that boundaries need to be remapped, or better still transformed, in the study of Native American literature is in the si(gh)ting of 'Indianness' and 'Americanness' with respect to this hemisphere rather than simply with respect to the United States and Canada" (173). Extending a discussion of Native American literature to include texts from south of the United States border does not have to erase distinctive elements from specific tribal groups. Instead, this broader discussion provides alternative avenues for understanding the ways in which contemporary indigenous people across the Americas claim and express their identities in the wake of ongoing colonization.

Connection to Lost Indigenous Land beyond the Grave

While Glancy explores the relationship between indigenous women and the land through the historical event of the Trail of Tears, Pauline Melville focuses on the same spiritual connection in a contemporary setting in "The Migration of Ghosts." Few scholars have written about this particular short story in Melville's collection by the same title; among those scholars, Kathleen Renk argues that Melville critiques globalization by "linking globalization with environmental degradation" ("Disaster Capitalism" 66) and "considers the possibility of an alternative to globalized capitalism and insular tribalism as she grapples with the possibility of the resurrection of the 'ghost' of communism, but this time a more perfected communism that might realize its ideals of economic and social justice" ("Disaster Capitalism" 67). Renk's focus on political ideologies is borne out by the narrative, and she does briefly discuss the

environmental impact of communism in Loretta's home; however, the indigenous relationship to the land deserves closer attention, particularly since its contemporary setting reveals the ongoing effects of colonization in the Caribbean.

Loretta, whose mother was a Macusi Indian, is married to Vincent, an Englishman, and travels with him to his native land. Loretta is visibly uncomfortable throughout the trip, "aware of having the darkest complexion" and feeling that "such social occasions [as the wedding reception of Vincent's niece] were a strain" (180), even though she does speak English. Interestingly, Loretta's discomfort seems to increase at moments when Vincent's excitement at being home is greatest: "nothing could quench Vincent's delight at being in England and his desire that his wife should feel the same...He longed for her to share his enthusiasm...He wanted her to like everything, to share his feelings, even his memories. Her criticisms disappointed him" (181). Vincent recalls the past, solidifies his identity, and glories in the familiar landmarks as he reconnects with the places he loves yet left.

Unlike "Ovando" which is set in the indigenous land, or the *Pushing the Bear* series which begins in indigenous land and gradually moves away from it to reservation territory, "The Migration of Ghosts" takes place entirely in Europe, an ocean away from the Loretta's native land, a significant border to cross. Despite this more exotic location, three events occur to indicate the significance of Loretta's land to her and her fellow Macusi Indians. First, when Vincent mentions communists, Loretta recalls an incident involving some near her home in Roraima: "Armed police and ranchers had shot down some of the Sem Terra, the landless ones, a few hundred yards down the road...The Sem Terra people had refused to be moved on by the ranchers and had just sat in the road. It was a set-up. The police arrived and, when the Sem Terra

still refused to move, they shot eight of them right there on the ground and several more who tried to flee” (182). The violent reprisal seems extreme, but Loretta admits that “The Sem Terra were not liked by her own Macusi people. They burned the forest and squatted on the land. The Macusi claimed that the land was Indian territory” (183). Rather than living in reciprocity with the land, the Sem Terra have political motivations for using and redistributing the land according to their own revised map; this puts them in conflict with the Macusi who value the land for traditional cultural reasons.

The fight over land in Roraima is a complex one, even today. Not only are the Macusi and other indigenous people in the area battling the government for official demarcations of land for themselves, but the Sem Terra, or Landless Workers’ Movement, also fight for land reform, specifically against increasingly modernized and globalized agribusinesses. According to Max Aji, “Relations between the peasantry and capital are permanently conflictual and are defined, on one hand, by the subaltern position of the peasantry vis-à-vis capital (including the power of capital to destroy and recreate the peasantry in accord with its own interests), and on the other, by peasant resistance in setting the terms of its own reproduction, through land occupations” (para.1).

Although these are noble goals, problems arise when indigenous groups, including the Macusi, refuse to comply with efforts to achieve them. Ben Penglase states that “The indigenous peoples of northern Roraima...have been the victims of an ongoing campaign of terror and violence waged largely by local ranchers with the support of the Roraima state police. Especially targeted have been the Macuxi and Wapixana Indians...The goal of this campaign is to drive the Indians off land that they claim as their traditional home and to discourage them from pressing

for the creation of an officially demarcated indigenous area” (2). Even more problematic than the colonial efforts to prevent indigenous peoples in the area from the right to their own land is the fact that many government officials disregard the fact that these actions occur. According to Penglase, “violence against these indigenous communities...has gone entirely unpunished by the state and federal authorities. The response of the government—when it is not actively involved in the violence—is unresponsive, complicit, and completely inadequate. Impunity is guaranteed” (2). Furthermore, in his essay on the Sem Terra, Ajl only briefly acknowledges indigenous interests in the land: agribusiness puts “indigenous territories [in Roraima] at risk. This conjuncture challenges us to rethink the concept of territory. The simple notion of territory as mere geographic space is insufficient for addressing the conflicts among the peasant movements and indigenous movements of Latin America” (para. 16). The boundaries that separate indigenous people and local ranchers continue to be contested and unstable in this region because of the force the earliest colonizers exerted over the people and the land.

Although some indigenous people in the region continue to fight to retain their traditional lands today, others, like Loretta, were displaced. Radhika Mohanram suggests that “Within the context of displacement from one’s nation, often an encounter with a compatriot or a familiar feature of landscape powerfully and painfully evokes the other terms [of nation and people]” (6). As a doubly displaced person, Loretta, first removed from the Macusi in her hometown through her marriage to Vincent, and then temporarily transplanted to Europe, where she is uncomfortably aware of the darkness of her complexion in the midst of “the sheer whiteness of northern Europeans” (186), experiences the same powerful and painful evocation of her home. In Prague, Loretta sees a street performer who “was unmistakably a native Indian like her: the same

jet-black straight hair, the same brown face and flat features and fat brown eyelids over black pebble eyes” (186). Vincent speaks with the drummer and learns that he is from Mongolia. To explain the similarity, Vincent offers, “But your people are supposed to have come over from Mongolia originally, across the Bering Straits, aren’t they? Maybe that’s why you look alike” (187). Vincent believes that the Macusi crossed significant borders before eventually settling in present-day Brazil, just as the conquistadors did centuries later. Vincent’s version of history, her people’s history, is new to Loretta, but his belief is not uncommon for Euro-Americans. Simon Ortiz explains that there is

a notion held by Euro-American culture that Indian people came to the Americas from elsewhere, namely Asia. Indian people have disputed this non-Indian contention, which to them is intended to demean and denigrate their indigenous identity by implying that their origin was elsewhere and away from their Native American world. Further, Indian people have seen this as an attempt to undermine their claims to the land they have always known as their and which is absolutely associated with their cultural identity.
(xiii)

Although Vincent loves Loretta, his assumptions perhaps belie his subconsciously negative attitude toward Loretta and other indigenous people from Brazil. Despite the conflicting accounts of her people, Loretta and the drummer share a moment where “They faced each other across tens of thousands of years” and Loretta feels “unexpectedly liberated” after the encounter (187).

Finally, Vincent and Loretta happen upon beautiful murals in an empty courtyard that remind Loretta of her people’s water spirits, leading her to wonder if spirits can migrate, cross borders into new terrain and return as easily. Whereas Ovando’s and the Cherokee’s border crossings result in much pain, the idea of this kind of border crossing seems to bring comfort to Loretta. Vincent, however, is certain that “spirits are quite conservative. They stick around the same place” (190). Later, Loretta returns to the idea and asserts that “When I die, I expect my

spirit will return to my village and hover around there for a bit until it just dissolves” (194). So rooted is she to the place where she grew up, that when she dies, Loretta knows that she will return there in death from wherever she might be in life. That spiritual connection to the land transcends the boundary of the grave and is one that Vincent only begins to understand by the end of the story: “Although he enjoyed his life in Brazil, perhaps he would never feel that he understood it properly because he did not know the ghosts. Just as Loretta did not know about Henry VIII or Kafka or Dachau” (196). Vincent’s appreciation for the Brazilian landscape is shallowly rooted because he was not born there; he lacks the spiritual connection to the place that Loretta has. Furthermore, as a comfortable European, he has not experienced the same struggles or witnessed the same colonial atrocities as Loretta and the Macusi people have.

Loretta’s attitude toward her land is complicated because of the ruthless colonizers who had invaded the space. On the one hand, Loretta’s visit to Europe is littered with memories of life in Brazil, which together create a map of home that overlays her experiences in the present time, indicating the extent to which she is grounded in that space. On the other hand, in the company of Vincent’s friends, Loretta is glad when they do not ask her about Brazil: “It was a relief that none of her hosts seemed to be interested in either her or the continent she came from. The lack of attention made her feel safely invisible” (191). Even years after Loretta witnessed soldiers rape and torture some village girls, the pain is fresh and recounting the stories would surely be difficult when the audience is comprised of Europeans who have enjoyed the benefits of colonialism and are likely ignorant of the cost to the indigenous people. Whereas Glancy reveals the conflicting emotions regarding lost land through Maritole and other characters at the time of removal, Melville shows how conflicting emotions regarding native land continue to

plague the indigenous people of the Caribbean even centuries after the first Europeans set foot there.

Mapping Colonized Land and Bodies

The physical landscape plays an important role in each of the narratives already discussed, revealing connections between the values of indigenous women writers across the Americas. The physical landscape similarly plays an important role in *Monkey Beach* by Eden Robinson (Haisla-Heiltsuk). Robinson tells the story of Lisamarie Hill, a twenty-something Haisla woman growing up in present-day Kitamaat, an Indian reservation located in the Haisla's traditional homeland along British Columbia's coast. The story opens with Jimmy, Lisamarie's brother, lost at sea somewhere between Kitamaat and Namu, a six-hour boat ride to the south. Her parents set out to find him, but it doesn't take long for Lisamarie to feel the urge to be with her parents and join in the search. As she travels alone by boat to Namu, Lisamarie remembers moments from her past, including various commonplace and significant interactions with her friends and family, as well as terrifying premonitions and visits by ghosts and shapeshifters, and these memories oftentimes overtake the present-day story of the journey to Namu and the search for Jimmy.

Critics such as Jennifer Andrews, Jodey Castricano, and Shelley Kulperger focus on these Gothic elements in their analyses of the novel. Andrews considers the supernatural elements of the novel and argues that Robinson's "depiction of the Gothic within the Haisla community and through a character whose life blends tribal beliefs and practices with an intimate knowledge of the non-Native world calls for a fundamental rethinking of the significance of the Gothic novel

for English Canadian literature and Native Canadian literature in particular” (2). Castricano takes a slightly different approach, explaining how the Haisla are “haunted by the legacy of European contact” (802), and Kulperger similarly argues that “feminist postcolonial Gothic surfaces intertwined personal, national and regional histories by a precise materializing and familiarizing of haunting, trauma, monstrosity, and fear” (108). Castricano’s and Kulperger’s colonial/postcolonial lens is appropriate, particularly with the novel’s insistent focus on the Haisla relationship to land, an important issue for colonized people whose land was usurped, including so many indigenous people in the Americas who also have spiritual and cultural ties to the land which magnifies its significance for them.

Another scholar, Kit Dobson, breaks away from these Gothic readings of *Monkey Beach*, reading Robinson as primarily resisting representations of traditional Haisla life. Dobson asserts that Robinson

express[es] a need to maintain the ability to represent more than Native experiences... The ghettoization of writers into essentialized ethno-cultural categories is of a piece with the history of the representation of Indigenous peoples as vanishing. It is also consistent with Canadian colonialism, in which Native writers are associated with a fixed point of origin—their indigeneity tied to taxidermic notions of tradition and history rather than to the present—a position that limits their participation in contemporary life and their ability to posit self-governance. (60)

Although her argument is valid to a certain extent, Dobson reveals a limited understanding of Native peoples in her assertion that connections to the past hinder indigenous people from accomplishing things in the present. Dobson falls victim to an iteration of what Mary Louise Pratt calls the “archeological perspective” that was common amongst nineteenth-century colonizers: “The European imagination produces archeological subjects by splitting contemporary non-European peoples off from their precolonial and even their colonial, pasts. To

revive indigenous history and culture as archeology is to revive them *as dead*” (132, italics in original). Dobson worries that too many indigenous writers are considered as relevant *only* to the past that is long gone, but she nevertheless separates Robinson and other Native writers from their indigenous histories. The effects of this split between contemporary indigenous peoples and their pasts—no matter how recent or distant that past is—are frightening. Pratt forcefully argues that the archeological perspective “obliterates the conquered inhabitants of the contact zone as historical agents who have living continuities with pre-European pasts and historically based aspirations and claims on the present...What colonizers kill off as archeology often lives among the colonized as self-knowledge and historical consciousness, two principal ingredients of anti-colonial resistance movements” (132). While Dobson argues that being stuck in the past is detrimental to the contemporary lives of indigenous people, Pratt convincingly shows that the past lives on in the lives of contemporary Natives in ways that are instrumental in effective resistances against the colonizer.

Although she speaks specifically about Caribbean writers, Judith Misrahi-Barak more explicitly supports Pratt’s understanding of the relationship between natives and their cultural history, positing that Amerindian narratives characteristically “come and go freely between past and present, between the different zones of the past and of consciousness, thus composing a specific way of claiming and inhabiting both time and consciousness, our pasts and our presents” (316), and crossing boundaries of time and space. The same is true for other contemporary indigenous writers in the Americas: the past and the present are inextricably linked and that fluid movement between periods of time plays a significant part in indigenous identity.

Furthermore, contrary to Dobson’s assertion, Robinson forces readers to pay attention to the land—a significant part of Haisla history, tradition, culture, and life—by providing several directions to help readers navigate Kitamaat and the surrounding area. As the narrator gives these directions, readers also learn about the pre-colonial and colonial histories of the places, as well as Haisla legends that originate in specific natural landmarks. Thus, the significance of the land for this indigenous group remains clear, even in Robinson’s contemporary setting. But in these discussions of the land, Robinson does fight “essentialized ethno-cultural categorizations” of Native peoples as environmentalists, a categorization that Waller argues is “damaging to Indians of the past, present, and future” because it trivializes American Indian cultures and tends to “‘disappear’ important concerns of contemporary Indians” (277). Instead, Robinson uses the land to shift discussions toward the body and vice versa to reveal the interconnectedness of the two and the stories that each tells for the benefit of the individual and larger community.

One of the striking features of *Monkey Beach* is the way Robinson pointedly directs readers to pay attention to the land wherein her Haisla characters live by providing directions so clear that we could travel to specific buildings in Kitamaat Village or the larger town nearby if we would ever find ourselves there. Even before the narrative fully begins, our narrator delivers relentlessly detailed instructions about where to find the community where this story will take place, as well as significant historical events that readers should have as context for understanding that place:

Find a map of British Columbia. Point to the middle of the coast. Beneath Alaska, find the Queen Charlotte Islands. Drag your finger across the map, across the Hecate Strait to the coast and you should be able to see a large island hugging the coast. This is Princess Royal Island, and it is famous for its kermode bears, which are black bears that are usually white. Princess Royal Island is the western edge of traditional Haisla territory. *Ka-tee-doux Gitk’a’ata*, the Tsimshians of Hartley Bay, live at the mouth of the Douglas

Channel and surrounding areas just north of the island. During land claims talks, some of this territory is claimed by both the Haisla and the Tsimshian nations—this is called an overlap and is a sticky topic of discussion. But once you pass the head of the Douglas Channel you are firmly in Haisla territory. (4)

Whereas Kincaid shows how mapping is a colonial tool meant to erase indigenous groups from land newly “discovered” by European explorers, Robinson inverts what colonial maps do by highlighting the indigenous land and people who inhabit it. Similar imperatives occur throughout the novel, prompting readers to continually reorient themselves in the locale, whether it is on the land or on the water, which was traditionally central to this nation of fishermen. Although other Native American writers also draw attention to the land in their fiction, readers, especially non-Native readers, are oftentimes still removed from the landscapes they read about as they watch characters live in and experience it. Robinson, on the other hand, involves readers with the land; the narrator explicitly orders us to look at maps and watch for specific landmarks as we walk the same roads and boat on the same channels as the characters. The text demands participation, a different kind of border crossing that mandates readers to become part of the narrative, or at least be invested in it: though readers may initially resist the imperative, sometimes confrontational instructions, they do prompt readers to act, and if not act, to care about these matters in which the narrator is so deeply invested.

Although these directions draw readers further and further into the space of the indigenous Haisla and the setting for the narrative, they are markedly Western: the narrator gives English place names here and almost everywhere else in the novel. One exception is the town Kitamaat, but even that is not a Haisla name: “‘Kitamaat’ is a Tsimshian word that means people of the falling snow, and that was their name for the main Haisla village...The name got stuck on the official records and the village has been called Kitamaat ever since, even though it really

should be called Haisla” (5). In each of these cases, outsiders of the Haisla nation have renamed the places surrounding this group of people and codified the new names in records and maps. The only other exceptions to English place names in the novel include *Ga-bas 'wa* (180), *Gee Ouans* (276), and *Na-ka-too* (276), each of which is a land formation which may or may not have been given new names by English-speaking colonizers. As Owens observes, “Mapping is, of course, an intensely political enterprise, an essential step toward appropriation and possession. Maps write the conquerors’ stories over the stories of the conquered” (as cited in Rader 70). Maps visually reinforce the inevitability of manifest destiny and textually privilege the language of the colonizer who gives new names to places and things with existing native names, which is what Ovando strives for with his mapmaking in Kincaid’s allegory.

For Robinson’s narrator to engage with the colonial construct of maps does not necessarily mean simple acceptance of the colonizer’s presence in Haisla territory, nor does it suggest a resignation of the tools the colonized can use to speak back to the colonizer⁹. The forceful imperatives to the reader to look at maps and walk roads draw attention to the force that was used to create those maps which privilege the colonizer. This may be an instance of what Pratt calls autoethnography, “instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer’s terms...autoethnographic texts are texts the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations...[it] involves partly collaborating with and appropriating the idioms of the conqueror” (9, emphasis in

⁹ Audre Lorde suggests that “*the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house*. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (99). In other words, true progress can only be accomplished when marginalized people discard the strategies that the powerful used to institute and enforce unequal systems. Instead, the marginalized should seek new alternatives for (re)gaining agency. However, “the master’s tools” used by someone other than “the master” can be wielded to force “the master” to recognize his own inconsistencies and injustices, as Robinson does.

original). Robinson appropriates the colonizer's maps to draw attention to places of significance for the Haisla, and just as she implicates readers through the imperative "you," so too does she implicate readers for the markedly Western place names. In his analysis of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's mixed media paintings that critique the authority invested in maps of America, Dean Rader observes, "one can fight icons only with icons, so [Smith] outmaps the maps" (61). Robinson seems to be engaged in her own project of outmapping, or at least remapping, colonizers' maps, as is evident in the additional resonances with maps that echo throughout the novel.

In addition to readers' imagined physical engagement with the land she describes, Robinson also invests various pieces of the land with significance through the history and legends that have been passed down to Lisamarie. As Farca argues, "places are not only concrete locations but also internalized processes that result from individuals' mental interpretations. In other words, places are not inert pieces of land but textual constructs that are created by those who experience and imagine them" (2). Land is not just space to be occupied by people, plants, or animals, but it is also occupied by and with stories. As she travels to Namu, for example, Lisamarie reminds herself and readers of the oral traditions connected to the landmarks: "coming up is *Gee Ouans*, which means 'pushed-out point.' Lazy, shape-changing Weegit, the raven, was tired of paddling around the mountain on his way to Kitamaat and in a fit of energy, he tried to push the mountain down to create a shortcut. Halfway through, he took a break and never finished the job. *Na-ka-too* is on the opposite side of the channel" (276). According to Gordon Robinson, a Haisla historian and storyteller, Weegit is a fairly significant figure in Haisla mythology, having "originated many things in nature," including the moon, but "the fact that

these things happened to be useful was only incidental for his main interest was to play pranks on people or things” (4). He is a trickster, but as an integral part of Haisla culture and oral tradition, Weegit’s changes to the landscape do not harm the people in the way that colonizers’ changes did, and in fact, they sometimes help the people. Although Lisamarie may not have had any personal experiences at Gee Ouans, she finds meaning in that place because of the strength of the oral tradition, primarily passed down to her through her grandmother, Ma-ma-oo. These stories are sometimes mythic, sometimes historical, and sometimes family-oriented so that any given place can be filled with multiple kinds of stories, memories, and meanings. Without these stories, the land would be void of meaning aside from potential economic benefits of the natural resources found there.

Robinson thus reveals the significance of the British Columbian landscape for her characters and for readers who enter into it via maps, but navigating the space in the kitchen to make traditional food also becomes important in the novel. Lisamarie’s mom “was disappointed” when Lisamarie doesn’t “have the heart” to go to Kemano to catch oolichans, small fish which are a staple in Haisla diets (85). Furthermore, Lisamarie has no desire to make the traditional grease with Aunt Edith and Uncle Geordie. And yet, despite her apparent disinterest, Lisamarie launches into a thorough discourse on the oolichans: various ways in which the fish can be prepared and which of those ways result in the best meals. Then the narrator provides detailed directions for making oolichan grease, a staple for the Haisla because of their long history as fishermen:

Fill a large metal boiler with water. Light the fire pit beneath the boiler and bring the water to a boil. Then add the ripened oolichans and stir slowly until cooked (they will float slightly off the bottom). Bring the water to a boil again and mash the fish into small pieces to release the oil from the flesh. A layer of clear oil will form on the surface.

Scrape out the fire pit and keep the boiler covered. Let simmer, but, before the water cools completely, use a wooden board to gently push the layer of oil to one end of the boiler and scoop it into another vat. With a quick, spiraling motion, add two or three red-hot rocks from an open fire to the vat of oil, which will catch fire and boil. Once the oil has cooled, do a final straining to remove small twigs, water and scales. Put oil in jars. Keep your fresh oolichan grease refrigerated to prevent it from going bad. (85-86)

The level of detail is remarkable and noteworthy for its similarity to the kinds of directions that the narrator gives to guide readers through the landscape. Not only are natural spaces important for the narrator and her family and wider community, but so are the manmade spaces wherein tradition lives on. Although Lisamarie is reluctant to join Aunt Edith and Uncle Geordie in their work, she, or our narrator, is highly knowledgeable in oolichan cooking. In either case, that knowledge would be passed down from an earlier generation as a form of oral tradition. The narrator says that “Only the most experienced grease makers should decide when the oolichans are ripe enough to be transformed into grease” (85), and given the detail, there is a sense that the narrator is one of those experienced grease makers.

In these ways, Robinson uses familiar landscapes in important ways in *Monkey Beach*. Although Robinson may treat land and landscapes differently than other indigenous writers in the Americas, the significance of that land, even in a contemporary setting, remains clear. However, Robinson also discusses landscape and space in more subtle and interesting ways. Kathleen C. Stewart suggests that the body itself becomes a text on which the history of places can be read, and that one may discern “the constant recounting of places on the body where life has left its impact—the scars, the locations of pain, the disfigurements, the amputations, the muscles and joints and bones that remember” (as cited in Farca 5-6). Although Farca and Stewart take a rather unique approach to landscape and people’s relationships to it, these theoretical

positions can help frame a more robust understanding of Robinson's novel and the ways in which Robinson engages in contemporary Haisla identities.

Sandwiched between two short sections that depict Lisamarie's experience on her way to find Jimmy, Robinson strangely includes the following description of the heart:

Make your hand into a fist. This is roughly the size of your heart. If you could open up your own chest, you would find your heart behind your breastbone, nestled between your lungs. Each lung has a notch, the cardiac impression, that the heart fits into. Your heart sits on a slant, leaning into your left lung so that it is slightly smaller than your right lung. Reach into your chest cavity and pull your lungs away from your heart to fully appreciate the complexity of this organ...

Behold, your heart. Touch it. Run your fingers across this strong, pulsating organ. Your brain does not completely control your heart. In the embryo, the heart starts beating even before it is supplied by nerves. The electrical currents that ripple across your heart causing it to contract are created by a small bundle of specialized muscle tissue on the upper right-hand corner of your heart. (163-64)

Except in the context of the natural landscape, this scientific description of the bodily landscape makes little sense. Just as our narrator directs readers to "Drag your fingers across the map" to learn the lay of the land and the history that occurred there (4), she also directs readers to "Run your fingers across this strong, pulsating organ" (164). Later, Robinson becomes more insistent in her descriptions and mappings of the body. Our narrator asks readers to "Look closely at the skin on your wrist" before explaining what happens when an artery is pinched or entirely blocked (268) and then breaks down what happens during a fatal heart attack (275). It is no coincidence that these descriptions of the body occur in the context of the physicality of land that Lisamarie passes by on her way to Namu, for we are to read the body and the land in the same way. Lisamarie is the land. They contain marks, both visible and invisible, of colonization.

Castricano¹⁰ outlines the effects of government relocations on Aboriginal people following Canada's 1876 Indian Act, and these effects would have been felt by the Haisla as well:

the loss of traditional land and water rights; the pollution of the environment...and perhaps even more insidiously, the psychological and emotional damage to Aboriginal children in residential schools where the suppression of language and culture and the outlawing of First Nations spiritual practices all manifest in emotional and spiritual trauma that leads to alcohol and drug abuse, sexual abuse and date rape, violence, suicide, and murder. (802)

This description is brimming with violence against the land and the people who lived there, so even though the Indian Act occurred many years ago, physical scars remain on the land to the present day, and psychological and emotional scars similarly remain in the people. The historicity of the trauma fails to dull its effect. So although Robinson does not ask readers to specifically consider the physical effects of colonization on the Haisla, the highly objective, scientific mappings of the heart and body seem to beg us to also carefully consider the emotional conditions of the heart.

Robinson reveals these psychological and emotional scars through Lisamarie's heart where we see what she values most, and which is worn down by several broken family relationships, miscommunication, and a somewhat paradoxical disconnectedness from Ma-ma-oo's traditional way of living and being in the world. The scars on Lisamarie's heart may not be

¹⁰ Castricano primarily explores storytelling and Gothic elements in *Monkey Beach*. Although Castricano does not address land or landscape in the novel, she does "consider the pedagogical dimensions of Richard Lane's observation that Lisamarie's reflections on Haisla language succeed in transforming 'the reader from a passive consumer to an active participants in the "lessons" of the text'" (811). Robinson certainly transforms readers into active participants, and not just through the language lessons in the text: she also accomplishes this through her narrator's addresses—orders, even—to the reader. Castricano finally argues that "What the text teaches...is less about 'participation' than what it means to talk with ghosts" (811). While there is certainly some truth to this, Castricano fails to acknowledge the implications of readers' "participation" with the land: namely, learning what it means to experience culture and tradition through an ancient landscape that continues to exist into the present.

physical, but they are no less visible. Despite her close relationship with Ma-ma-oo, Lisamarie is skeptical of the traditional spiritualism that Ma-ma-oo was so comfortable with and trusted in: “I used to think that if I could talk to the spirit world, I’d get some answers. Ha bloody ha,” she thinks as she contemplates her missing brother and her parents who have gone to look for him without her (17). Similarly, she cannot “really understand the old stories” because to do so, “you had to speak Haisla,” and Lisamarie cannot (211). For a time, Ma-ma-oo would teach her a new word each day, but Lisamarie quickly realized that “that was only 365 words a year, so [she’d] be an old woman by the time [she] could put sentences together” (211). Despite Lisamarie’s active engagement in twentieth-century life, these traditional features of Haisla culture haunt her and daily influence her relationships with others and her understanding of herself.

In other, smaller ways, Robinson examines the scarred hearts of other Haisla characters: Jimmy is determined to represent Canada at the Olympics in swimming, despite violence Canada had enacted on the Haisla people in their not-too-distant history; Uncle Mick is an activist who loudly expresses his problems with the Canadian government (past and present) to the embarrassment of his family members; Frank is resolute in his desire to “get the hell out of here” (199) as soon as he can afford to. Between these characters’ and Lisamarie’s experiences, Robinson subtly speaks into the challenges facing contemporary Haisla as a result of colonization.

The highly objective, scientific mappings of the heart and body not only ask readers to consider the emotional conditions of the heart, but they also prompt us to question where knowledge comes from. Certain kinds of things about the body can only be known by observing it from a removed vantage point, such as the surgical descriptions the narrator provides. There is

power in that knowledge—the power to save a life or extinguish it—but that clinical knowledge is limited in other respects; nothing can be known about who a person is or what he or she has experienced by looking at the way blood circulates through the body. Similarly, some things about a particular landscape can be known by observing it from a removed vantage point, such as the colonial maps that are invoked through place names and directions. And while colonists have used those maps to control space and the people who inhabit it, they express only a limited knowledge of the land: one cannot know the spirit of a place or its history except through first-hand knowledge gained by living there coupled with second-hand knowledge gained through the oral tradition. Complications arise, however, when people no longer live in the land their ancestors had always inhabited or when other voices threaten to drown out the oral tradition. This is where Robinson’s “outmap[ping] the maps” becomes important for understanding life for present-day Haisla and other indigenous groups. Robinson fills in empty maps of British Columbia that normally would only include Western place names with the complex lives of Lisamarie, her family members, and her wider Haisla community.

In her analysis of Native women’s poetry, Mishuana Goeman asserts that “Critical Native feminisms will reassess and assert spatial practices that address colonial mappings of bodies and land and remap our social and critical lives according to cultural values and contemporary needs” (“(Re)Mapping” 295). In her novel, Robinson engages in the same kind of reassessment and assertion of spatial practices that Goeman identifies in Esther Belin’s poetry. Readers are given the same kinds of directions to know and understand both land and body better. Through her appropriation of colonial maps, Robinson shows how indigeneity is tied to tradition and history *as well as* the present. Therefore, it seems as though Robinson may be exploring new ways in

which the Haisla might understand life in a contemporary society which exerts colonial force more subtly than in the past.

Approaching Some Conclusions

As Goeman posits, “Understanding Native space as a set of connections from time immemorial thus counters the spatializing power of Western patriarchal law. Our ability to understand the connections between stories, place, landscape, clan systems, and Native Nations means the difference between loss and continuity” (“(Re)Mapping” 300). Each of the authors here explores boldly and more subtly the ways in which Native space should be understood as a set of connections from time immemorial and in doing so, each of the authors here counters the colonial project, as Goeman suggests.

And even as these authors across the Americas address the results of indigenous land stolen by colonizing forces and the often devastating effects of border crossing, each also distinguishes herself in the creative treatment of these issues. Kincaid’s allegory “represent[s] colonial power through images of putrefaction” (Soto-Crespo 362) in order to reveal the underlying death and destruction that *is* colonialism and that colonialism spreads to each new place it touches. Glancy’s historical fiction addresses the conflict that occurs between indigenous men and women of even the same tribe when something as fundamental as their land is forcibly taken from them and they are required to adhere to distant and artificial boundaries; these conflicts resist idealized accounts of intertribal relationships. Melville’s transatlantic narrative addresses the painful echoes of colonialism that can interfere with complete understanding between indigenous people and others, even if those others are not directly involved in the

colonial project of exerting and maintaining political and economic power for Euro-Americans. In her engagement with maps and science, Robinson reveals the limited nature of each of these colonizer's tools for knowing and understanding both places and the people who live there.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin assert that "A major concern of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (*The Empire Writes Back* 8). Individually and collectively, Kincaid, Glancy, Melville, and Robinson address this crisis of identity and work to further recover and reinvent the relationship between self and place that has been interrupted by the colonizers' assertion of boundaries according to their own colonial maps.

DECOLONIZING LANGUAGE AND STORY

“Language is the perfect instrument of empire.”¹

“they want to strip us of our words
they want to take our tongues
so we forget how to talk to each other
you swallow the rock
that was your tongue
you swallow the song
that was your voice
you swallow you swallow
in the silence”²

Just as the relationship to place is integral to the identity of indigenous people in the Americas, so too is the relationship to Native languages, oral traditions, and narrative agency. Whereas land is first a physical site for cultural identity, with emotional and psychological resonances stemming from it, language is the most emotional site for cultural identity, as Bill Ashcroft explains (1). People from around the world and from countless language groups experience this connection to cultural identity through language, but what makes the discussion an important one here is the particular relevance it has for colonized people. As Ashcroft suggests, language is "one of the most critical techniques of colonization and of the subsequent transformation of colonial influence by post-colonized societies" (1); Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues that "Language was the means of spiritual subjugation" (265) of colonized people and that language is "inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form

¹ In 1492, the Bishop of Avila said this to Queen Isabella of Castille. See Hanke, 8.

² Cochran 41-42.

and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world” (267). The assumption is that, if the colonizer can seize control of the language, then they also seize control of cultural identity, slowly shifting the identity of the colonized to align with a standard prescribed by the colonizer. For this reason, Ngũgĩ refuses to use colonial languages altogether and urges other African writers to follow suit, believing that writing in another language would deny his or her own culture in favor of the foreign culture. Ngũgĩ goes on to suggest that “writing in our languages...[is] a necessary first step in the correct direction,” even as indigenous writing must also be used for anti-imperialist literature in order to shift power away from the colonizer to the colonized (267).

In response to what he considers an extreme response to the use of colonial languages by African writers, Chinua Achebe suggests that “the culprit for Africa’s language difficulties was not imperialism, as Ngũgĩ would have us believe, but the linguistic plurality of modern African states” (271). The diversity in native languages within most African countries poses challenges for citizens who wish to coordinate efforts against colonial forces or build a stable society in a postcolonial era. According to Achebe, English or other colonial languages can unite people from different ethnic and language groups within any African nation, rather than encouraging the rejection of indigenous values and cultures. Salman Rushdie also accepts the use of colonial English for Indian writers, but firmly argues that

we can’t simply use the language in the way the British did...it needs remaking for our own purposes. Those of us who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world...To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free. (17)

Rushdie acknowledges the challenge of using a colonial language to write about the experiences of colonized people, but he sees that challenge as an opportunity to communicate truth about the struggle of colonization and postcolonial independence.

As closely linked as language and cultural identity may be, one must negotiate that relationship with care: as Ashcroft argues, “speakers very often conflate the *experience* of speaking a particular language, the experience of identification, belonging and location that it gives them, with the language itself, as though the act of speaking were a unique cultural event” (3, italics in original). Because there is a distinction between language itself and the act of speaking a language, however slight it may be, people who have had English imposed on them as a strategy of colonization can appropriate the language for purposes that are distinct from and even opposed to those of the colonizer: “language is not simply a repository of cultural contents, but a tool, and often a weapon, which can be employed for various purposes” (Ashcroft 4). Whereas Rushdie sees conquering a specific language as a tool in the struggle for cultural freedom, Gloria Bird understands the written word in any language to be a political weapon: “Through writing we can undo the damaging stereotypes that are continually perpetuated about Native peoples. We can rewrite our history, and we can mobilize our future” (30). As we have discussed, Diane Glancy’s *Pushing the Bear* novels rewrite history, and as we will see, Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* mobilizes a future.

For many Natives in the Americas, colonial languages were imposed in boarding schools: although some attended these schools because either they or their families wanted them to attend, government officials coerced many more indigenous children to attend these schools and learn, among other things, English and literature written in English, through which students would

learn cultural and artistic values that aligned with those of the colonizer. According to Brenda J. Child and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, students “were prohibited from speaking Native languages, wearing Native dress, or participating in any practice of cultural traditions—including singing, praying, dancing, and creating art—and were subject to severe punishment for breaking the rules. Students who came to school with Native language names were given appropriately ‘civilized’ English names” (26). In the wake of that history, some people, including Diane Glancy, claim their right to speak and write in native languages in the same spirit as Ngūgĩ, even if the audience primarily speaks English. Glancy, whose novels are discussed in chapter one in connection with issues of land, borders, and maps, also foregrounds issues of language and agency in *Pushing the Bear*. Glancy confronts readers with Cherokee words in the Cherokee alphabet, a disorienting experience for any non-Cherokee speaker. Word-for-word translations and grammatical English translations occur occasionally, communicating very little meaning or revealing the stark difference between the two languages, but just as often, the words are left entirely untranslated. Glancy appends “A Note on the Written Cherokee Language,” the Cherokee alphabet, and a Cherokee story alongside an English phonetic version and word-for-word translation; however, these appendixes provide few—if any—answers to questions about the Cherokee in the novel proper. When Glancy privileges Cherokee over English, readers are forced to contend with the colonial implications of language and experience the alienation inherent in experiencing a language not one’s own.

In contrast to what many consider extreme reactions against colonial languages, some authors, believing that “colonial languages have been not only instruments of oppression but also instruments of radical resistance and transformation” (Ashcroft 3), write in the colonial language

in ways that confront the colonizer and make the language their own. Still others use colonial languages with some trepidation: Simon Ortiz, for example, explains that “Using the English language is a dilemma and pretty scary sometimes, because it means letting one’s mind go willfully—although with your soul and heart in shaky hand, literally—into the Western cultural and intellectual context” (xvi). Despite having to make these considerations, indigenous writers in the Americas can—and do—transform the colonial language and also canonical texts through their fiction, as we will see Pauline Melville do in “The Parrot and Descartes.”

In addition to formal education, colonial control over language also took the form of translation. Margara Averbach discusses the violence inherent in translation: “When one culture translates another, it perverts the original; it explains it through ideas, institutions, and words that are not really equivalent. All cultural translation is, then, a violation of the other culture’s identity, and, as all violent acts, it generates first an awareness of what is happening and then a resistance against the translation” (166). Even more than an act of violence, David Murray argues that “In a situation of dominance, the cultural translation is all one-way, and the penalty to the subordinate group for not adapting to the demands of the dominant group is to cease to exist” (6). The kind of translation that Murray points to is the kind that helped reinforce the image of the vanishing Indian, doomed to extinction if he or she fails to adjust to the behaviors and practices valued by the dominant group. Jean-Marc Gouanvic adds that “translation is power—not simply an instrument of power or of a certain power, but intrinsically power, without which there is no translation” (102). If translation is violent and has intrinsic power, when it is used for colonial purposes, the results can be devastating for the colonized people: Gouanvic explains that

translation has been used as an instrument “to censure the Other’s discourse” (102). Michael Cronin adds that

Translation is frequently presented in colonial contexts as either a predatory, exploitative activity or as the True Path to reconciliation, understanding and the withering away of prejudice. Less account has been taken of *translation as resistance*—the ways in which originals can be manipulated, invented or substituted, or the status of the original subverted in order to frustrate the intelligence-gathering activities of the Imperial Agent. (35, italics in original)

Despite the destructive ways in which colonial powers can use translation to gain or ensure control over colonized people, Cronin identifies the ways in which indigenous people in the Americas can use translation as a weapon in the fight against Euroamerican colonizers as we will see Cathy McCarthy show in *The Hollow*. However, this kind of translation does not necessarily require a transfer of texts into a native language. When authors reimagine canonical works of fiction, for example, and introduce new perspectives, themes, or languages to the original story that better reflect the concerns for colonized women and men, they translate the original text. This is still considered translation even if both texts are written in English.³

The implications of the colonial translation or eradication of Native languages are further reaching still: Inés Hernández-Avila argues that “This campaign of eradication had and has the purpose of destroying our sovereignty by destroying our connections to our landbases given that the home(land)s or landbases inform the cultures, belief-systems, and the languages” (176). Not only does the loss of Native languages disrupt cultural identity, but it does so in part by

³ Sherry Simon discusses yet another register of translation when she argues that “Colonized cultures were texts whose vast spaces were contained within the hermeneutic frames of Western knowledge. ‘Translation refers not only to the transfer of specific texts into European languages, but to all the practices whose aim was to compact and reduce an alien reality into the terms imposed by a triumphant Western culture... Translation was part of the violence, then, through which the colonial subject was constructed” (11). Simon’s argument about this alternative interpretation of translation is important and worth mentioning, particularly in this (post)colonial context; however, this chapter focuses instead on more concrete implications of language, voice, and the oral and written traditions in the fiction of indigenous women writers in the Americas.

destroying connections to the land. Thus, issues of language, voice, and agency exist in a reciprocal relationship to the land where each shapes the other in significant ways. Dennis Lee argues that “if we live in a space which is radically in question for us, that makes our barest speaking a problem to itself. For voice does issue in part from civil space. And alienation in that space will enter and undercut our writing, make it recoil upon itself, become a problem to itself” (348). Lee refers to contemporary Native Americans who are sequestered on reservations—land they did not choose—and also urban Native Americans who are entirely landless. In this context, contemporary Native American writers must wrestle with how to speak in a civil space that does not grant them the same kind of recognition that it does for other citizens. Lee goes on to posit that “perhaps our job was not to fake a space of our own and write it up, but rather to find words for our space-lessness. Perhaps that *was* home” (349, italics in original). Because of the injustices that have led to so many indigenous people living in spaces that are not truly theirs, writers are forced to find creative ways to face these kinds of losses in ways that are still meaningful.

One way that many indigenous people have faced loss due to colonial intervention is through storytelling. Joseph Bruchac suggests that “Stories have always been at the heart of all our Native cultures” (35), and Lee Francis adds that the identities of urban- and reservation-born Native people are “inextricably interwoven in the stories they were told. For Native People, story was and continues to be essential to an individual’s identity construction and development” (77). These stories include ancient origin and migration accounts, but they also include the difficult histories of smallpox, greed, rape, and the massacres of Native men, women, and children enacted by colonizers. Francis’s concern is that when stories aren’t told among the dispossessed,

their Native identity suffers, particularly for youth living in urban centers; they “need to learn the stories of the people. They need to learn, remember, and tell the ancient origin and migration stories, the stories that focus on Native values, attitudes, and beliefs. And they need to tell new stories about growing up and living urban lives. These new stories need to incorporate the wisdom of the People about the land and the relatedness to all creation” (79). A long tradition of storytelling exists for indigenous people, but it is not static in nature. Rather, it allows for new stories that reflect the new experiences of Native men and women today, while maintaining a core of essential values.

Although written stories about indigenous culture, tradition, and history can be closely related to spoken stories in many ways, some still express the concern that they do not adequately mimic the oral tradition, on which so many Native cultures are built. For example, Diane Glancy asserts that “It takes many voices to tell a story, and I think we carry those voices within us. The voice is important; it’s a spiritual energy field. And when you deal with writing, that kills the energy, it kills the importance of the voice...When you speak a story, all of the voices that have ever told a story ride upon your voice as you tell that story. But when you write, all those voices can’t speak” (“A Conversation” 651). Glancy and other writers confront this limitation with voice in their fiction by layering multiple voices and perspectives into the narratives to provide a broader understanding of the range of experiences that people may have had with colonialism.

In their interest in oral traditions, the authors in this chapter connect with other gynocratic cultures that recognize the value and power of storytelling by women in particular. Trinh T. Minh-ha explains that

Storytelling, the oldest form of building historical consciousness in community, constitutes a rich oral legacy, whose values have regained all importance recently, especially in the context of writings by women of color. She who works at un-learning the dominant language of ‘civilized’ missionaries also has to learn how to un-write and write anew. And she often does this by re-establishing the contact with her foremothers, so that living tradition can never congeal into fixed forms, so that life keeps on nurturing life, so that what is understood as the Past continues to provide the link for the Present and the Future. (148-49)

As marginalized women, the authors in this chapter have written primarily in the dominant language of the colonizer, but they have certainly written anew, challenging norms established by the colonial powers. Significantly, Trinh identifies the necessity of foremothers in that process of re-establishing a relevant oral tradition that helps to explain the past for the purpose of living now and in the future. Assuming the storyteller to be a woman, Trinh asserts that “The storyteller, besides being a great mother, a teacher, a poetess, a warrior, a musician, a historian, a fairy, and a witch, is a healer and a protectress. Her chanting or telling of stories...has the power of bringing us together, especially when there is sickness, fear, and grief” (140). Certainly men can—and do—tell stories, but there is a particular power in what the female storyteller does in building historical consciousness in the community in order to face present and future challenges, and this power is particularly important in the context of ongoing colonization of indigenous people in the Americas.

Because the issues surrounding language, voice, and the oral tradition are so complex, a careful consideration of how they unfold in the fiction of indigenous women writers is necessary for understanding their concerns with colonization. “The Parrot and Descartes” by Pauline Melville (Wapishiana, Guyana), *The Hollow* by Cathy McCarthy (Anishinaabe, Canada), and *Almanac of the Dead* by Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo, United States) are a few texts in which language and story play particularly important roles. Whereas Melville privileges orality

over the written word while also delegitimizing the literary canon, McCarthy underscores the ways in which language and storytelling inscribe cultural identity, while Silko speaks to the fundamental connection between the oral and written word.

Word of Mouth and the Written Word: A Shifting Hierarchy of Power

Although the parrot, the central character in Pauline Melville's "The Parrot and Descartes," does not verbally speak, issues of voice and agency nevertheless feature prominently in the short story. The parrot is from the Orinoco region in northeastern Venezuela and western Guyana where the indigenous Warao people have lived for thousands of years. Werner Wilbert suggests that, "As a consequence of their seclusion [in the Orinoco Delta], the Warao were largely spared the scourges of intertribal conflict, warfare, Old World pestilence, ethnocide, and slavery that ravaged the surrounding lands" (383-84)⁴. Nevertheless, Melville's parrot, a representative of the indigenous people, is abducted and taken to Europe. Significantly, though, Melville does not begin this story with interactions between the parrot and Europeans; instead, she provides readers with a small portion of the Orinoco creation cycle, in which the parrot plays a noteworthy role. When the earth opens, "A woman who was watching turned into a male parrot and began to scream a warning" (101). Though the scream is non-verbal, the vocalization still communicates a warning, as it does later in the story as well. Moreover, the metamorphosis from female human to male parrot is curious, particularly because the transformation is described with

⁴ Although they have fared better than other indigenous groups in the Caribbean, more recently, the Warao people have been battling a new kind of colonizer, transnational corporations who have "plans to drill for oil on their fragile delta homeland, one of the world's largest wetlands" (Johansen 455). Drilling has already begun to deteriorate the local environment with oil leaks, seismic activity sinking land people had been living on, and the proliferation of malaria-carrying mosquitoes in newly stagnant water.

so little explanation or indication of its significance. However, in light of Melville's interest in the oral tradition and what Trinh describes as women storytellers' power, the parrot's origins as a woman connect him more firmly to the oral tradition: first as a participant in the earth's creation story, and second as a figurative voice for indigenous people in the Caribbean.

The immortal parrot never fully recovers from the drama of the earth's creation: even centuries later, we learn that the parrot is "still in a state of shock" when he meets an Englishman in 1611 (101). Whereas Kincaid's "Ovando" is an allegory of first contact between colonizers and the indigenous inhabitants of the Caribbean, Melville takes an ironic approach to her first contact narrative, although both authors ground their fiction in history. Sir Thomas Roe, the first European the parrot meets, is better known in history as a Member of Parliament and the ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, but before his political career was established, Roe travelled to the West Indies on a mission from his friend, Prince Henry of Wales. Based on reports from Sir Walter Raleigh, England developed the belief that El Dorado, the Lost City of Gold, was located in the Orinoco region of Guyana. Based on these popular beliefs, Prince Henry sent Roe to the West Indies in 1610 with the instructions "to proceed cautiously" and "to search for gold without antagonizing the Spaniards. A clash with them must be avoided, but the implication was clear that, if Roe should succeed in finding gold in substantial quantities, the English government was willing to risk war in order to get it" (Brown 14). Unfortunately for Roe, he was unsuccessful in finding gold after spending a year and a half in the Caribbean.⁵

⁵ In fact, according to Michael J. Brown, "It would be foolish to suggest that Sir Thomas Roe's voyage to Guiana deserves an important place in the annals of England's foreign policy" (16). Although his voyage failed to be fruitful at the time, Melville makes it fruitful through her ironic depiction of Fat Thom in "The Parrot and Descartes."

Roe was not the only European on the quest for El Dorado, however. From his log-book and letters, it becomes clear how “anxious to find gold” in the West Indies Christopher Columbus was, so much so that at one point he waited “all night on the chance that the king of this place or other persons may bring [him] gold” (62, 72). In this context, the “friendships” that Columbus makes with inhabitants who supposedly had information about or access to gold are highly suspect. Gold always seems to be just outside of Columbus’s grasp: language barriers and other kinds of miscommunication often prevent him from finding the goldfields he so desperately searches for. In Melville’s version, Roe also fails to find the precious metal, but he does not come home empty-handed: “At first Fat Thom thought that sunlight was falling on the bird’s head, then he saw that it had a golden beak...It was a surprisingly easy capture” (101). When gold is unavailable, Fat Thom settles for a bird with a gold-colored beak. Like the conquistadors searching for El Dorado who surreptitiously used natives in their quest for gold, this colonizer steals the parrot, a representative of the indigenous people, because of his gold beak. What makes this abduction particularly ironic is that native people would give parrots as gifts to Europeans, including Christopher Columbus.⁶

According to Kathleen Renk, “Melville’s story, which attacks the rational foundations of Western philosophy, critiques the way in which a mechanical view of the universe and nature ‘triumphed’...over magic” (“A World Turned Upside Down” 34). Certainly Melville addresses these issues in “The Parrot and Descartes.” While he lives with the Winter King and Queen of Bohemia, the parrot enjoys the curious speaking statues in their gardens, which are created

⁶ In his log-book, Columbus describes how natives “swam out to the ship’s boats in which we were sitting, bringing us parrots and balls of cotton thread and spears and many other things, which they exchanged with us for such objects as glass beads, hawks and bells” (55).

through scientific principles but appear to be magic. The parrot also expresses his interest in Giuseppe Arcimboldo's paintings, which manipulate human and other natural forms to reveal the unity that exists between them. In these interests, the parrot reveals his pleasure in the harmony that can exist between reason and magic. This harmony is disturbed by René Descartes, whose rationalist philosophy forever changes society's understanding of the interconnectedness of life; the parrot screams forebodingly in response. As Renk rightly asserts, Melville's story "serves as a caveat against the consequences of intellectual fragmentation, while it also resists the assumptions of rationality by juxtaposing the consciousness of a parrot, a representative of the universal unconscious, with the psyche of Descartes, the harbinger of reason" ("Magic that Battles Death" 105). Melville's parrot defies expectations with its extraordinary memory; engagement with intellectual stimuli; ability to recognize the danger of Descartes, "a man who believed that animals were automatons and that parrots ceased to exist when they were asleep" (Melville 110); and wit: "reason tells us reason has its limits," the parrot thinks (110). Melville's parrot is clever and intellectually curious, casting doubt on Descartes's conclusion that animals are "nothing but matter in motion" (LaVine 118). Ironically, this conclusion stems from a dream Descartes has, rather than rational thought processes, in which he sees that mathematics are "the sole key to the understanding of nature" (Melville 108). Clearly the fragmentation of intellectual disciplines in "The Parrot and Descartes" is an important issue for Melville, but issues of language and agency are no less important to the story.

Upon his arrival in England in 1611 as Roe's wedding gift for Frederick, Elector Palatine of the Rhine and Princess Elizabeth, the parrot is forced to view the first performance of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which according to Ashcroft "has become the very symbol of the

impact of a colonial language” (2). Indeed, this play has prompted many postcolonial responses, both critical and creative. Aimé Césaire, for example, wrote *Une Tempête* in 1969, a play that adapts *The Tempest* to the perspective of Caliban and Ariel as the original inhabitants of the island where Prospero and Miranda find themselves. Part of Césaire’s adaptation includes the specifications of race—Caliban is a black slave, Ariel is a mulatto slave, and Prospero is a white master—thereby highlighting another set of power dynamics often at work between colonizers and colonized people. It is no coincidence, then, that Melville, part Amerindian, also responds to the colonial text in which Caliban is an enslaved native, just as so many natives were enslaved—or killed—by the Spanish.

In Shakespeare’s play, Prospero and Miranda land on Caliban’s island and trick him into serving them and showing them how to survive in the unfamiliar place. After his sexual indiscretion and the resulting punishment, Miranda reminds Caliban of all that she has done for him in teaching him to speak English. Furious, Caliban curses Miranda and Prospero: “you taught me language, and my profit on’t / Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language” (I.2.363-365). The exchange raises an important question in postcolonial studies: “is that [colonizer’s] language good for nothing but cursing, or can Caliban use that language to change the world?” (Ashcroft 2).⁷ As we have seen, Cronin and other scholars insist that the latter is true, so Melville’s early reminder of the issues surrounding

⁷ Audre Lorde would suggest that the colonizer’s language cannot change the world since “*the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house*. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (99). However, just as Eden Robinson engages with maps, one of “the master’s tools,” to reveal injustice and so contribute to genuine change, so does Melville engage with the English language and the canon of English literature, more of “the master’s tools,” not only to draw attention to false premises of colonization, but also to help shape new and more truthful understandings of colonized people.

colonial language sets the stage for an interrogation of the ways in which any colonized person might use that language to effect genuine change in the world.

Significantly, *The Tempest* is the parrot's first introduction to European life. The parrot himself has been colonized and made to live under another's rule, so naturally he would disdain the creator of a play in which the hero colonizes others. However, Melville reinforces the parrot's disdain and scorn for *The Tempest* through the disaster of the performance: Shakespeare interrupts the play with an "Oh no" when Ariel slips on an orange peel and skids across the stage and into the wedding party. This play, its author, and the entirety of the canon of English literature is revealed to be less worthy of praise and emulation than so many have come to believe. Renk suggests that "Melville's purpose in this portion of the story is not to rehash all of the postcolonial approaches to *The Tempest*, but to underscore the connections between the drama's magic and empire-making and also to mock Shakespeare, English literature and the canon as a whole" ("Magic that Battles Death" 107). Indeed, Melville does not repeat postcolonial interpretations of this particular play, but precisely because Shakespeare and his work are nothing but a foolish spectacle here, the postcolonial implications of the scene should not be dismissed: Melville mocks English literature, and in doing so, forces readers to question the basis for the literary canon as well as its legitimacy.

Although the performance of *The Tempest* is memorable for all the wrong reasons, the parrot curiously remembers more than he cares to: "The parrot's genetic construction, however much he willed it to the contrary, ensured that every word sank ineradicably into his memory" (102). Because he is immortal, the parrot will be able to recall the entire play against his will, much in the way colonized people were force-fed Shakespeare, including its mishaps and

Shakespeare's own interjection, until the end of time. The performance of this play about colonialism is an embarrassment and Shakespeare, an icon of English literature, is made to look foolish, suggesting that society's faith in the written word and reason are open to critique. Again and again throughout "The Parrot and Descartes," orality is positioned as an alternative epistemology, and Shakespeare's shame prompts readers to consider the legitimacy of that other epistemology. Furthermore, the parrot is not satisfied in laughing at what he has seen, and the parallels for colonized indigenous people forcibly exposed to the culture and customs of the colonizer are clear. The (post)colonial issues at stake are no laughing matter for the parrot, nor are they a laughing matter for so many indigenous men and women. Rather than mocking these symbols of the colonizer, the parrot seems to prefer a situation in which he had never encountered the colonizer to begin with.

Of course going back in time to avoid the situation is impossible. Instead, the parrot chooses silence: "Sensibly," our narrator tells us, "he refrained from repeating any of it" (102). Certainly amazing an audience with his remarkable memory and speaking ability would be enough to ensure imprisonment or even death, so the parrot holds his tongue and feigns stupidity. Not only does the parrot refuse to utter the words penned by Shakespeare and performed by the actors, but he also refuses to repeat Shakespeare's own words. The parrot maintains his distance from the colonial play and from the figure behind it who is so highly revered in English literature, suggesting that they do not represent his experience as an indigenous woman-turned-bird who was kidnapped to a country across the ocean, nor do they represent the experiences of so many others who were forced to read such texts under efforts to construct the ideal colonial

subject educated in accordance with the standards of the colonizer. In keeping silent, the parrot maintains his agency, even as he continues life as the royal family's pet.

The parrot more explicitly expresses agency in giving himself a name, though "Monsignor Parrot" is not necessarily one that the reader would expect. Our narrator tells us that "he had adopted a continental handle" (104). Although the new name is mentioned only in passing and the explanation is relegated to a short parenthetical clause, the significance of this moment should not be overlooked. As Adam Sol asserts, "Naming is an important tool of power in European-based cultures, from the power of naming that was given to Adam in the Garden of Eden to the controversial renaming of lands by colonial nations in the lands they conquered" (41). In this case, the colonized parrot has assumed the right to name himself what he pleases, rather than being subject to a name the colonizer chooses for him. However, the naming in this case is initially alarming because the parrot chooses a continental name to go by, not an indigenous one, presumably because he has been warming up to the culture, customs, and religion of the continent. In fact, at the University of Heidelberg, "the parrot passed a time of such intellectual stimulus that he rarely gave a thought to the quarrelling rapids, surging rivers and thorny bushes of his own South American continent" (104). This is exactly the kind of change that the colonizer would typically hope to see in his colonized subjects.

However, considering the context of his life and experiences, the parrot's new name is not a simple signal that the colonizer has "won" over this subject. According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, when a colonized subject like the parrot adopts

the colonizer's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, the result is a 'blurred copy' of the colonizer that can be quite threatening...because mimicry is never very far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever it mimics. Mimicry therefore locates a crack in the

certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behaviour of the colonized. (*Postcolonial Studies* 155)

The “blurred copy” that Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin describe is precisely what Melville creates with Monsignor Parrot. He is incredibly intelligent, but the central character is, in fact, a bird and not a human, let alone a cleric in the Catholic Church. The image is ridiculous. Rather than a mimic man⁸, Melville fashions a mimic bird, and in so doing, intensifies the mockery of the colonizer and his culture. Furthermore, although the parrot enjoys certain aspects of the Western world, his hatred for *The Tempest* never wavers; the parrot’s ambivalence, then, toward the colonizer’s values reveals an underlying uncertainty about and critique of the colonizer’s control.

Throughout the story, the narrator reminds readers of the parrot’s hatred for *The Tempest*. He “disappears into an ornamental box hedge whenever a troupe of actors arrived” for fear that they would perform *The Tempest* (103); the narrator suggests that one theory for the parrot’s scream is that he overheard a conversation in which actors debated producing *The Tempest* as planned (107); another theory the narrator offers is that the parrot narrowly escapes becoming a prop in *The Tempest* when the actors decide to continue with it (108); and we learn that Descartes is the parrot’s “greatest nightmare (not including *The Tempest*)” (111). These regular reminders make the parrot’s eventual fate as a prop in *The Tempest* particularly painful, especially when we see how that fate unfolds: “Intimations of predestination should have warned the parrot to steer clear [from the group of actors]. His appetite for fruit, however, overcame his

⁸ This term comes from V. S. Naipaul’s 1967 novel *The Mimic Men* in which the Caribbean-born protagonist of Indian heritage tries to become a proper Englishman by assuming the behaviors and values of one. Homi Bhabha later formalized a theory of colonial mimicry, which he defined as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*...mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference...[it] is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy...Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation” (126).

trepidation. They fed him” (114), and it doesn’t take long before he is chained to a cardboard tree on the set of *The Tempest*.⁹

The parrot sobs at the indignity of having to participate in a production of *The Tempest* and finally breaks his silence with speech:

...now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon’d be,
Let your indulgence set me free. (115)

Although we might have expected him to curse the colonizer in the way that Caliban curses Prospero, instead the parrot speaks Prospero’s epilogue along with the actor, aligning himself with the colonizer. Once again the parrot mimics the colonizer, but the mimicry destabilizes the colonizer differently in this case. Here, Prospero is in the position of the colonized, pleading with the audience to release him from their control over him, while the parrot pleads for freedom from his captivity. Unfortunately for the parrot, while Prospero is released at the end of the play, the parrot has his wings clipped and, “wearing an ornamental chain on one leg, set[s] off wearily for

⁹ The parrot’s appetite for fruit is an ironic allusion to the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve succumb to the serpent’s temptation to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Melville’s parrot similarly yields to the temptation of fruit; however, whereas Adam and Eve are banished from the garden with no further access to the tree that was their downfall, the parrot is punished for his moment of weakness by being chained to a flimsy, cardboard tree of European design and forced to participate in the very thing he hates most in the world: a performance of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Additionally, the parrot’s appetite for fruit parallels the appetites that some indigenous people have for money or power or resources from colonizing powers. The Warao people, for example, “possess ancestral rights to the [Orinoco] delta, which (unlike for most other indigenous peoples in Venezuela) are recognized, *at least in theory*, by Venezuela’s constitution, local legislation, and common law, as well as by international conventions signed by Venezuela” (Johansen 456, emphasis added). However, these legal protections are vulnerable to the money and power backing transnational corporations, as well as shifting attitudes among some Warao people who have been influenced by the same money and power or who have been otherwise acculturated by mainstream society. The consequences of cozying up to the colonizer, while providing some short-term benefits, can lead to long-term pain.

a new life in North America” (115). Although the parrot had already been colonized for a considerable length of time, previously he had some freedom within his captivity. European colonization has clipped the parrot’s wings, setting him up for a life of restrictive confinement in North America. The parrot’s captivity has shifted from a European captivity to a North American one, suggesting that readers should pay attention to the new ways and new places in which colonization occurs today.

Because “The Parrot and Descartes” essentially starts and ends with the parrot’s interactions with *The Tempest*, the significance of language and voice for the parrot and colonized people in general is fairly evident. However, Melville’s treatment of the oral and written traditions are equally important for understanding this (post)colonial text. Walter Ong asserts that, “More than any other single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness” (78), and the parrot sadly reflects on what that transformation entails. During the time in which Descartes’s ideas about rationalism began to develop, the parrot becomes lost in thought about the written word: “Books had become the truth. The written word had become proof. Laws were built on books which contained precedent. People were killed in their name. Confession, word of mouth, rumour, gossip, chattiness and oratory had all lost their place in the hierarchy of power. Passports verified. Documents condemned. Signatures empowered. Books were the storage place of memory” (111). The parrot recognizes that writing is a form of “discourse which cannot be directly questioned or contested as oral speech can be because written discourse has been detached from its author” (Ong 78); one cannot engage with a text in the way he or she might engage with an orator. Not coincidentally, the “irrefutable” written word

begins to rise in prominence alongside Descartes's promotion of rationalist thinking to the detriment of the oral tradition.

For the parrot, who is "a natural representative of the oral tradition" (112), the realization about the shifting hierarchy of power is devastating. A creature who only speaks the words of others might seem like a strange representative of the oral tradition, but the parrot's unfailing memory reveals an important characteristic of the oral tradition: as Bruchac asserts, "Our stories remember when people forget" (35). Without stories, a people's language, customs, and history would be forgotten eventually, but the stories remember, and the stories help people to remember as well. Because the oral tradition faces a new threat as the written word gains power and people begin to put their faith in books rather than oratory, the parrot is rightfully devastated and turns to memories of his home in the Caribbean. The parrot recalls sights and smells, and "As solace, he often reproduced for himself the deep silence of the forests before words swarmed over the earth" (112). Of course the forests were never actually silent: the parrot himself recalls "the chattering waters of the Essequibo River" in Guyana and the "celestial choirs of humming howler monkeys" (112). However, these natural sounds would never propose a theory of rationalism or propose that truth existed in the written word alone.

Although the parrot experiences a changing tide in the hierarchy of the oral tradition, for Melville, its significance continues, though perhaps in more subtle ways. "The Parrot and Descartes" is a written text, but it is one that is framed as an oral text. *The Tempest* almost entirely bookends the parrot's experiences, but Melville's short story begins with an unknown narrator declaring, "I had better tell you about the parrot" (101). From the outset, readers are positioned as listeners to the tale that the narrator will tell. The narrator proceeds to give a

dream-like creation story of the Orinoco region, the kind of story that typically would be passed down from generation to generation in indigenous communities. The narrator seems to recognize that the account is somewhat fantastical but validates the story by acknowledging that it did not originate with him or her: “That’s what they say. I wasn’t there myself” (101). The narrator rests on the knowledge that has been passed down to him or her by others, and that form of knowledge is legitimate on its own terms. Following the creation account, the nameless narrator proceeds to share with readers/listeners a biography of the parrot. This biography is told with only one other early reminder for readers that this story is told to us by an “I” (102), but the numerous rhetorical questions and parenthetical asides also mimic a storyteller’s strategies for engaging listeners. Similarly, the sequence of proposed theories for the parrot’s scream makes sense if the narrator is actually a storyteller: the incorrect theories function as teasers to ensure listeners’ full attention before the storyteller relents and shares the true cause. Thus, Melville styles “The Parrot and Descartes” in such a way that the significance of the oral tradition resonates in the written word.

Learning One’s Name, Accepting One’s Identity

Whereas Melville playfully explores issues of language, voice, and agency through a parrot, Cathy McCarthy (Anishinaabe, Canada) takes a more serious tone to broach the same subjects. In *The Hollow*, Cathleen McCaffrey, a young woman from Ottawa, Canada, travels to the White Earth reservation in Minnesota in 1973 where her paternal grandmother, Annie, has passed away and left her a hand-written notebook and a box of relics. The people on the reservation claim that Cathleen is a blood relation, and as Cathleen reads the notebook and

examines the relics, she discovers that her grandmother was, in fact, an Anishinaabe¹⁰ woman named Meya-wigobiwik—not a white woman, as she had always assumed. Moreover, Cathleen gradually accepts and grows into her role as the new Bear Clan Shaman Healer on the White Earth reservation. The notebook, detailing much of Meya-wigobiwik’s life and her struggles navigating Native and white cultures, serves as part of the foundation of the novel, as readers read large excerpts of it alongside Cathleen. Not only does the novel deal specifically with the tension between language, the oral tradition, and the written word, but it also straddles the U.S.-Canadian border as characters move back and forth between Native and white communities in both countries.

The Anishinaabeg, Ojibway, and Chippewa all refer to the same people, though “Chippewa” is a name that these people traditionally do not call themselves. The Anishinaabeg had been living in the area already, when the United States government designated land for the White Earth reservation in northern Minnesota in 1867. Then in 1889, government officials used the Nelson Act to force all Minnesota Anishinaabeg on one reservation and allot them privately owned lots of land, though not necessarily for the Natives’ benefit: “In this bountiful, isolated area, federal officials hoped that the Anishinaabeg would be able to learn the ways of market farming and successfully ‘assimilate’” to Euroamerican culture (Meyer 1). Because different bands of Anishinaabeg began living in close proximity in White Earth, a “fragmented collection of individuals accustomed to different lifeways” formed there:

Towns and villages in the eastern forests came to symbolize the conservative way of life still centered on the seasonal round, which Indians identified with the full-blood ethnic

¹⁰ I use this native-referent term whenever possible, rather than “Ojibway” or “Chippewa,” the latter of which is a corruption of the former. Occasionally I use “Ojibway” in discussion of others’ descriptions, histories, or literary analyses to maintain consistency and avoid confusion. The “e” ending of Anishinabe is adjectival, while the “g” ending of Anishinaabeg forms a plural noun.

pattern. The mediating and entrepreneurial activities of the métis¹¹ cultural brokers at White Earth Village and successful commercial farmers in the west formed yet another ethnic pattern, associated in peoples' minds with individuals of métis descent. Although many White Earth residents perceived these distinctions themselves, the ethnic differences were not immutable and individuals easily deviated from the general pattern to create unique adaptations. (Meyer 134-35)

Although White Earth saw some early successes, eventually “Congressional legislation, couched in a carefully worded rationale justifying reservation land loss, increasingly came to benefit outside interests that whittled away the land and timber resources at White Earth” (Meyer 137). Conflicting ideas on the part of White Earth residents did not help. Assimilationist leaders recommended proportionally distributing tribal funds and lifting restrictions on resources, while more conservative leaders were more concerned with the interests of the reservation community as a whole, rather than individuals. The lack of consensus made stable government operations very difficult at a time when having a united front against the U.S. government would have better secured the future of the residents at White Earth (Meyer 174-75). Natives control very little of White Earth's land base today—a meager seven percent—while private landowners and federal, state, and county governments control the rest. Only 4,000 people continue to live at White Earth, though there are 11,000 official members of the band (Meyer 229). Although White Earth is in Minnesota, the Anishinaabeg had been living in the region spanning the United States-Canada border for centuries leading up to the formation of the reservation.

¹¹ Melissa L. Meyer describes the social and political climate surrounding her use of the term “métis”: “Conservative Anishinaabe bands located at a distance from fur trade outposts maintained a more subsistence-oriented way of life, while their mediator ‘cousins,’ analogous culturally to the Canadian Métis, participated more fully in the market economy....The terms ‘mixed-blood’ and ‘full-blood’ were used to distinguish between ethnic groups and became politicized as disagreement over management of reservation resources escalated” (5). “Métis” not only refers to those who were of mixed descent (European and Anishinaabe), but also those whose values aligned them with the cultural brokers, the men and women who functioned as intermediaries between the Native and Euroamerican populations: as “they explained themselves, the terms ‘mixed-blood’ and ‘full-blood’ indicated basic cultural or ethnic differences—not solely genetic ones” (173), especially since many Anishinaabeg recognized at least some Euroamerican ancestry.

Although there is no criticism on *The Hollow*, McCarthy's treatment of language and the oral tradition is worthy of consideration, particularly because the novel is transnational and intertribal, with characters traversing international borders and making alliances across tribal boundaries. Whereas Melville generally discusses the oral tradition symbolically through the immortal parrot, McCarthy takes much more of a concrete approach to the oral tradition, tracing its significance for Native culture and identities, even in the present day. The novel opens with an account of the practical application of storytelling. When a young Cathleen cuts her hand on a rusted nail, she trusts that her grandmother, Nana, will treat the physical pain and also tell her a story "from the deep forest, one that would be perfect for cut hands" (1); Annie is thus positioned as the kind of storyteller that Trinh describes, one who mothers, heals, protects, and brings people together in the midst of sickness and fear. Nana creates a culture of storytelling, frequently spinning tales "of magical creatures called manitou and tricksters, tales of the beginning of the earth and of how the animals got their names. Nana could spin a tale that would make your eyes as round as saucers, and the hair stand up on the back of your neck" (28). Annie's storytelling later serves as one of Cathleen's clearest memories of her grandmother, so much so that story becomes the controlling idea of Cathleen's eulogy:

The old woman...told wonderful stories of a magical world where spirits took the form of men and animals to show the people how to live. But she never said where the stories came from...[The child] followed her and found the magic world of the old woman's stories...when the old woman died, her spirit took the form of a story to help the child find her way back to herself. The child is still lost, but she understands that if anything can lead her to the right path, this story can...[Nana] will always be among us in her story, to guide her people back to their path. (134)

Not only has Nana influenced Cathleen through the stories she had heard, but because Nana's spirit has taken the form of a story, she continues to guide Cathleen as she gradually comes to

learn her true identity and embrace it. Part of embracing this identity means embracing the significance of story and storytelling, and the beautiful eulogy Cathleen shares at Nana's funeral reveals the fact that she has begun to appreciate the power of stories as Annie herself did. Storytelling is essential to Annie's identity, and eventually it becomes essential to Cathleen's as well, evincing Francis's assertion about how inextricably stories are interwoven with the lives of Native people.

However, the oral tradition was not always such an integral part of Annie's identity. After her mother dies and her link to the Anishinaabeg is temporarily gone, Annie's white stepfather encourages her to "put that [Native] life behind and start anew as a white girl" (76), which is exactly what she tried to do, but when she first tells stories to her stepsister Lilith, Annie begins to appreciate how important they are to her identity. As a direct result of telling Lilith the traditional stories of "Geezhigo-Quae, Sky Woman and the creation of the land of [her] people from a handful of dirt on the back of the turtle; of Winonah and Ae-pungishimook, and the coming the Anishina'bee¹² whose name meant The Good People," Annie changes. In her journal, Annie admits that, "With each story I told [Lilith], the loneliness within me diminished and I began to love myself again. She made me forget that who I was and what I was did not fit into the world that I now occupied" (170-71). Annie implies that the white world she now lives in is not a genuine reflection of who she really is: a young Anishinaabe woman. Storytelling is part of that identity, which explains why Annie begins to love herself again once she accepts the necessity of sharing stories in order to remember and maintain vital connections to the culture.

¹² This spelling differs slightly from standardized spelling of Anishinaabe used in scholarship, but variants of the spelling do exist, suggesting different emphases of vowels.

McCarthy shows through Annie how important storytelling is, not just for listeners like Cathleen, but for the storytellers as well.

Straightforward storytelling is an important part of *The Hollow*, but the subtle nuances of the oral tradition as depicted by McCarthy suggest a complexity that goes beyond bedtime stories. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin explain that there is an “assumption that words, uttered under appropriate circumstances have the power to bring into being the events or states they stand for, to embody rather than represent reality. This conviction that the word can create its object leads to a sense that language possesses power over truth and reality” (*The Empire Writes Back* 80). Not only do we see the oral tradition functioning as a repository of cultural identity in *The Hollow*, but words also have a tremendous amount of inherent power, as Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin suggest. For example, words can alter the environment, or at the very least, one’s perception of the environment: “The words from Nana’s notebook seemed to change the little cabin, make it a different place from the one [Cathleen] had known for the last ten years” (35). Words can also assist in physical healing, as it does for Cathleen. After surviving a car accident in which her father Anthony dies, Cathleen, recovering in the hospital, reveals that she “had been able to ride the crests [of pain] by concentrating on [Douglas’s] voice, on Nana’s words” (145). Of course words are not a substitute for the medical care she receives, but listening to Douglas, a resident of White Earth and Cathleen’s lover, read Nana’s notebook gives Cathleen the power to bear the intense physical pain she faces.

Furthermore, words can change hearts, as they do in Cathleen’s testimony to Brian Hooper, who is investigating her father’s fraudulent business and her involvement in the scams. In a series of ledgers, Cathleen “chronicled everything in meticulous detail” regarding the

bribery, extortion, and blackmail that Anthony McCaffrey orchestrated. Initially, Hooper considers the testimony to be “the greatest gift of his career” (210), but he has difficulty focusing on taking accurate notes because his “attention was diverted by the words [Cathleen] used, the sorry and compassion in her voice, the pain of shedding her hideous secrets, of betraying her own family” (210-11). The power of Cathleen’s story, coupled with the vision of an old woman whose “chanting to some tuneless Indian song” seemed to be “bending his thoughts, changing his mind” (213) convinces Hooper to let Cathleen “go in peace, back to her people” (214). A woman’s story has power over reality in these situations, suggesting as Trinh does, that it should be used with care in any situation.

Because of the power in language, stories can speak for themselves in any context, without the aid of commentary or explanation. Cathleen initially refuses to talk to Hooper because “he wanted her to tell a story too, but not her story... They had it all wrong, the story had already told itself, she thought. Why did they need her to tell it again?” (70). Once Cathleen finally confesses everything to Hooper and he has had time to process the testimony, Hooper eventually convinces himself that “There’s no point dragging Cathleen McCaffrey through hell, punishing her for giving you the gift of truth, opening the light on the real perpetrators. The entries speak for themselves; [he doesn’t] need anyone else to tell their version of a story that tells itself in the money and power that crossed hands” (214). What Cathleen knows early on about the story’s power to speak for itself eventually becomes evident to Hooper as well; his realization saves Cathleen from the possibility of facing conviction for aiding and abetting her father.

The personal implications of a story's ability to speak for itself are drastic for Cathleen, but McCarthy also shows the wider implications through Cathleen's family. Nookomis Mina, one of Annie's cousins, fills in some family history for Cathleen, who has only recently learned about her Anishinaabe ancestors. One of these family stories includes the account of the island where Ickwe'saigun, Annie's biological father whom she met only once, used to live: a white millionaire named Gilby wanted it for himself, but when government officials ruled that Ickwe'saigun was the legal owner of the island, Gilby eventually killed Ickwe'saigun so he could take the island for himself. Gilby's body was later found on the island, infested with maggots; his head was found separately, "leaning against Ickwe'saigun's bloodstained canoe, the same one Gilby's men had used to dump his body into the lake" (69). Nookomis Mina suggests that Ickwe'saigun had taken revenge from the grave, but Cathleen is skeptical, asserting that there must be a "logical explanation to what happened" (69). Cathleen's initial disbelief at the story can be explained by the same rationalism that comes to dominate other epistemologies since Descartes and that worries Melville's parrot. Nookomis Mina evades Cathleen's implied question about the plausibility of the story, instead reminding Cathleen that "There are many stories about these kinds of things happening among the people...So it is easy for us to understand what happened...Makes no difference anyway, the story speaks for itself" (69). Even though Cathleen expresses doubt about this legendary piece of family history, Nookomis Mina asserts that the story speaks for itself: whether or not Ickwe'saigun was behind the gruesome deaths of Gilby and his companions, they nevertheless experienced gruesome deaths and were never able to live on the island as they had hoped.

One might expect stories to speak for themselves on a personal level, either for the individual or family, but McCarthy insists that the application of the idea that stories speak for themselves extends beyond the individual or family. On her way to Ottawa with Elijah, Anthony's halfbrother, to see her father's lawyer and meet with Native leaders in Ontario, Cathleen remembers learning about the land in university: at one time it "had been covered by a great inland sea that stretched from the St. Lawrence to Lake Superior...It explained the presence of all the tiny shells and trilobites in the pink clay by Blue Sea Lake. Nana had told her that they had been put there in Noah's Great Flood. But then the miracle spoke for itself, didn't it? It didn't matter which story was true" (173). Significantly, Cathleen comes to the conclusion that this story speaks for itself, rather than being told that it does by Nookomis Mina or another of her Anishinaabe family members. Rather than insisting on what the West would describe as the "logical" explanation for the trilobites by Blue Sea Lake, Cathleen realizes that it does not really matter how the trilobites got there, but only that they are there for people to enjoy. One should not ignore the fact that Noah's Great Flood is part of Judeo-Christian belief and does not originate in Anishinaabe traditions, yet this should not distract readers from seeing that Cathleen has accepted the more fundamental belief about story's power, and thus has further accepted her Native identity.

Cathleen is not the only character who marks part of her Native development in a deeper understanding of the ways in which story speaks for itself. Hooper, whose grandfather was Cree, denies his Native heritage for many years. In fact, when his colleagues laugh at an old man in jail, a "muttering figure slumped on the floor of the cell, stinking of urine and vomit," Hooper refuses to join in the laughter, but does nothing to defend his grandfather or give him dignity,

even though he was once “an important man on the reservation.” Instead, Hooper “turned his back ashamed of their kinship and let him die alone in the white man’s jail” (213). Hooper faces a significant tension between the white world of his work in law enforcement and the Native world of his ancestors; only after interacting with Cathleen who has faced the same tension and immersed herself in a culture of storytelling does Hooper begin to shift his values and approach to the world. The struggles that each of these characters experiences are due, at least in part, to the primary concern Francis expresses: that Native identity suffers when people’s urban lives are devoid of cultural stories (79). Hooper’s beginning acceptance of his own Native identity is marked in part by his conclusion that the ledgers Cathleen described are enough for his investigation: “The entries speak for themselves; you don’t need anyone else to tell their version of a story that tells itself in the money and power that crossed hands” (214). This focus on the story and its power not only reminds listeners of the story they hear, but it also cements Native identity, whether that identity is still developing or fully embraced and lived.

As important as story is in *The Hollow*, it is not confined to operating in its power through words alone. Cathleen initially wonders at this possibility when she arranges the pictures and artifacts on the floor that were left to her by her grandmother: “To her the arrangement seemed a shorthand of a story eighty-three years long, the black notebook, a key to these things. But how could things tell a story better than words?” (17). Cathleen senses that the clothes, pipe, and photographs are ready to tell her something, so much so that she ends up “half-expecting the relics to start telling their own story” (17). Interestingly, rather than tell an explicit story, “The objects created an uneasy silence in her mind, drew her back to the sad time in her life, a time without Nana, when she had chosen to turn her back on magic, replace it with Glen Avenue and

drugs” (17). By making space for silence, the objects invite Cathleen to recall her own stories in that space, without a single word spoken or read.

Although she does not go to the same lengths as Ngũgĩ does in only writing in the mother tongue, McCarthy is not afraid to include the Anishinaabe language in her novel to indicate the way in which stories are communicated amongst Cathleen’s family members. Once she shares the truth about her family’s racial and ethnic identity, Nookomis Mina, Elijah, and others begin teaching Cathleen—and readers—Anishinaabe: *ina’bandumo’win* is a vision (23), *mi’in* means enough (50), *ninga* means mother (50), *wanda’wasud* is a name-giver (50), and so on. But Cathleen also learns Ojibway from reading her grandmother’s journals; Annie knows the language, but because she writes for Cathleen who does not know the language, she includes translations and definitions appear: *wayaabishkiiwed* are white men (25), *asin’ipwa’gun* is a ceremonial pipe in the Wolf Clan, and *daebaudj’imoot* are storytellers (111), for example. In a conversation with Annie, Father Brennan reinforces the significance of the language with an example from across the ocean: “The Celts remembered, and they whispered their memories, their language to their children who in turn, whispered to their children. So it is that I can tell you about their world today” (186). Memories must be passed down from one generation to the next, but Father Brennan implies that when those memories are passed down in the native language, they seem to take root in ways that may not otherwise happen.

Soon Nookomis Mina expresses approval that Cathleen is “picking up a little Ojibway” (67) and so becoming more attuned to Anishinaabe ways of life, but just as Melville’s parrot significantly takes on a new name, so too does Cathleen, although she adopts several names over the course of the novel. Following Nookomis Mina’s early suggestion that Cathleen will be the

new Shaman woman to the Bear Clan People, Cathleen is skeptical, instead calling herself “Judas Goat or ‘Glen Avenue loser’ or better still, ‘daddy’s little whore’” (25). These self-given names belie the deep-seated guilt Cathleen lives with due to her involvement in her father’s illegal activities. And while Cathleen carries this guilt until she makes a confession to Hooper toward the end of the novel, it becomes apparent that Cathleen eventually thinks better of herself than the demeaning names she initially calls herself imply. Before long, Elijah has a vision in which he gives Cathleen the name Wase’ya, and Cathleen uses this name to identify herself at her grandmother’s funeral (134). Whereas Melville’s parrot takes on a “continental handle,” distancing himself from his native identity, Cathleen accepts the Anishinaabe name and so draws herself closer to her native identity. Her acceptance of this name is important, not only because it indicates her shifting allegiances, but also because Wase’ya means light. Before things begin to change with new knowledge of her ancestry, Cathleen emotionally and psychologically exists in a dark place. She reflects that “Ever since daddy had involved her in his business deals, a black cloud had descended. Listless, without purpose or connection, she knew she had been drifting, cutting herself off from everyone around her, from everything that was happening. And now she too was dead from the inside out, happily dead” (24). When Cathleen accepts Wase’ya as her new name, she not only embraces the Anishinaabe culture from which the name stems, but she also accepts a new way of living, one as different from her old way of life as light is from darkness. Cathleen begins to develop more connections with people, including Nookomis Mina, Elijah, and other members of her extended family, as well as with Douglas, whom she eventually marries. She begins to live with purpose, taking an interest in what it means to be an Indian in White Earth (89), trying to make peace with her father and get him to understand his mother’s

reasons for her decisions to leave him and return to White Earth or keep her origins a secret (130-32, 137)¹³, acting as an accomplice for Elijah's presence in Canada (160-61), and eventually taking responsibility for the work she did for her father (210). The changes in Cathleen are remarkable, particularly because her former lifestyle would almost certainly have led to a fate similar to her father's.

Learning Anishinaabe is a significant step for Cathleen in accepting her native identity, but Cathleen also sees what learning English meant for many people in her grandmother's life when residential schools became an important colonial tool through which the government forced indigenous children to acculturate to Western lifestyles and values. Annie remembers the strict rules at her school, which were enforced with severe punishments for those who violated expectations: "Girls will tie their hair back in a modest fashion: no braids, no feathers, no ornaments. Boys will wear their hair cut short: no feathers, no ornaments. Your children will be educated in English and taught the same things as all Catholic American children...Any use of the Ojibway language is forbidden. Any practice of the Ojibway religion is forbidden" (30). Not only that, but students were also made to wear uniforms customary for Euroamerican children and receive the Catholic sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and communion. Annie's cousin, Vincent Landreville, or Gidagaakoons, balks at these orders and any instruction that the nuns provide. He insists that his "ancestors made the river red with the blood of [the nun's] people. That is all I have to learn in my life" (32). Vincent's concerns about the colonial forces at work in the school are similar to those of Seth Crow Catcher, chief of the Six Nations Reservation in

¹³ Annie never revealed her origins to her son, Anthony, while she was alive. When Cathleen sees her father at Annie's funeral, she explains that Annie was born to a White Earth Ojibway woman and an Ojibway-Sioux warrior. Anthony rejects this information and its implications for his own life, believing instead that the contents of the notebook are "all fantasy...ravings of a lunatic mind" (137).

Ontario. When Annie moves there to teach, Seth hesitates to allow Annie to teach English because “Handsome Lake warns against learning the white man’s language, and using the white man’s medicine, his tools and his organizations; especially the church” (96). Annie insists that the people should “learn what it is to be Iroquois as well as white, both are equally important” for survival in this changing world (96).

Cathleen reads in her grandmother’s journal about the tensions with the English language that her ancestors dealt with, but the effects of those concerns persist to the present day. Before she first gets to White Earth after her grandmother’s death, Cathleen reads an interview with Dennis Banks, a so-called radical Ojibway from another reservation who asserts that the genocide of indigenous people continues to the present day: “You think the genocide has stopped? Well think again. The weapons you use today are far more effective than guns. Alcohol, poverty, residential schools, all these thing[s] are killing Indian people in larger numbers than the Gatling guns you used to wipe us out here eighty[-]three years ago. You are killing us from the inside out” (9). Even though Dennis may be considered a radical by the newspaper publishing the interview, his anger at the injustice of ongoing colonization and the ignorance of so many Euroamericans is rooted in truth and reinforces Vincent’s discomfort at the school.

However, McCarthy treats the issue of learning the colonizer’s language in a nuanced way, not satisfied to show only the suffering involved in the process or the resulting loss of culture that it brings. Annie reminds Vincent of the folly of stubbornly refusing to learn English:

The Elders tell us over and over again this is the Sixth Fire time; you cannot fight [white men]. There are as many of them as black flies in the summer. The Elders say you must find your way inside, where they cannot go, remember? So what if you have to learn to read and speak English? They cannot take away your pride, unless you give it to them.

Learn their language and their ways. It will only make you stronger in your own ways.
Use your head to defeat them, because you will not be able to use anything else. (33-34)

Although there are some dangers associated with learning English, Annie points out that knowing the enemy's language and customs can give them an advantage in defeating the enemy, just as Cronin suggests (35)¹⁴. Ickwe'saigun, Annie's father, reiterates the benefits of learning English for Vincent: he admits that he used to think that "we could drive these people away with bullets and knives. But they kept coming back with paper and pen, making us put our marks when we could not read or understand. But it didn't matter anyway because they never lived up to their word whether it was on their paper or their lips" (62). Because of colonizers' deception in writing treaties and then acting beyond what those signed treaties allowed, Ickwe'saigun gives Vincent an important task: "Take back what [the white man] has stolen from us using his weapons, pen and paper, not bullets and knives" (63). If he learns English, Vincent, along with other indigenous men and women are able to fight legal battles with the government, battles which reveal, for example, that a significant amount of land was taken unlawfully from indigenous groups in the Americas.

Vincent takes Ickwe'saigun's charge seriously. Zachary Yorke, a white man on a mission, arranges to have the city council of Brantford, Ontario issue a claim for land along the river. The Six Nations Reservation, where Annie is a teacher, uses that land as a burial ground, and Vincent steps in to protect the land on behalf of the tribal council. Vincent earns a favorable decision from a judge, but Yorke files a federal appeal and verbally intimidates Vincent to step

¹⁴ In addition to Cronin's "translation as resistance," the English language and boarding schools became opportunities for establishing intertribal alliances. Just as Aji describes the ways in which speakers of different African languages could unite through a common colonial language and resist colonial powers together, so too could people from different tribal groups and languages in the Americas collaborate after learning a common language in boarding schools.

down from the battle. When he sees the verbal intimidations are unsuccessful, Yorke's allies make an attempt on Vincent's life, which ends in Vincent losing a leg and one of Yorke's men losing his life. Even as he recovers and spends time in jail during the inquest into the events surrounding Thomas Corbin's death, Vincent refuses to let Yorke win, instead enlisting the help of Honore Lavictoire¹⁵ to be present in court when he cannot. Vincent continues to fight until a judge orders him to leave Canada, and even then, Vincent is not deterred. He tells the judge that "it is a good day to die. The whites may succeed in killing one smart Indian.¹⁶ Lord knows, they have killed many already. But behind that one will rise another, and then another. Eventually you will have to deal with us...I am your sworn enemy" (152-53). Although Vincent faces limits to the work he can do with the Iroquois on the Six Nations Reservation, his accomplishments are nevertheless noteworthy, particularly when one considers Vincent's early refusals to learn English at all. Despite the colonial intentions in teaching the indigenous children at White Earth to speak English, Vincent subversively uses those skills to defend people against ongoing colonization, even if those people belong to a different tribal group.

Vincent's challenge to the judge anticipates the similar work that his son, Elijah, does in the present day. While he is in Ontario to escort Cathleen home after the car accident which injured her and killed her father, Elijah plans a meeting with Inuit and Dene leaders because "they're going through the same kind of legal battle with the Canadian government as we are with Minnesota" (173). Elijah supports the efforts of other indigenous leaders in fighting the

¹⁵ In keeping with her interest in names, McCarthy also invests non-Native characters with aptronyms. The French translation of Honore Lavictoire's name is honored victory, a fitting name for a lawyer working on behalf of Vincent and the Iroquois on the Six Nations Reserve.

¹⁶ Seth Crow Catcher, chief of Six Nations, had been shot by Thomas Corbin's brother shortly before the violent encounter between the Corbin brothers' violent encounter with Vincent.

ongoing colonization they face by local and federal governments by offering them Vincent's case notes on the Six Nations claim. Even though these leaders belong to different tribes and live in a different country, Elijah insists that he can and should help as he is able to: "The treaties may be different but the issues and the white man's tactics are always the same...The Six Nations file will help brief the Dene and Inuit on what to expect from the Canadian Feds and the provincial courts" (173-74). Vincent's legacy clearly reveals the ways in which the colonizers' language, while certainly complicating traditional ways of life for indigenous men and women across the Americas, can nevertheless become a means for fighting the colonizer in ways he cannot ignore.

Not only does English present an opportunity for fighting the colonizer in the courts, but for those who speak both the native and colonizing languages, translation from one language to the other can also be a subversive tool against the colonizer. Initially Annie's understanding of the power in translation is limited: she only thinks about "how funny it was that [she and Jacob] could understand both sides of what was said and the Wayaabishkiiwed couldn't" (27). But she quickly sees how much power a bilingual Ojibway has over those who only speak English. At one point, Herbert Wold, the Indian Agent for White Earth, inspects all the young men to ensure that none has broken the law by practicing the Sundance ceremony, during which young men become warriors. Vincent has fresh scars on his chest from this ceremony, so Mr. Wold questions Vincent through Jacob Two-Fingers, who translates the Ojibway into English. Vincent comes up with a story about falling on barbed wire, but when Mr. Wold presses Vincent for more information, Jacob tells Vincent, "The barbed-wire was a good idea. Do not worry, son. I think I can take care of it from here. Just say something to me so they think you are answering

their question” (27). Vincent is brave, asserting that “it is a good day to die” if Jacob’s plan will not placate Mr. Wold, but Jacob is confident in reporting that Vincent “was hot and he needed to pee. When he got outside, he decided not to use the outhouse and went for the bushes instead. That’s where he fell on the barbed wire” (27). Jacob has a separate conversation with Vincent about how best to fool Mr. Wold while they stand in his very presence, and he also successfully elaborates Vincent’s lie so that Mr. Wold takes no action against Vincent. None of this would have been possible had Jacob not known English, and perhaps more importantly, had Jacob not presented himself as a trustworthy translator to Mr. Wold.

Once she sees how taking liberties in translation can protect loved ones, Annie does not hesitate to do the same when she has the opportunity. When Sister St. Michael wants to communicate to Vincent the necessity of learning English in order to learn the other subjects, she needs Annie, who is bilingual, to translate for her. Because punishments are handed out to anyone who speaks Ojibway, Annie interestingly confirms that she could speak to Vincent on the Sister’s behalf “in Indian,” rather than specifying the Ojibway language (32). Although the languages belonging to different indigenous groups are distinct, Annie knows that this woman either does not know that or does not care—for Sister St. Michael and so many other white Euroamericans, all indigenous people are essentially the same and present the same problems to the colonizing power. When Vincent asserts, “I already know what I need to know,” Annie remembers the “liberties” Jacob had taken in translating for Vincent before she speaks again to Sister St. Michael: “He says he’ll try” (32). Moreover, when Vincent proposes a different education for himself, one that centers on the history of his ancestors killing the nun’s colonial ancestors, Annie protects Vincent once again, reporting that “He says Thank You, Sister” (32).

Had Annie given true translations of Vincent's speech, he almost certainly would have been punished severely. Instead, Annie concocts a conversation that will protect Vincent for the time being and also give her additional time to persuade Vincent to ease his stubborn attitude toward the school and the rules that govern it.

Although Cathleen does not have to deal with the issues surrounding English language use, she does struggle for quite some time with her ethnicity. When she first hears the truth about her ethnic heritage, Cathleen remains stubbornly opposed to the idea that that heritage might change anything about who she is: "She was still the daughter of two Irish Catholics, even if as it turned out, one of them was a half-breed Indian. What did genetics matter anyway? Hadn't she been raised in a white world by seemingly white people?" (13). Although her understanding of her identity has been shaken significantly at this point, Cathleen forcefully asserts that because she is culturally white and mostly genetically white, the portion of her heritage that is found in indigenous people and their culture means nothing in practice. Realizing that her genetic composition is slightly different than what she had always assumed it to be will not automatically make Cathleen an Anishinaabe woman. Cathleen's struggle with her ethnicity mirrors that of her grandmother's; even though her biological parents were both Anishinaabe, Annie cannot escape the clash of cultures in her home due to her adoptive white father. Some of the first words Cathleen reads concern the tension Annie faced: "For many long years I had tried to be both Indian and White and knew I had failed to be either. I thought I had struck a compromise by building a third person out of the ashes of the first two, but even this fell short of my spirit" (18). By reading about her grandmother's struggles between the Anishinaabe and

Wayaabishkiiwed worlds, Cathleen learns to accept and even embrace her indigenous family and customs, but the process of “tak[ing] her place among The People” takes even longer (217).

Early in his relationship with Cathleen, Douglas lashes out at her for her ignorance: “How could you understand anything about being Indian? You think ’cause you’ve been coming here all these years you’re one of us? Well fuck you Kate. You’re just some spoiled white bitch who’s been slumming around. You don’t know squat” (88-89). Douglas admits that he never really picked up the Ojibway language, and as important as the native language is to carrying the culture into the future, being an Indian is much more than knowing the language or spending time with other Indians. Racial and ethnic identifiers are important, but even more important are the shared hardships endured under colonial force. Douglas later shares with Cathleen some of these experiences and histories that have shaped him, including his tribe’s forced removal to White Earth, the devastation of losing government-issued land when an anthropologist determined that his grandfather was not a “real” Indian due to his mixed racial identity, and his family’s new dependence on welfare (190). It does not matter that Douglas is not a racially “pure” Indian or that he did not experience the removal or the government betrayal himself; Douglas nevertheless experiences the ongoing colonial oppression with life on welfare as the only option for his family and community. Cathleen has a mixed racial identity as well, but at this point, she does not yet have the knowledge and understanding needed to claim a shared ethnic identity with Douglas.

Although these questions surrounding ethnicity appear unrelated to the issues of language, they raise questions about agency and who has the right to speak. Legitimacy is not a question for Annie’s journals, which are a personal record and gift to her granddaughter, nor is it

a question for Elijah and the other lawyers who defend indigenous communities in the United States and Canada. However, McCarthy briefly reminds us of the complexity of this issue by the end of the novel when Cathleen's uncle, No'dinens, discusses the preparation of the Sundance ceremony for Douglas: "The last time we had a Sundance it was for your uncle, Weza'wange. And we had Gidegaakoons' as well as my memory to help us. This time we had to consult some old photos taken by a Wayaabishkiiwed woman. I think she wrote a book about us" (229). A white woman assuming authority to speak about the people and customs at White Earth is problematic given the historical precedents of colonialism, and this act could be regarded as another instance of colonial assertion of power over the colonized group. However, the scene shifts promptly after No'dinens's statement, and none of the characters thinks twice about their reliance on a white woman's interpretation of their customs in order to continue them, suggesting that perhaps the question of agency and voice are less important than one might assume. For McCarthy's characters, the present day reinvention of ceremony and knowledge is more important than technical correctness or the source of knowledge because the reconstructed knowledge stimulates identity formation. If the record is more important than the recorder, then any concerns should be put to rest that readers might have about the legitimacy of Cathleen identifying herself with "the People" by the end of the novel when she has what some might consider marginal connection to the Anishinaabe at White Earth. Cathleen had considered herself white for her entire childhood and adolescence, but the connection she does have to White Earth, her pride in her new name and new role as Shaman woman to the Bear Clan are sufficient evidence of Cathleen's indigenous identity for the community to accept her.

Whereas “The Parrot and Descartes” considers the loss that occurred when societies began relying on the written word rather than on memory and the spoken word for truth, *The Hollow* explores how the written word might be used to connect indigenous people, families, and communities while also reinforcing worldviews and values particular to their tribal group. McCarthy shows one way in which the written word, and perhaps the written word in English in particular, might be used in ways the colonizer would not have expected; instead of crumbling a culture that does not adhere to the metropole’s expectations, Annie’s journals invigorate Cathleen and draw her into the indigenous community that cares for and needs her, while Vincent and Elijah turn the tables on local and federal governments with their legal expertise. Moreover, while the parrot’s new name mocks the colonizer, Cathleen’s new name deepens her connection to her people and signifies a new life for her as an Anishinaabe woman.

Erasing the Binary: The Interdependence of Orality and Textuality

Just as Melville and McCarthy explore nuances of indigenous language and of the oral and written traditions, so too does Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo, United States) in *Almanac of the Dead*, but Silko situates her discussions of these topics in a transnational context, extending her novel across the Americas and across the Atlantic Ocean to Africa. This apocalyptic novel is sprawling and complex, including dozens of narrative strands that follow different characters across time and space, in a way similar to Glancy’s *Pushing the Bear* novels. Silko wrote the novel in sections, similar to the fragments of the remaining Mayan codices; she explains that she “could not think of the story of the *Almanac* as a single line moving from point A to point B to point C...[she] wanted to use narrative to shift the reader’s experience of time

and the meaning of history as stories that mark certain points in time...and still tell stories people could understand” (*Yellow Woman* 140). The nonlinear structure of the novel reflects the recursive writing process, and more importantly, the oral tradition and traditionally indigenous attitudes regarding the circular nature of time. *Almanac* purposefully lacks the structure, temporal progression, character development, and narrative resolutions that Euroamerican readers might come to expect from a novel.

Yet alongside the formal influence from the Mayan codices, Silko also draws on the almanac, as the title suggests. Mishuana Goeman describes the far-reaching base that almanacs had during the colonial era in the United States:

almanacs were essential to forming American culture and mapping the Americas from the sale of the body, to regions, to the global. In the early years, almanacs were instrumental in bringing forth enlightenment ideas that materialized in the everyday realities and continue to organize our various spatialities. Silko taking up the form of the almanac underscores the multivocal narratives and genres that constitute community. (*Mark My Words* 161)

Not only does the almanac form give space for a variety of narratives that reflect community, but Silko’s combination of indigenous and colonial formal influences allows her to emulate, appropriate, and subvert each genre in order to engage with them both. Each of these influences is important to the project, though many readers will find the final product challenging to navigate, understand, or even see to the end.

In an interview with Kim Barnes, Silko admits to poking the bear: “I don’t want to write something that the MLA will want. I want something that will horrify the people at the MLA” (48). And horrify them she did. According to William Dinome who compiled a Silko bibliography, the early reviews of *Almanac of the Dead* were “largely negative” (211). One of these reviewers, John Skow, complains that the novel is “long” and “a dull headache,” but goes

further to describe Silko as “self-righteous” and the novel “vengeful” (86). Although the novel is certainly long, it is not long unnecessarily. Silko crafts a novel that communicates the stories she says had been handed down to her from her ancestors through the oral tradition alongside “all sorts of myths from the Americas, including the modern myths” which satisfy readers’ craving for story while also altering experiences of time and reality (*Yellow Woman* 140).

In short, *Almanac of the Dead* describes white man’s treatment of indigenous people in the United States and across the Americas in the centuries since Europeans first made contact with the natives. The novel is set in an era called “Death-Eye Dog” in which violence, greed, corruption, and depravity are chief characteristics of American society. Families are fragmented and void of intimacy or otherwise built on crimes like weapon and drug smuggling; women are objectified and children murdered; natural resources are mined and manipulated with an eye for profits and no regard for sustainability; scientific advances like organ donation, which are meant to improve the quality of life for the ill, are perverted into a black market enterprise. As easy as it might have been to place the blame for the corruption on white Americans, Silko also implicates the indigenous Aztecs, who were destroyers themselves; according to prophecy, they invited their fellow destroyers from Europe to the Americas to pursue the appeal of bloodlust, ushering in the “Death-Eye Dog” era, but according to prophecy, that era will eventually come to an end and Euroamericans will lose their destructive and unjust power in the Americas. Toward the end of the novel, various groups of indigenous people form an alliance to overthrow the illegal U.S. government: “no legal government could be established on stolen land” (133).

Indeed, the novel seems all-encompassing, presenting several ideologies, revisionist histories, and themes, many of which have drawn scholarly attention. For example, based on

political oppression and other kinds of marginalization in the novel, Michelle Jarmon argues that Silko complicates the notion of authenticity with disabilities and queer identities to “expand borderland notions of hybrid identity” and to “expose the cultural erasures of eugenic histories connected to homosexuality and disability” (148). Janet St. Clair and Amy S. Gottfried, on the other hand, focus on Silko’s depiction of society’s fascination with violence. St. Clair analyzes the greed, perversity, and aggression in the novel, arguing that they are instances of Silko’s attack on “the misogynistic, arrogantly hierarchical, and egocentric traditions of Western liberal individualism” (141). However, Gottfried takes another perspective, analyzing Silko’s use of violence in the context of comedy. Gottfried argues that the combination of violence and humor creates a “depiction of Indian life as complex, resourceful, and vital, [which] works against the sentimental myth of the dying, silent Indian” (118), and that the encapsulation of violence and comedy in the novel “plunges the reader into a realm of trickster-like inversion” (122). Rebecca Tillett and T. V. Reed consider the environmental degradation of the land due to Western greed that is presented in the novel. Tillett focuses on the human and ecological costs of the exploitation evident in *Almanac* and highlights the significance for many contemporary indigenous communities in the United States who may once have had a symbiotic relationship with the land. Meanwhile, Reed focuses on transnational interests in achieving justice for environments that have suffered exploitation, arguing that “*Almanac of the Dead* was already doing global decolonial environmental justice cultural criticism many years before the field was named” (25).

Notably, just as this dissertation reveals (post)colonial connections between indigenous groups from Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean, *Almanac of the Dead* accomplishes a

similar feat: the novel spans continents and includes characters from a variety of indigenous groups with similar political goals. Several scholars have analyzed these transnational and pan-Indian impulses and their implications in Silko's work. Shari M. Huhndorf argues that "*Almanac* revises indigenous politics by positioning transnational alliances—what the novel, reprising Marx, labels 'tribal internationalism' (515)—as the most powerful (but nevertheless contradictory) form of anticolonial resistance" (141). Elizabeth Cook-Lynn faults Silko for the transnational alliances in the novel, however, "since it does not take into account the specific kind of tribal/nation status of the original occupants of this continent. There is no apparatus that allows the tribally specific treaty-status paradigm to be realized either in Silko's fiction or in the pan-Indian approach to history" (93). Eric Cheyfitz, on the other hand, sees nationalism and transnationalism existing in a dialectical relationship that "drive[s] the structure of *Almanac*'s vision of pan-Indian revolution in the Americas"; that is, "the transnational cannot articulate itself except through national situations; the global is grounded in the local because it needs a *place* to give it form" (420). Eva Cherniavsky similarly argues that national and transnational concerns are not mutually exclusive since "the colonized protagonists of Silko's novel mobilize tribal affiliations and knowledges in an effort to define a transnational strategy of resistance to both the old and the new colonialisms" (111). Although Cook-Lynn's concerns about the loss of specificity are well-founded, Silko's tribal internationalism seems too powerful a force to ignore in the context of ongoing colonization. Thus, more than any other piece of fiction by an indigenous woman writer, *Almanac of the Dead* reinforces the necessity of building transnational relationships amongst indigenous people in the Americas for the purpose of resisting settled colonizers who continue to marginalize them.

In addition to these critical insights, I would argue that *Almanac of the Dead* highlights the oral and written traditions to show the depth and variety in each, while also revealing the interrelatedness of the two: the almanac is deeply informed by the oral tradition, and although it is not necessarily based on traditional oral practices, instances of oral performance in the novel are supported by texts, the combination of which produces new or untold histories. In the face of so much scholarship on indigenous oral traditions, Yvonne Reineke importantly considers the significance of indigenous writing and indigenous texts in the novel, which occur both before and after European contact. Reineke argues that Silko “challenges Western evolutionary models of time, space, and writing (history, geography, literacy) that have held sway and served to justify colonization of ‘nonliterate’ cultures” (66). Although many indigenous groups in the Americas highly valued their oral traditions, this does not mean that all indigenous groups were also without written traditions. Birgit Brander Rasmussen redefines writing to take into account indigenous literacies in the Americas, which include pictographs, wampum, birch bark scrolls, quipus, and more. She argues that “writing is too often conceptualized as synonymous with alphabetic script. The common equation between writing and the alphabet relegates other forms of recording and transmitting knowledge outside the boundaries of literary inquiry...It denies the agency, knowledge, and sometimes even the existence of indigenous perspectives recorded in non-alphabetic texts” (4). Rasmussen begins to fill a scholarly gap in the understudied written tradition of indigenous people across the Americas to counter the “enduring notion that indigenous Americans did not write before the arrival of Europeans” (6).

Alongside Rasmussen, Silko also draws attention to indigenous literacies, which are so often forgotten or ignored. Silko reminds us that "The Europeans had destroyed the great

libraries of the Americans to obliterate all that had existed before the white man" (315). Reineke draws our attention to some of the surviving influential texts of Mayan culture to which Silko alludes, including the *Popul Vuh*, or the Council Mat, and *Chilam Balam*, Book of Chumayel. These books, along with the Mayan codices, record history and religious practices, and because Silko alerts readers to these texts, she reminds us that "this hemisphere has its own sacred texts which tell us how to live," separate from the Bible or histories written by colonizing powers (Reineke 74). These texts and others like them, in concert with oral traditions, create powerful opportunities for indigenous people to remember and pass on language and culture, while also remaining flexible to new challenges, especially ones posed by colonial systems in the Americas. In fact, Diana Taylor describes how these texts relied on orality in order to pass on cultural knowledge and identity. According to Taylor, writing for the Aztecs, Mayas, and Incas "never replaced the performed utterance. Writing, though highly valued, was primarily a prompt to performance, a mnemonic aid. More precise information could be stored through writing and it required specialized skills, but it depended on embodied culture for transmission" (17).

Furthermore, not only do written and oral traditions work together to preserve and pass on cultural values, memories, and identities, but Matt Cohen also suggests that scholars consider broader, multimedia networks of communication in indigenous communities across the Americas: "indigenous North American recording systems [including wampum, traps, monuments, medical rituals, and more] complicate the distinction usually made by historians of writing between semasiographic systems (based on inscription) and phonographic ones that are based on spoken language" (6). The binary of written communication and spoken communication is a false dichotomy, Cohen argues, instead revealing the complex interplay

between various forms of indigenous expression that only became more complex once Native people began engaging with colonial discourses. Silko similarly rejects this binary and provides a nuanced picture of the relationship between the various forms of communication.

Beginning with the notebooks that Yoeme, an old Yaqui woman, entrusts to her twin granddaughters, Lecha and Zeta Cazador, it soon becomes clear how the oral tradition informs the text's content and form. Just as the oral tradition depends on a community to tell stories, so too is the almanac dependent on a community. First, when the almanac begins its journey to the north, "The pages were divided four ways. This way, if only one of the children reached safety far in the North, at least one part of the book would be safe. The people knew that if even part of their almanac survived, they as a people would return someday" (246). This strategy does come with its share of risk. We later learn about "evidence that substantial portions of the original manuscript had been lost or condensed into odd narratives which operated like codes," and that "Only fragments of the original pages remained, carefully placed between blank pages" (569). Although there is some risk involved in dividing the text into segments which may or may not remain together and which may or may not look the same as they had originally, there is even greater risk in relying solely on one person to protect the text. Just as the text was divided at the outset of its journey north, it is divided again when Yoeme delegates some of the translation and transcription work of the notebooks to Zeta and some to Lecha, who also enlists Seese to help; the almanac survives and is passed on to future generations through a community effort, much as the oral tradition survives and is passed down through the participation of many.

As we saw in *The Hollow*, tensions between indigenous and colonial languages and the ways in which translation might resist colonial power continue to be a concern for native women

writers; questions of translation arise in *Almanac of the Dead* as well, although Silko considers written translation, rather than spoken translation, as McCarthy does. The notebooks Zeta and Lecha receive are “all in broken Spanish or corrupt Latin that no one can understand without months of research in old grammars” (174), and portions of the old notebooks include Yoeme’s “made up spellings for Yaqui words” (592). The collective text becomes even more linguistically complex when Lecha makes the “first entry that had been written in English” (130). Although Zeta expects Yoeme to reprimand Lecha for the English language addition, instead Yoeme claims that “this was the sign the keepers of the notebooks had always prayed for” (130). The almanac is primarily written in languages that are not native to the indigenous people, and Yoeme even celebrates the new inclusion of English, which may be troubling to some readers who expect the almanac to be written entirely in indigenous languages. However, Martha J. Cutter suggests that “we can see a focus on language not as ‘pure’ but as a contact zone between peoples and cultures” (112). Cutter describes Lecha’s translations of and additions to the notebooks as evidence of the “need for linguistic hybridity and fluidity” between people and cultures (113). Alongside Achebe who advocates for using colonial languages to unite indigenous people from disparate native tongues, Silko seems to suggest that isolating languages and the people who speak them is not a solution to colonial oppression.

Moreover, Cutter argues that pure translation is essentially impossible, whereas Averbach focuses on the violence involved when one culture translates another: Silko’s novel “implies that language is broken and that we cannot recover an ‘authentic’ story of it through translation. In *Almanac of the Dead* there is no ‘original’ or ‘uncontaminated’ story, no ‘pure language’ to be ‘reclaimed.’ Rather, ‘pure language’ and a ‘pure story’ as such exist only in a dialectical context

of multilingualism” (113-14). Because translation is an imprecise art, errors sometimes occur. For example, in the fragments from the ancient notebooks, Lecha discovers an “Error in translation of the Chumayel manuscript: 11 AHU was the year of the return of fair Quetzalcoatl. But the mention of the artificial white circle in the sky could only have meant the return of Death Dog and his eight brothers: plague, earthquake, drought, famine, incest, insanity, war, and betrayal” (572). However, this error does not discredit the overall power and truth of the almanac; similarly, when people attempt to translate their own language or culture into that of another’s, the translator’s work is interpretive and creative, leading to truth, even if authenticity is questionable (114). Moreover, the five hundred year map preceding the novel includes this key: “Through the decipherment of ancient tribal texts of the Americas the Almanac of the Dead foretells the future of all the Americas. The future is encoded in arcane symbols and old narratives” (14). Translation of the symbols and narratives opens the text to a wider audience and a broader truth that impacts that audience, including native and non-native people. Silko’s vision of a transnational revolution is made possible through these translated stories that prophesy the future of the Americas.

In addition to the multilingual nature of Silko’s almanac, the text is powerful and living, even to the present day. Ellen L. Arnold argues that “Silko implies in her writing that printed text, like photographs, freezes the dynamic flow of life, making it available to abstraction and analysis, and may be similarly recontextualized” (216). Arnold goes on to suggest that abstraction allows readers to “see the larger story...and thus to recognize consciously how the written word may participate in the living dynamism of the world much like the oral/aural word” (216). The written word does participate in the dynamism of the oral/aural word in *Almanac of*

the Dead, but it is not through the freezing and abstraction of words that that relationship takes place. Silko shows readers the ways in which a text can be flexible, rather than frozen in time as many Western readers would expect. Instead, Reineke suggests that “The scribbled arguments, Yoeme’s story, fear, madness, and protection emphasize the power of the pages, and the interactions between the living text and its caretakers: the almanac is a living entity and like one, grows and changes. Her addition of her escape and the plague also adds another note to understanding the identity of the days in which one lives” (78-79). The almanac, written on horse-gut pages, provides physical sustenance for the children who carried it northward long ago when the eldest girl includes a page of the manuscript in a stew: “They lived on it for days” (249), and the children later consume more pages to give them strength for the journey. Even though the others express concern at what is lost, the eldest comforts them, saying, “I remember what was on the page we ate. I know that part of the almanac—I have heard the stories of those days told many times. Now I am going to tell you three. So if something happens to me, the three of you will know how that part of the story goes” (250). These stories last through the combination of the written and oral traditions: the girl had heard the stories before, and with the help of the text, she is able to memorize and share them, presumably to be written down again and reinserted into the almanac. Yet even if those particular pages are not replicated for the almanac, its power is clear, at least for Yoeme who added marginalia after the account of her escape from prison was added to the notebooks. She believed

power resides within certain stories; this power ensures the story to be retold, and with each retelling a slight but permanent shift took place. Yoeme’s story of her deliverance changed forever the odds against all captives; each time a revolutionist escaped death in one century, two revolutionists escaped certain death in the following century even if they had never heard such an escape story. (581)

Without the context of the notebooks, one might assume that the narrator refers only to spoken stories here because the written word is so often seen as inflexible; it is in part the static nature of texts that causes Melville's parrot such distress. However, *Silko* shows readers a different kind of text, one that is open to additions and revisions in the same way that the oral tradition is.

In addition to a new way of understanding and experiencing the written tradition as one that is not opposed to the oral tradition but is shaped by its dynamism, *Silko* also reveals the ways in which formal and informal texts shape oral performances. Clinton, a black and homeless veteran, stands out from the other homeless people: "while others off the street used the downtown public library to wash and shave, Clinton always went from the rest room to the reading room. Clinton had plans. He kept pages and pages of notes from the books he read at the public library" (415), and *Silko* includes some excerpts of these notes for readers to see. Clinton is deeply concerned with the oppression and inequalities he sees in the United States, and his plans involve fighting these injustices, in part by educating the masses and telling more accurate histories about African tribes and slavery in the United States via radio broadcasts. Clinton believes that "all around them lay human slavery, although most recently it had been called by other names. Everyone was or had been a slave to some other person or something that was controlled by another. Most people were not free, Clinton knew from experience, yet man was born to be free" (411-12). Homelessness and slavery might initially appear to be unrelated to real tribal sovereignty for indigenous people in the Americas, but as *Silko* emphasizes, all of these groups are disenfranchised; as Kimberly Roppolo suggests, "there is a need for supporting the connections between the tribes and other oppressed peoples just as there is the need for individual tribal sovereignty" (554). Whenever Clinton feels overwhelmed, even desperate with

the task ahead of him, he consoles himself with his notes on African religion (418). The books Clinton has read and the notes he has taken are a form of security for him since they are truth in the midst of a culture of lies from Hollywood and the powerful in the United States who want to maintain existing systems of oppression.

Although he and another homeless veteran are waiting for the right time for their Army of the Homeless to wage war against the United States and seize the radio stations, Clinton already knows where he will begin in educating people: the first broadcast “was going to be dedicated to the children born to escaped African slaves who married Carib Indian survivors. The first broadcast would be dedicated to them—the first African-Native Americans” (410). Clinton’s interest in this little known part of the history of the Americas stems from his own ancestry, which includes black Indians. Clinton’s grannies told him stories about their ancestors, and Clinton reflects on the pride his Cherokee ancestors must have had with their wealth, education, and white and black slaves: “pride had gone before their fall. That was why a people had to know their history, even the embarrassments when bad judgment had got them slaughtered by the millions. Lampshades made out of Native Americans by the conquistadors; lampshades made out of Jews. Watch out African-Americans! The next lampshades could be you!” (415). Clinton had enjoyed the benefits of his family’s oral histories, but he realizes that most people do not hear the stories of their ancestors as he had.

In the absence of an oral tradition through which more people would know these histories, Clinton plans to tell these stories about African people’s earliest histories in the Americas, black Indians, and the spiritual connections between Africa and the Americas, particularly because “slave masters had tried to strip the Africans of everything—their languages

and histories” (416), just as colonial settlers had done to indigenous people in Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean. Having transcribed some of his first broadcasts, Clinton realizes that they sound like lectures from a black studies class, but this doesn’t bother him: “there had been no more funding for black studies classes. That was no accident. The powers who controlled the United States didn’t want the people to know their history. If the people knew their history, they would realize they must rise up” (431). These oral performances, shaped by texts, write a new history of the oppressed people in America, including both indigenous people and African-Americans. Virginia E. Bell argues that *Almanac of the Dead* in general, and Clinton’s historiographies in particular “dismantle Eurocentric narratives that accrue around the idea of ‘nation’” (19), an accurate evaluation of the function of Clinton’s notebooks and broadcasts. Clinton, along with several other characters, show that the United States is far less united than the name suggests: African Americans, black Indians, the homeless, the oppressed form a distinct “nation” within the United States that will soon revolt against the oppressive government and mobilize its “citizens” through Clinton’s radio broadcasts. Again, Silko reveals the power in the interconnectedness of written and oral traditions for effecting change in people, governments, and even more broadly, spiritual forces. The alliances between tribal groups that are introduced in *Almanac* are here extended to include other disenfranchised people.

Just as Clinton relies on texts to help him prepare his oral performances, Angelita La Escapía also reads and writes in preparation for her revolutionary speeches, with Marx as her greatest influence. Even though Clinton denies being a Marxist because “African and other tribal people had shared food and wealth in common for thousands of years before the white man Marx came along and stole their ideas for his ‘communes’ and collective farms” (408), Angelita deeply

admires the man. She had “read the words of Marx for herself. Marx had never forgotten the indigenous people of the Americas, or of Africa” (315), and what really convinces her of his reliability is that “his accounts had been consistent with what the [Indians] already knew” about oppression under the Europeans (312).¹⁷ Like Clinton, Angelita makes notes as she reads, at first because she has to consult a dictionary for many of Marx’s words, but later because “people were always liable to ask you to prove what you were saying wasn’t just a lie... La Escapía had kept the notebook to back her up when Cubans wanted to argue” (314). Just as Melville’s parrot feared, Westerners now are more apt to trust written texts than spoken words.

Nevertheless, Angelita knows that stories of the people, their history, are sacred, and “If the people had not retold the stories, or if the stories had somehow been lost, then the people were lost” (315-16). Following Marx’s example in gathering the stories of suffering factory workers, Angelita gathers the stories of indigenous people she believes the Cubans are hiding from them. Bartolomeo, a Cuban and communist liaison between the Cubans and indigenous people, is put on trial for “crimes against the revolution, specifically for crimes against Native American history; the crimes were the denial and attempted annihilation of tribal histories” (515). Interestingly, Bartolomeo is not accused of any act of violence or wrongdoing toward a specific person, but to tribal histories generally. During his trial, Angelita reminds people of some of those stories, as she reads from her notes. Angelita recites a litany of crimes against indigenous people in seven countries across the Americas dating back to 1510, and then moves on to read figures about the Native American holocaust: “1500—72 million people lived in North, Central, and South America. 1600—10 million people live in North, Central, and South

¹⁷ Marx and communism were also of interest to the Amerindian Loretta in Pauline Melville’s “The Migration of Ghosts,” though her interest is not as fervent as Angelita’s is.

America. 1500—25 million people live in Mexico. 1600—1 million people live in Mexico” (530). Angelita’s speech is so moving that the crowd claps and cheers when she pauses to take a break: “the names and dates had touched off a great deal of excitement among the people...Voices buzzed with enthusiasm and she realized that for a moment the crowd had forgotten the Cuban on trial as people began to recall stories of the old days, not just stories of armed rebellions and uprisings, but stories of colonials sunk into deepest depravity” (530-31). In her speech, Angelita picks up the oral tradition and channels the power of women storytellers, reminding the crowds of their histories and empowering them and prompting them to return to the oral tradition in the process as well.

Angelita’s success with the crowds is complicated by the fact that Marx is European; the texts that drive her toward revolutionary speeches do not originate from the colonized. However, “Marx had been inspired by reading about certain Native American communal societies,” so even though, “as a European he had misunderstood a great deal,” the stories, customs, and lives that undergird Marx’s work do originate in indigenous communities. When those ideas return to the people via Marx and Angelita, they excite the people and move them toward action¹⁸ because “Wherever their stories were told, the spirits of the ancestors were present and their power was alive” (520). Whereas Clinton’s speeches have not yet been broadcast on the radio, Angelita, whose speeches are also informed by the written word, has already begun to energize the colonized and oppressed people who hear her words. The almanac, Clinton’s radio broadcasts, and Angelita’s speeches together exemplify Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin’s analysis of orality in today’s postcolonial environments: “not only is the work of the written

¹⁸ Marx also had a significant influence on some postcolonial theorists, including Franz Fanon and his *The Wretched of the Earth*.

culture increasingly modified by the existence of popular oral forms, but also the oral cultures themselves are transformed by their ongoing interaction with the written cultures of the modern period” (*Postcolonial Studies* 184).

Alongside these examples of the various ways in which the oral tradition informs the written word and vice versa, Silko also includes an example in Sterling of what happens when the written tradition is used as a substitute for the oral tradition. Sterling, who ends up working as a landscaper for Lecha and Zeta, is from the Laguna Pueblo tribe and had been living on the reservation until the Tribal Council exiled him for conspiring with Hollywood filmmakers; according to Sterling, he simply was unable to control the film crew from staying away from sacred shrines that were off limits, but he was unable to convince the Tribal Council of this. His exile was not Sterling’s first time away from the reservation, however. As a child, he was sent to a boarding school, something Sterling considers to be “the main problem” with life among the Laguna Pueblo (87). He explains that “He and the other children had to learn what they could about the kachinas and the ways to pray or greet the deer, other animals, and plants during summer vacations, which were too short” (87-88), and Sterling had been sent away particularly young when his parents died, compounding the problem of Sterling’s missing cultural education.

Not only was Sterling disconnected from tribal knowledge as a child and young man, but he also experienced pain associated with an iteration of the oral tradition: gossip. Upon reflection of the charges brought against him and the Tribal Council’s decision to exile him, Sterling concludes that “The worst charges traveled in wildfire gossip propelled from village to village by imaginations so uncontrolled and so vivid that ordinary and innocent actions were transformed into high intrigue...he had grown up with village gossip for entertainment. Sterling had never

seen anything on television to match Laguna gossip for scandal and graphic details” (94).

Members of the village intensify and exaggerate Sterling’s condemnation, further disconnecting him from the community and the oral tradition it values. Another character, a Yaqui Indian named Calabazas verbalizes what appears to be Sterling’s sentiment: “We live in a different world now. Liars and feeble-minded are everywhere, getting elected to public office or appointed federal judge. Spoken words can no longer be trusted. Put everything in writing” (217). After being on the receiving end of lies and feeble-minded people who “had probably confused ‘conspirator’ with ‘conquistador’” (96), Sterling turns away from the value of the spoken word and turns toward the written word in magazines as the source of all truth.

Even before we learn about Sterling’s past, readers see how deeply Sterling values his magazines. Seese asks him several questions about his background, but before Sterling can answer, Lecha calls her away. Sterling is relieved because he

had been carefully following advice printed recently in a number of magazines concerning depression and the best ways of combating it...One article had pointed out that whatever has happened to you had already happened and can’t be changed...he had not been sure where to begin his story or even if he should disobey the magazine advice. What had happened to Sterling was in the category of things magazine articles called ‘irreparable’ and ‘better forgotten.’ Water under the bridge. (24)

Sterling keeps one of these articles in his billfold so he can refer to it whenever the need arises (36). Without family or another kind of community to help him through his depression, Sterling clings to impersonal self-help articles as the source of truth. Alongside mental health issues, Sterling turns to magazines to teach himself about the law. Beginning during his years in Indian boarding school, Sterling became interested in law “Because everything the white teachers had said and done to the Indian children had been ‘required by law.’ Reading his magazines, Sterling had made a modest study of the law on his own...Sterling had bought subscriptions to [*Police*

Gazette and *True Detective*] so he would never miss a single new development in the law” (26). Sterling’s desire to learn more about the history of the American government’s involvement in the affairs of indigenous people is admirable, but unfortunately, it appears that the only things Sterling knows about Indian history are those things that magazine editors have chosen to publish. When Sterling takes Seese to Tucson to see some historic sites and buildings, for example, he begins teaching her about Geronimo and the Indian wars. When Seese expresses regret at her own ignorance of the events that took place, Sterling assures her that he “only happened to learn it from this magazine article” (80). Unfortunately Sterling had not learned this history from his tribal community who most certainly would have a different perspective on the wars than reporters for magazines about criminal activities; having experienced rejection from a community that values storytelling, Sterling’s reliance on other sources of knowledge is not unexpected.

By the end of the novel, however, Sterling’s attitude toward his magazines shifts. After returning to Mesita Village and spending three days at his family’s sheep camp, Sterling wakes up on the fourth day and “didn’t have the heart to look at his magazines anymore.... The magazines referred to a world Sterling had left forever, a world that was gone, that safe old world that had never really existed except on the pages of *Reader’s Digest* in articles on reducing blood cholesterol, corny jokes, and patriotic anecdotes” (757). Sterling realizes that the magazines fail to offer meaningful connections that are forged in the process of listening to and telling stories. Instead, Sterling attempts to “remember more of the stories the old people used to tell; he wished he had listened more closely because he vaguely recalled a connection the giant snake had with Mexico” (759). Although the magazines had helped him understand to some

extent mental health, the law, and Indian outlaws, Sterling knows now that magazine articles are unsatisfactory replacements for the stories he had grown up hearing. Even though he has yet to see anyone from Mesita Village again, Sterling takes a step toward reconnecting with his Laguna community when he allows his magazine subscriptions to lapse, revealing Sterling's commitment to orality as an alternative epistemology, in a manner similar to Melville's parrot. Moreover, he "didn't care about the rumors and gossip because Sterling knew why the giant snake had returned now; he knew what the snake's message was to the people. The snake was looking south, in the direction from which the twin brothers and the people would come" (763). Sterling finally puts aside his negative experiences with orality, knowing that some important truths about history and the future are communicated in that tradition, rather than in the empty magazine articles he temporarily used as a substitute. Although Silko reveals the interconnectedness of the oral and written traditions throughout *Almanac of the Dead*, the novel's ending with Sterling's rejection of magazines in exchange for confidence in the oral tradition suggests its continuing significance for indigenous people in the present day and in a future era.

Approaching Some Conclusions

As Melville, McCarthy, and Silko have shown, (post)colonial issues of language and storytelling continue to be significant concerns for indigenous women writers in the Americas. Melville's first-contact narrative that satirizes the canon of literature written in English alerts readers to the unbalanced reliance on the written word that marginalizes any other epistemology, including orality. McCarthy, on the other hand, reclaims the English language in written and

spoken form to speak back to ongoing legal injustices against various indigenous groups in Canada and the United States and to establish an indigenous identity for one who had been disconnected from Anishinaabeg family and culture. In contrast, Silko reveals the interdependence of the written and oral traditions, particularly in the context of tribal international alliances, though she does emphasize that the oral tradition should not be neglected.

Notably, these perspectives regarding language and storytelling also engage with border crossing to some extent, further supporting an analysis of indigenous fiction from across the Americas. Because Melville's short story is a first contact narrative, the border crossing in "The Parrot and Descartes" and *The Tempest* within it emphasizes the colonizer's movement, rather than the movement of indigenous people: the parrot is kidnapped from the Caribbean to Europe and then later to North America. In contrast, with texts set in more contemporary times, McCarthy and Silko address the relationships between indigenous people from distinct geographical areas and tribal groups. In part because the Anishinaabe historically lived in an area that was later split by an international border, McCarthy's characters travel back and forth between Canada and the United States, using legal precedents in one country to assist the causes of indigenous people in another, thereby strengthening alliances between the different tribal groups. Similarly, Silko's characters from different indigenous backgrounds living with the effects of colonialism in different parts of the world and those who experience other forms of injustice work in solidarity against oppressive systems and governments. Rather than diluting resistance forces, tribal and international border crossings seem to invigorate the power of language and storytelling.

WOMEN ON THE RUN: STRENGTH AND STABILITY IN FEMALE COMMUNITY

“Native women are going to raise the roof and decry the dirty house which patriarchy and racism have built on our backs. But first we must see ourselves as women: powerful, sensuous beings in need of compassion and tenderness.”¹

As we have seen, some of the most pressing issues in postcolonial theory, including land and language, are ongoing concerns for indigenous women writers across the Americas as they continue to negotiate colonial systems and fight for sovereignty for their nations. However, the intersection of imperialism and patriarchy is yet another complex issue which arises in both postcolonial literature and the (post)colonial literature of Native women in the Americas. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin point out, “both patriarchy and imperialism can be seen to exert analogous forms of domination over those they render subordinate” (*Postcolonial Studies* 116); however, when both imperialism and patriarchy exercise influence at once, negotiating between the two and determining effective responses can be difficult, especially when other forms of oppression such as ageism or economic discrimination may also exist.

Perhaps because of the complexity that exists when imperialism and patriarchy overlap, postcolonial theorists have not always provided space for distinct experiences of colonialism by men and women. In fact, more recently feminist scholars have expressed concern that “postcolonial theory has tended to elide gender differences in constructing a single category of the colonized...the ‘double colonization’ that resulted when women were subject both to general discrimination as colonial subjects and to specific discrimination as women needs to be taken

¹ Maracle, *I Am Woman* 22.

into account in any analysis of colonial oppression” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies* 116, 118). Unfortunately, the double colonization that Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin describe occurs in indigenous communities in the Americas as well, as Grace J. M. W. Ouellette points out: “the roles of Indigenous women vary according to their culture, but...some roles have indeed changed and declined following contact with Europeans. It is apparent that the imposition of European-based laws and institutions over Indigenous peoples has contributed to these changes” (6). Ouellette describes the changes for indigenous women in rather gentle terms; in contrast, Paula Gunn Allen argues that “The amount of violence against women, alcoholism, and violence, abuse, and neglect by women against their children and their aged relatives have all increased. These social ills were virtually unheard of fifty years ago” (191).² Although the United States since passed the Violence Against Women Act to help protect Native women from outsiders coming onto reservations and committing abusive acts, it is far from an airtight solution. As Andrea Smith points out, “There is a contradiction...in relying upon the state to solve problems it is responsible for creating,” particularly when Native people often face oppression in the criminal justice system (*Conquest* 139). Furthermore, Smith argues that “gender violence is not simply a tool of patriarchal control, but also serves as a tool of racism and colonialism” (*Conquest* 1). The challenges that indigenous women face require a response, but the most appropriate response is difficult to determine because of the complexity of the oppression.

Indigenous women in the Americas clearly face many difficulties and injustices because of the double colonization they face, but what Ouellette and Allen only hint at is that women are

² The violence and abuse that Allen describes may have increased, but it would be an overstatement to suggest that they are due solely to the effects of imperialism as many other factors contribute to any given social phenomenon.

subject to oppression from both non-Native and Native men. The betrayal of women by Native men is particularly painful in traditionally matrilineal and matrifocal tribes such as the Haida, Hopi, Navajo, or Tlingit wherein women held positions of power in their communities, but also in tribes such as the Iroquois where gender equality was valued. Smith points out that, “Regardless of its origins in Native communities...sexism operates with full force today and requires strategies that directly address it” (“Native American Feminism” 121). Sadly, sexism comes not only from outside Native communities, but also from within them. Notwithstanding indigenous men’s role in enacting domination and violence against women in their communities, Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill clarify Allen’s point about the social ills women experience, arguing that “Native men are not the root cause of Native women’s problems; rather, Native women’s critiques implicate the historical and ongoing imposition of colonial, heteropatriarchal³ structures onto their societies” (18). Because some indigenous tribes like the Sioux are patriarchal to begin with, it must be noted that not all heteropatriarchal structures are colonial. However, patriarchal norms entwined in imperial actions together proved to be a powerful force in altering attitudes Native men have toward the women in their communities. Boarding schools are one such colonial, heteropatriarchal structure that retrained indigenous men

³ Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill define heteropatriarchy as “the social systems in which heterosexuality and patriarchy are perceived as normal and natural, and in which other configurations are perceived as abnormal, aberrant, and abhorrent” (13). A closely related term they use is heteropaternalism, by which they mean “the presumption that heteropatriarchal nuclear-domestic arrangements, in which the father is both center and leader/boss, should serve as the model for social arrangements of the state and its institutions” (13). In other words, these terms “refer to expressions of patriarchy and paternalism that rely upon very narrow definitions of the male/female binary, in which the male gender is perceived as strong, capable, wise, and composed and the female gender is perceived as weak, incompetent, naïve, and confused” (13). Jennifer Nez Denetdale offers an example of heteropatriarchy at work: “Navajo leaders, who are primarily men, reproduce Navajo nationalist ideology [in ways that] re-inscribe gender roles based on Western concepts even as they claim they operate under traditional Navajo philosophy” (9). Such expressions of heteropatriarchy are particularly dangerous as they are “inherited from imperial policy but cast as key elements of tradition” (Rifkin 21).

to think differently about themselves, about women, and about the relationships they had with the opposite sex.

Furthermore, Lee Maracle, in her influential collection of essays, *I Am Woman*, identifies additional evidence for the colonial roots to the oppression of Native women by Native men: “This anti-woman attitude by Native males seems to be reserved for Native women. The really big crime is that our men-folk rise when a white woman walks into the room. Native men go to great lengths to recognize her, and of course, where there is controversy, her word is very often the respected one” (22). Maracle suggests that the anti-woman attitude she witnesses among Native men would be somewhat more acceptable if it was applied to all women equally, but that is not the case, prompting Maracle and others to advocate for feminist ideology, or some version of it, to transform indigenous communities.

Some scholars, however, are suspicious or cautious of feminism as a solution for non-white, non-Western women generally, and Native women specifically. Devon Abbott Mihesuah, for example, argues that “while clarity about gender may be a compelling goal, it is often achieved at the expense of the visibility, agency, and identity of those represented,” which leads to “the need for appreciating the heterogeneity among women and the necessity for more sensitivity in studying and writing about individuals outside one’s racial and cultural group” (5). Chandra Talpade Mohanty comes to similar conclusions in her analysis of the difference between Western feminist self-presentation and Western feminist presentation of women in the third world.⁴ Mohanty takes issue with “the critical assumption that all of us of the same gender,

⁴ Mohanty was born and raised in India and is not specifically addressing the role of feminism for indigenous women; however, her theoretical work on postcolonialism and transnational feminism makes Mohanty a relevant authority in this discussion.

across classes and cultures, are somehow socially constituted as a homogenous group identified prior to the process of analysis. This is an assumption which characterizes much feminist discourse” (“Under Western Eyes” 337). Feminism, in Mohanty’s view, unsuccessfully attempts to universalize the experience of women, disregarding the specific contexts in which women may experience oppression. Such attempts to see women “as a coherent group in *all* contexts, regardless of class or ethnicity, structures the world in ultimately binary, dichotomous terms, where women are always seen in opposition to men, patriarchy is always necessarily male dominance, and the religious, legal, economic and familial systems are implicitly assumed to be constructed by men” (“Under Western Eyes” 350). Binary, dichotomous terms cannot adequately capture the diversity of women’s experiences from around the world, which is why Mohanty advocates for a sisterhood based not on gender, but “forged in concrete historical and political practice and analysis” (“Under Western Eyes” 339), through which distinct kinds of oppression can be recognized and dealt with.

Alongside Mohanty, Ouellette is similarly wary of feminism as a solution for indigenous women in Canada in particular, pointing out the misconceptions that some feminists have about the situations in which other women live. She suggests that “most Aboriginal women want to preserve their roles as childbearers, nurturers and caregivers, in contrast to many feminists’ discontent with these roles...[M]ost Aboriginal women see these roles as their responsibility while some feminists perceive it as an oppression. Aboriginal women believe that all things in nature are equal despite differences in roles” (89). Not only does Ouellette identify priorities for some indigenous women that differ from those of non-Native women, but she also reminds us that sexism is only one of many problems: “As colonized persons and as women, they face a

multitude of problems. The impact of the state's legislation on Indians in Canada not only oppresses members of First Nations but causes divisiveness within these societies as well" (43). According to Ouellette, the complexity and variety of the situations for indigenous women in Canada, let alone across the Americas, is such that there is no one ideology that can serve as a solution to double colonization.

Whereas Mohanty and Ouellette simply explain the inadequacies of feminism for non-white and First Nations women, M. Annette Jaimes and Theresa Halsey adamantly oppose feminism and criticize indigenous women who align themselves with it, arguing that

those who have most openly identified themselves [as feminists] have tended to be among the more assimilated of Indian women activists, generally accepting of the colonialist ideology that indigenous nations are now legitimate sub-parts of the U.S. geopolitical corpus rather than separate nations, that Indian people are now a minority within the overall population rather than the citizenry of their own distinct nations. Such Indian women activists are therefore usually more devoted to 'civil rights' than to liberation *per se*. Native American women who are more genuinely sovereigntist in their outlook have proven themselves far more dubious about the potentials offered by feminist politics and alliances. (331-32)

In their zeal for justice for Native American women as women and as Native Americans, Jaimes and Halsey unfortunately make a hasty accusation against those indigenous women who consider themselves feminists and make assumptions about their political stances. Jaimes and Halsey pass judgment on those who they deem assimilated, and while some may have betrayed their Native communities and identities in order to pander to the colonizers, some change and adaptation seem to be necessary in order to thrive in contemporary society.

Jaimes and Halsey hold a relatively extreme position, but Maracle is similarly upfront about her response to feminism. She baldly addresses the issues of racism that concern these other theorists: "That the white women of North America are racist and that they define the

movement in accordance with their own narrow perspective should not surprise us. White people define everything in terms of their own people, and then very magnanimously open the door to a select number of others. They let us in the door as we prove ourselves to be civilized” (*I Am Woman* 137). Maracle identifies the limitations of feminism, but those limitations do not prevent her from using what she finds beneficial in feminism. She suggests an alternative kind of feminism that prioritizes indigenous concerns: “White women figure too largely in our minds. Let us stop chasing them and challenging their humanity at every turn. Let us begin by talking to each other about ourselves. Let us cleanse the dirty shack that racism left us. Let us deal with our men-folk and the refuse of patriarchy they borrowed from white men” (*I Am Woman* 139). Maracle disregards what white women are doing, but at the same time encourages readers not to vilify them. Kate Shanley similarly suggests a distinct kind of feminism for indigenous women who seek “equality in two ways that do not concern mainstream women: (1) on the individual level, the Indian woman struggles to promote the survival of a social structure whose organizational principles represent notions of family different from those of the mainstream; and (2) on the societal level, the People seek sovereignty...in order to *survive* as a people” (214). Ultimately what these scholars suggest is that there are multiple kinds of feminism, allowing indigenous women to fight for gender equality in ways that are appropriate to their distinct experiences as colonized people from different tribal nations and indigenous communities.

Julia V. Emberley goes one step further than Maracle, however, and proposes greater engagement between First World feminisms and those of Native women:

A tracing of the specific historical struggle on the part of Native women to resist imperial patriarchy will make clear...their need also to resist the totalizing tendencies of feminist theories and practices, and provide a better understanding as to why feminists must seek new possibilities for respecting the autonomy of Native women’s issues while still

learning from their struggle how to braid their respective differences in such a way that all can benefit from each other's mutual support. (20)

Emberley, alongside other scholars, points out the problems with First World feminisms, and yet sees the opportunity that exists if greater dialogue and understanding can happen between mainstream feminists and indigenous women who resist patriarchal and colonial systems and ideologies. Likewise, Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill maintain that “greater engagement between Native feminist theories and other feminisms is sorely needed” (10). Furthermore, they suggest a completely new way of thinking about feminism for indigenous women. Whereas most scholars criticize the inflexibility of mainstream feminism for addressing the needs of indigenous women, Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill argue instead that Native feminist theories “already inform and have impacted whitestream feminist theories...there cannot be feminist thought and theory without Native feminist theory. The experiences and intellectual contributions of Indigenous women are not on the margins; we have been an invisible presence in the center, hidden by the gendered logics of settler colonialism for over 500 years” (14). Rather than making room for Native feminism as a subset of mainstream feminism, Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill point out that indigenous women have been fighting for justice against colonial and patriarchal powers since the first Europeans arrived in the Americas; these efforts have already informed mainstream feminism, whether or not it is acknowledged by those in the mainstream.

Finally, Mishuana Goeman and Jennifer Nez Denetdale argue that Native feminist theory is essential, not only for indigenous women as women but also as colonized people: “While acknowledging these strains of feminism that work at odds with Indigenous sovereignties and understanding the debates among Native women about the usefulness of the term...we affirm the usefulness of a Native feminism's analysis and, indeed, declare that Native feminist analysis is

crucial if we are determined to decolonize as Native peoples” (10). In other words, “we must understand that attacks on Native women’s status are themselves attacks on Native sovereignty” (Smith, “Native American Feminism,” 123). Lisa Kahaleole Hall similarly argues that “Feminist theory remains integral to the process of decolonization for Hawaiian and other indigenous women because colonialism takes place through gendered and sexualized forms that reconstitute both individual and communal indigenous identities in stigmatized and disempowering ways” (15). Despite the complex debates surrounding feminism as a useful tool in indigenous communities, the issues that colonialism and patriarchy present to indigenous women in the Americas are clearly intertwined in such a way that both postcolonial and feminist theories and practices are needed to bring about change.

Another answer to the universalization that can happen with mainstream feminism may be found in a transnational approach, particularly in a (post)colonial study such as this one. Constance S. Richards argues that “Transnational feminism recognizes historical and political specificity and the influence of the transnational flow of capital resulting in cultural displacement, expatriation, migration, and cultural appropriation” (x), and that “In advancing a transnational feminist approach to literary practice...writers and readers in the postcolonial moment can successfully negotiate difference without effacing it” (xi). Although Richards does not examine indigenous women in the Americas in particular, her assertion that race, nation, and class must not be neglected in analyses of gender in colonial and postcolonial literatures by women is an important reminder.

Using Mohanty’s theories of non-Western third-world feminism and imagined communities in concert with Richards’s theories of transnational feminism will produce

particularly rich analyses of the fiction of Lee Maracle (Sto:lo, Canada), Marie-Elena John (Antigua), and Janet Campbell Hale (Coeur d'Alene, United States). Together, these novels and short stories illustrate some of the ways in which double colonialism continues to affect Native women in the Americas, but they also suggest an answer to that double colonialism: Maracle and John show that building or reclaiming women's communities, forged through family ties or common experiences, foster the kind of strength needed to fight for equality and sovereignty, while Hale illustrates the challenges that Native women face in the absence of such communities.

Memories as a Vehicle for Facilitating Reconciliation

Lee Maracle's *Daughters are Forever* directly addresses the intersection of colonial forces on Canada's First Nations and the distinct challenges for First Nations women. The novel describes the mental and emotional journey of one woman, Marilyn, as she tries to navigate her professional life as a social worker and political speaker about the injustices that First Nations women face, and her personal life as a single mother with strained relationships to her two adult daughters, Cat and Lindy. Marilyn struggles to determine the most effective strategies for helping her clients, including Elsie, an Ojibway woman whose children have been temporarily removed from her care, as well as restoring healthy relationships with her daughters. In the midst of these emotional hardships, Marilyn experiences more and more frequently moments in which the past overtakes her present with personal or cultural memories. Westwind, together with Northwind, Eastwind, and Southwind, orchestrate these moments, which Marilyn refers to as "gapping," and they gently urge her to engage with her tribal history and wisdom in less political and more personal ways in order to gain a better understanding of and appreciation for herself

and so enable the resolution of conflict and strained interactions with her now-grown daughters. Marilyn's version of feminism was, for so many years, focused on rights and protections for Native women she did not necessarily know, and it appears that she had forgotten her own place in that historical and political moment; Westwind helps her to connect the dots between her female ancestors, her daughters, and herself to restore community with even those who are no longer living. Although the novel ends before we can know definitively, there is an underlying suggestion that grounded in community with her daughters and living in the experiences and wisdom of her ancestors, Marilyn can be more effective in her work as a social worker and political speaker.

In her analysis of Maracle's novel, Paula Anca Farca focuses on the role that mental and physical places play in the novel. She argues that "Maracle bases her whole novel on mental recreations of places and makes the case that the analysis of these memories can be healing...By examining mental recreations of places, Maracle shows that places are not only fixed geographical locations, but also textual concepts" (57). Although flashbacks and dreams do comprise a significant portion of the novel, the suggestion that the entire novel is based on these memories is a slight exaggeration; as we will see, Native feminism is more central to the novel than mental recreations of place, and Marilyn's memories serve a larger purpose than simply showing that place can refer to both geographical locations and textual concepts. Furthermore, Farca contends that "Marilyn eventually finds the strength to redirect her life when she attends conferences on Indigenous themes and matters, works for First Nations families, and struggles to understand her daughters" (64). However, the novel makes it clear that Marilyn had been speaking at conferences and working with First Nations families for some time, so doing these

things again in the novel's present day cannot alone explain the changes Marilyn makes in her life.

Farca goes on to argue for Marilyn's agency in her "gapping" experiences. She suggests that "Marilyn recreates several episodes and places from her childhood and adulthood to adjust her present reality. Marilyn confronts her past memories about uncomfortable places, tries to heal herself and find closure, and create safe homes and places in the city" (59). However, Marilyn does not recreate these episodes, as if she conjures the memories of her own will. Rather, the memories seem to have the autonomous power and will to visit Marilyn, regardless of how much or how little Marilyn wants to contemplate them. Elizabeth Jackson, in her article focusing on the temporal shifts in the novel, agrees that "these slippages and gappings are not experienced with pleasure or hope by Marilyn. Indeed, she is disoriented and troubled by them and seeks desperately to cling to the certainty and solidity that measured time can offer" (227-28). In fact, at one point Marilyn recalls memories of her stepfather purposefully driving away and leaving her behind and, at another time, struggling to keep up with her mother because she was wearing inappropriate footwear for the snow. These memories are unpleasant, and we learn that when Marilyn "managed to kill the memories, [and] begin thinking again" more clearly, before long they would "push up, interfering with her ability to reach some sort of plan to change the condition she had created for her daughters" (140). The memories eventually do adjust her present reality, but Marilyn does not initiate that process as though she anticipates the healing that will occur; instead, Marilyn worries that she is losing her grasp on reality precisely because she cannot control the memories.

Jackson further provides a useful framework for understanding the role of Marilyn's flashbacks and memories. She explains that

Marilyn must reckon with her individual and cultural pasts – including a cultural history of European colonialism and genocide; a childhood of abuse at the hands of her stepfather; and her struggles as an adult with an often absent, neglectful husband, with alcohol abuse, and with her own violence toward her daughters... Hers is not a solo journey: many others – including ancestors, community, and most pressingly her daughters – are also crucial to the process. (227)

Indeed, understanding her personal and tribal histories are equally essential for Marilyn to understand her responsibilities as a Sto:loh woman and mother. Significantly, Marilyn's ancestors, community, and her daughters are all women, and the female community surrounding her in the past and present are instrumental in helping her heal and strengthen her identity. The personal benefits are clear, but Marilyn's change is important for other reasons, too. A greater sense of unity among these women, even across time and space, fosters the kind of sisterhood based in historical and political experience that Mohanty discusses in such a way that Native values and social structures become more visible and more difficult to ignore by the mainstream (post)colonial culture.

Jackson also offers an interesting reading of Marilyn's gapping: the past impinging on Marilyn's present reality "demonstrates the potential of cultural legacy to endure, even through violence and genocide, and to sustain the lives of later generations...the past has never passed but is always a part of the present emotional and cultural environment. The presence of the past has tangible, material consequences for present and future" (232-33). While Native feminism is an important theoretical framework for understanding Maracle's novel, one must not ignore the ways in which this text also opposes notions of the vanishing Indian and provides a measure of hope for the ongoing work of decolonization in the Americas. Furthermore, gender politics are

not the sole focus of Native feminism: as Goeman and Denetdale assert, a “Native feminist analysis is crucial if we are determined to decolonize as Native peoples” (10), and Shanley similarly claims sovereignty as an aim of Native feminism (214).

Sylvia Terzian takes Jackson’s analysis one step further and examines in detail the effects of Western colonial and patriarchal forces for indigenous women and maternal legacies. She suggests that there is a clear link between the broken families and abused women in indigenous communities and the colonial relations between Natives and the West. Terzian asserts that “Maracle illustrates the extent to which patterns of violence constitute a breach of trust between female intergenerational relationships...the trauma that reside within Aboriginal women repeats itself within intergenerational female relationships and manifests itself as a wound on both the female body and collective psyche” (147). As a social worker and a mother, Marilyn knows that “no mother chose to neglect her children” (57), and yet Marilyn still cannot escape the cycle of trauma. As a child, Marilyn witnesses domestic abuse and is often left to fend for herself since her mother has difficulty functioning after her husband is killed, let alone also nurturing and caring for Marilyn. Before she realizes it, Marilyn repeats her mother’s habits in parenting; it is only once her daughters are grown that Marilyn finally acknowledges that “her youthful motherhood was haunted by near suicide and destructive drinking. The girls had paid” (99). The relationship between Marilyn and her daughters continues to be cautious and strained throughout most of the novel as a result of the trauma and broken trust that Terzian identifies as common to the female intergenerational relationships in indigenous communities.

The trauma is passed down from one generation of indigenous women to the next, but according to Terzian, it originates with men who are the perpetrators of domestic abuse. Maracle

focuses primarily on female relationships in her novel, but indigenous men are no less important to the story she tells. Terzian rightly points out that “the men in the novel sever cultural ties by imparting physical and psychological trauma on the women” (148), though it is unclear how those severed cultural ties affect men. We see only the negative implications for women.

Furthermore, arguing alongside Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, Terzian asserts that “the physical violence experienced by Native women works as an allegory of the collective violence of native history and experience. As such, Native women are doubly colonized by both patriarchal and imperialist regimes” (148). Terzian suggests that some measure of healing occurs for these characters when they laugh together at the end of the novel, both communally reconnecting each person to the other and also individually reconnecting the scarred body with the fragmented psyche. Moreover, according to Terzian, “the text posits laughter as an ironic, humorous [*sic*], and visceral response to trauma, as a feminist gesture that breaks through social and cultural barriers and foregrounds an indictment of the exclusivist postcolonial paradigms of past/present, us/them, east/west, native/other, and tradition/modernity by positioning it against patriarchal and colonial ideas of normal behavior” (149). That is, because laughter is an unexpected response to trauma that unites the physiological and psychological, the woman’s body is not only the site of patriarchal and colonial struggle, but also the site of personal and cultural transformation.

Terzian goes on to focus on the body and the ways in which it “testifies to the experience of individual trauma and functions as the channel through which the characters witness each other’s trauma. Accordingly, memory is deeply embedded in both the individual and the collective’s sense of identity” (150). Terzian goes on to discuss the significant role that memory plays in individuals and the broader community of Native women across time and space.

Although Terzian's analysis alongside those of Farca and Jackson yield significant insights into Maracle's novel, they presuppose an indigenous female community that warrants greater analysis here. Through Marilyn, her daughters Cat and Lindy, and her client Elsie, Maracle reveals the necessity of building indigenous female communities to ensure healthy and ongoing connections with tribal knowledge and tribal identities in the face of heteropatriarchal and colonial systems, particularly for women who experience physical and psychological trauma because of their ethnicity and gender. If Native feminism is indeed an essential part of the work of decolonization as Goeman and Denetdale suggest, a more thorough analysis of these issues is important not only for a richer understanding of complex gender politics at work in Native communities, but also for a clearer picture of what stands in the way of sovereignty.

Maracle's focus on women and female communities becomes clear from the outset of the novel, even before readers are properly introduced to Marilyn, her daughters, or her clients. The unknown narrator recounts the devastating first contact with imperialism that Turtle Island women experience. Even though "each generation of women schooled the next to solve crises, to enter into relationship with others, eyes wide open and hearts optimistic" (14), they were not prepared for the strangers' brutality of raping and killing mercilessly. Only one woman survives the massacre due to the stillness that overcomes her in the midst of the chaotic attack (19), and as a result of that first colonial encounter, the indigenous women "picked up the stillness of the survivors of each new holocaust" (21). These Turtle Island women are "the keepers of cultural survival, [so they] passed on stillness as the ultimate way to protect their daughters. Daughters are forever...every daughter is needed to recreate the villagers" (22). Without women, there is no future for the indigenous community, and as new generations were born, "Every now and then

the stillness showed up in the woman's children... This stillness became her female descendants' response to life's critical events, the ones that might cause them to grieve, then move on to that magical creative space of change, of transformation. Softness in the woman gave way to the planned grace of stillness and silence" (22-23). Sadly, the softness that nurtures relationships and builds community was replaced with stillness as a coping mechanism in response to colonial traumas.

This same stillness shows up in Anne, Marilyn's mother, and Marilyn herself, but rather than helping her survive the colonial issues facing their generations, we come to understand the stillness as a contributing factor to the problems these contemporary women face. After Marilyn's abusive father is killed, Anne becomes silent and withdrawn. In an effort to help heal Anne and Marilyn, Westwind, embodying the voices of the women who preceded them, reminds them of the wisdom of their ancestors: "Children are a gift, a loan. Appreciate this gift... Children need attention. Courage is cultivated by the nature of the attention we pay to children. At some point humans need to face themselves. To do so requires the courage to become conscious. This courage is not born, it must be nurtured" (34). Unfortunately Anne does not hear the wisdom Westwind shares, hearing only the "din going on in her own mind" instead, so "Stillness filled both mother and daughter. It became their governess. Their bodies adjusted almost automatically to it" (34). In the same way that Marilyn learns stillness from her mother, Cat also learns stillness to cope with the upheaval she experienced during her brief time in foster care: "From the day Cat returned, the two unconsciously fought their stillness to meet on the same arc of shared light. Their love for one another grew more urgent and desperate as they failed to connect on the arc's strongest point. An invisible bridge divided them" (49). This bridge

divides Marilyn and Cat, and sadly a bridge divides Marilyn and Lindy as well. Marilyn admits that, as much as she wishes she played a larger role in Lindy's life, "She was destined to know about her younger daughter through her elder sister" (95). When Marilyn compliments her adult children, Lindy shrieks in excitement at the first "clean compliment" Marilyn gave her—a compliment that is not qualified by accompanying criticism—and Cat wonders if Marilyn is sick (96, 97). However, Marilyn and the other women in her community are not doomed to the burden of stillness that prevents healthy, nurturing relationships between mothers and daughters; Westwind calls out to Marilyn in her sleep, alerting her to an impending societal shift: "Marilyn. You need to know it's over. We are entering a new era, a new saga has been born" (21). In this new era, stillness gives way to softness once again, though it is a long process for Marilyn to shift her personal and professional perspectives and behaviors to better align with the new saga.

Despite her inability to hear Westwind's message to her through the wall of stillness that supposedly protects her, Marilyn is relatively knowledgeable about her Sto:loh nation and the political state of various First Nations in Canada. For Marilyn, though, that knowledge impacts her professional life only for much of the novel and not her personal life, resulting in a fragmented identity. Marilyn travels to Ontario to deliver another lecture, where she meets up with Gerri, an old friend who used to live in British Columbia. Marilyn is eager to reconnect with Gerri, in part because "She didn't want to be alone in Ontario with foreigners; even Indians were included in the foreigner category when they were all Ojibways with long names and strange ways" (119). Although part of Marilyn's message is that the Western world needs to allow indigenous people in Canada to repair the wounds of colonialism themselves (90), she does not feel completely at ease with other First Nations people. They live so differently from

her own cultural experiences that Marilyn considers them foreign. This suggests that alliances among women from different tribes would be challenging, if not problematic.

However, transnational feminism is not a silver bullet and should not be treated as one; as Richards argues, transnational feminism “allows us to view the experience of women more broadly than is possible in localized situations, while at the same time it allows us to recognize the limitations of a global perspective that tends to homogenize experience, masking historical specificity” (13). The differences between indigenous women should not be glossed over or ignored in the effort to promote a particular viewpoint. Marilyn, for example, identifies a distinct difference between Natives from Eastern Canada and Western Canada: “Eastern Natives seemed to be much more glib about white people and their ways than Natives in the West. They seemed to know them more intimately, in an emotionally distanced way. The antics of white people, their meanness, didn’t shock them” (123). Eastern Natives are perhaps less shocked by the lengths white people and their governments go to in order to maintain power, and Marilyn considers the Eastern Natives foreign, but still there is a common experience between them in dealing with double colonization. This common experience forms the basis of a particular kind of community proposed by Mohanty: “imagined communities of women with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by the political threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systemic” (*Feminism Without Borders* 46-47), forms of dominations like colonialism and patriarchy.

Regarding the women on her caseload, Marilyn feels “a kind of hopelessness she tried not to acknowledge,” but the other part of her professional life, giving lectures, has “always left her with a feeling of hope. The future continued to look brighter as long as someone in the

audience heard” (90). Although she had always been confident in her lectures on the colonial “perpetrators of the terrorism on Native children” and the need for the West to “leave us to this ourselves” (90), Marilyn eventually has difficulty reconciling that message with the number of case files she has to deal with that prompt a feeling of hopelessness in her, let alone her own problems with her daughters. Upon reflection of her role as a mother, Marilyn uses the same word—terrorize—to describe her actions as she does to describe colonial actions, although she does not otherwise recognize the connection. Marilyn admits to herself that “she terrorized her daughters” and “left the girls to resolve their terror alone” (104). And although Marilyn wants to repair the relationship, she cannot envision what it would take to accomplish that. Despite the considerable advice Marilyn gives to audiences and clients, she is unable to apply that same advice to her own relationships.

Marilyn’s fragmented professional and personal identities find resolution through the “gapping” experiences that occur without warning. Marilyn is often troubled by the painful or confusing cultural and personal memories that interfere with her experience of reality, and initially, she understands them as roadblocks to emotional healing with her daughters. Over and over again, “She managed to kill the memories, begin thinking again, only to have them push up, interfering with her ability to reach some sort of plan to change the condition she had created for her daughters” (140). Marilyn has been unsuccessful in changing that condition on her own up until this point, and in part because she is disconnected from tribal knowledge, Marilyn is unable to interpret and understand the memories and visions she has, at least initially. Although the “gapping” incidents are disorienting and she is unable to articulate how, they do gradually help

Marilyn form female community with the women in her family; these memories and visions communicate important family history and wisdom for living that stems from tribal knowledge.

Indeed, there is a small part of her that recognizes the significance of tribal knowledge, for a few lines later, Marilyn reflects on the crucial juncture in life in which she finds herself: “Burnout: when what you’re doing contradicts your beliefs. Belief is old, coded into the memory of every cell. Tribal consciousness, lineage memory, old beginnings were pushing up at the new layers inside Marilyn” (140). A part of Marilyn recognizes that her behaviors and attitudes toward her clients, and more importantly her daughters, are in conflict with beliefs—even unconscious, inherited beliefs—that are based in the Sto:loh nation. More personal knowledge of those beliefs would almost certainly help Marilyn “hear the Westwind-borne voices of her ancestors” (39) that she had been deaf to for so long. Tribal consciousness is embedded in Marilyn and seems to be seeking expression in her life, not to impede progress with her daughters, but to teach her truth.

Later Marilyn realizes that her Western education—and thus, imperialism—is responsible, at least in part, for the fragmentation she experiences. She regrets allowing Western society to influence her as much as it has: “If she had not become so biased by Western society’s narrow perception of what constitutes reality...she would have known that her body was moving as though it were bucking the wind because it was. If she had not left behind the science of her own people’s holy knowledge she would have known a great gift was being born in her. Truth, earth truth, was visiting her” (206). This knowledge not only affects Marilyn’s understanding of herself, but it also positively influences her work with her clients. Her university training was important, but only after feeling the sense of hopelessness for so many clients for so many years

and recognizing the insufficiency of Western therapies for Native concerns, Marilyn decides on a different approach: “*I gotta gamble on these women*, she told herself...She was painfully cognizant that there weren’t many ideas about how to approach this without the textbooks, but she had a gut feeling that the key to sorting this out lay inside the women themselves. She made up her mind to trust them and her own smarts from here on out. *Elsie, I am going to let myself care*” (199). Personally investing in these women’s lives was frowned upon in her profession, but Marilyn now understands that the relationships she can form with her female clients are crucial to their success. From the beginning, the unnamed narrator explains that “Softness is a gamble and these women dare not wager. The women no longer hear themselves; not hearing themselves, they have nothing to invest and so do not gamble” (26). Just as the Turtle Island women avoided taking risks in relationships in order to survive, so too are Marilyn’s clients caught in a cycle of refusing to be vulnerable with themselves, which leaves them incapable of being vulnerable with others and investing in community with them. This kind of behavior is an example of historical trauma, which Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart defines as a “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences” like colonization (7). Marilyn herself is caught in this same cycle of historical trauma until she finally realizes that the benefits of community outweigh the risks that come with softness, in her professional life and personal life alike.⁵

⁵ In order to address the issue of historical trauma and its varying responses, including “substance abuse...self-destructive behavior, suicidal thoughts and gestures, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, and difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions” (Brave Heart 7), Brave Heart established an intervention program that turns to culture as an integral element in healing historical trauma: it incorporates tribally specific values, ceremonies, and teachings into the work that is done. Marilyn, having grown up without a clear grasp of her culture, similarly struggles to cope with her historical trauma until she embraces community.

While in Ontario, Marilyn meets an Ojibway man, T.J., and begins to fall in love with him, as “ridiculous” as the prospect of a relationship is to her (177). However, the process of feeling romantic love again causes Marilyn to feel “so completely conscious of every part of her and so completely satisfied with herself that it startled her, made her see that she had not felt this way about herself before” (179). Although her feelings of confidence and self-awareness may have been prompted by T.J.’s interest, Marilyn ultimately decides that she does not need a man in her life to be happy: “She realized she was not hungry for a man at all, but hungry for her daughters” (246). Just as Elsie seems to come to life in the company of women, so too does Marilyn need the relationships with other women, with her daughters, to be most satisfied in life. She needs to develop relationships with and invest in her female clients to assist most effectively in their situations, and she similarly needs to develop relationships with and invest in her daughters to be an effective Salish mother. When she musters up the courage to reprimand Cat and impart wisdom to her and Lindy, Marilyn acknowledges that “The words spilled out feeling slightly foreign, like some voice was compelling them other than her own. The words felt old” (226). Through the process of learning to listen to Westwind and her ancestors’ voices, Marilyn begins to reconnect with their truth, and even though they feel “slightly foreign,” readers get the sense that they will feel less and less so as Marilyn transitions into this new phase of life where she allows tribal consciousness to shape her experiences and inform her relationships to others.

Despite the ultimate significance of her relationships with clients and daughters and her satisfaction without a man in her life, Marilyn does not completely cast aside men or strip responsibility away from them. In the last speech readers hear Marilyn give, she gives a call to action:

Sovereignty, liberation, cultural revival are all words on the lips of men. I want to say, as a Native woman, keep on talking them words, but work to make them real. I need you to carry on singing for them, working for them, speaking for them...without our women raising our children all the work of your generation will be dead by the next...We, the women of First Nations, need you men on our side of the line in order to keep our children. We need your love and your support and I am not ashamed to ask for it. (197)

This call to action may be surprising, considering the overall focus on women in the novel. There are no significant male characters, and outside of T.J.'s cameo, the other men in the novel—husbands and fathers—have been alcoholics, abusive, or otherwise uninvolved in their family's lives. However, in the same way that Alice Walker asserts that womanists⁶ are “Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female” (xi), Marilyn insists on joining with men to form a united community to address the (post)colonial issues they face because they will be stronger together.⁷

Whereas Marilyn begins her journey of reconciling her personal and professional lives with some knowledge of her tribal community, Elsie, one of Marilyn's clients, is completely disconnected from Ojibway tribal knowledge. When we meet Elsie, she is very much alone in the world: she is single, her youngest child, Marsha, has died of pneumonia, and her other children, James and Theresa, have been removed from her care. When social workers first arrive at Elsie's home, Marsha is sick, yet still alive; unfortunately there is a “damning beer bottle” in Elsie's hand and she is unable to properly tend to Marsha's needs (41). Although Elsie was not

⁶ According to Janet J. Montelaro, “Walker invents the term ‘womanist’ from her necessity to inscribe a place for women of color within a feminist culture that she finds overwhelmingly white and middle-class” (12). Although Walker was speaking for African-Americans, not Native women, her womanist ideology aligns in many ways with Native feminist theory and contributes to a transnational feminism in which a “social identification [exists] among all women as ‘sisters’” (Montelaro 12), particularly among women who face both racism and sexism as so many indigenous women in the Americas do.

⁷ Kathleen J. Renk also draws a connection between womanism and third-world feminism in her book *Caribbean Shadows and Victorian Ghosts: Women's Writing and Decolonization* (9, 144).

properly caring for her children, the social workers are also partially to blame for Marsha's end: they strictly follow protocols for documenting the situation, rather than first tending to Marsha's immediate needs and possibly saving her. Prior to each of her meetings with Elsie, Marilyn reviews the social workers' notes from that fateful day, believing that "some hint of what happened to Elsie, to herself, to Indian motherhood was buried between the lines" (40). Marilyn senses that the neglect Elsie perpetrated is not due primarily to an individual flaw in her or an error on her part, but instead due to forces outside of Elsie's control that must have acted upon her, victimized her, or "broken" her (50), leaving her less than capable of caring for her children. Furthermore, Marilyn senses that these as yet unnamed forces have similarly acted upon her and also upon all Indian mothers, so many of whom find themselves wrestling with the same issues that Elsie and Marilyn do.

Before long, Marilyn realizes that the imposing force that has wreaked havoc in Elsie's life and in her own is slow-moving: "Elsie's condition had taken over one hundred years to create" (55). However, Marilyn is unable to articulate the reason for Elsie's condition until much later in the novel. Eventually, though, Marilyn realizes that,

Unable to internalize the other world's culture, yet divorced from her own, Elsie had no way to value herself. Of course, Marilyn knew hundreds of Native intellectuals who ascribed to the concept that Native values were destroyed in residential schools...but until this moment, it had no clinical significance for her or her clients...Colonization is such a personal process. Culture is so intensely personal. There must be something about us that never quite gives up that never quite can be completely erased, but at the same time over a hundred years of cultural dismemberment has to surface in some intensely personal way. In the absence of our own cultures we would naturally develop this not quite completely valueless, not quite completely apathetic, not quite completely uncaring self. Elsie's persona seemed to live on the periphery of herself somehow, as though she were on the outer edge of her own life, unable to fully participate in it. (216)

Elsie is a victim of colonization, as is Marilyn and all other Indian women and men who have been disconnected from tribal knowledge and values. Elsie is particularly disconnected from her Native identity; when Marilyn asks Elsie what nation she's from, her only reply is, "I'm Indian," and Marilyn's unspoken response is resigned to this reality: "There it was. No-name-brand misnomer, undefined from within, numbered and identified from without, just like the Jews before the concentration camps murdered them" (217). Elsie is Ojibway, but she knows nothing of Ojibway cultural traditions, language, or religion. Although she is unable to fully internalize the "other world's culture," she has internalized their view of her, a state of mind that Marilyn recognizes as dangerous and on a level with the Holocaust. Elsie's ignorance of her cultural history confirms Marilyn's supposition of colonization's role in Elsie's unstable and unsafe parenting. Marilyn knows that "Someone had broken Elsie" (50) but recognizes that the culprit is much bigger than any one person: Elsie is part of the "historic condition that had birthed massive child neglect among Native families" (55), especially because she lacks support from a united Ojibway community that is clearly connected to its distinctive culture. Thus, Elsie is responsible for neglecting her children, but because Elsie is broken by the lasting effects of systematic colonization and prejudice, she is not the only one at fault. The colonizer is implicated in Marsha's death just as much as Elsie and the white social workers are, though that information is not well received by those in power. Marilyn speaks out against the injustice of Elsie's case and the more widespread "tragedy of the horrific conditions in which Native women are forced to bring up their children" (53). As a result of this press conference, Marilyn almost loses her job, and the status quo persists.

Perhaps because of the brokenness she sees in Elsie with which she can at least partially identify, Marilyn seeks a connection with Elsie. At first, Marilyn imagines developing a professional connection with this client in order to help her, but she is unsuccessful: “She wanted Elsie to relate to her in a powerful way. Yet try as Marilyn might, Elsie deferred to her in the same way she did to any other person with authority over her life. *She defers to me like she would any white woman*, Marilyn thought” (65). Indeed, as uncomfortable as it may make her, Marilyn acknowledges that she does, at least in part, behave as a white woman. She is “bound by her Western ethics, [even when h]olding to the discipline these ethics called up sometimes meant betraying mothers. A social worker was not entitled to serve up a blueprint for reunification [with children]. She was not at liberty to coach Elsie” (83). Marilyn feels torn by her desire to build true community with Elsie and her responsibility to adhere to the ethical guidelines that her profession requires. Despite the tension between Native and Western values she experiences, Marilyn takes Elsie to a salon for a manicure at her own expense, knowing that her company would not pay for such “therapy.” At the salon, Elsie voluntarily shares a memory of her grandmother, and when Marilyn asks Elsie if she likes remembering this woman, Elsie nods in agreement as tears well up in her eyes. Significantly, “Marilyn noted that it was the first time Elsie had looked at her and made eye contact” (69). Marilyn and Elsie finally make an emotional connection when they discuss a significant woman in Elsie’s life while they are surrounded by other women in the salon. Even though Elsie is usually reluctant to speak to Marilyn, she remarks that “It’d be nice to work here [at the salon], around girls every day. No men” (81). Memories of her grandmother coupled with the female community she experiences at the salon

prompt Elsie to open up about some of the trauma she experienced as a child, making it easier for Marilyn to understand her and work with her.

This female community is important for Elsie, but it impacts others in the salon as well. When Elsie smiles at the thought of her grandmother, Marilyn “imagined Marsha’s smile. Then her image of Marsha changed into the smile of her own daughter. As a young mother Marilyn had not fully seen or appreciated Catherine’s beautiful smile...She wished she had been able to appreciate [her smile] with the same depth and feeling she was now experiencing” (70). Marilyn cannot help but consider her own community, her own family, in the salon with Elsie and the other women. Marilyn briefly considers apologizing to Catherine for being “a horrible fool,” but almost immediately discards the thought because “Catherine would think it weird” (70). Even so, her experience in the salon prompts reflection that begins to shift Marilyn’s perspective, eventually making it possible for her to open up to her daughters about her own struggles and failures and begin repairing the broken relationships.

Even Nettie, the white manicurist, acknowledges the burden of being a woman and the benefits of working amongst other women. Nettie jokes, “Tell me if it’s ever good being someone’s daughter, sister or mom” (76). Each of the women, white and Native alike, laughs in response, even though they are all “[e]motionally numb” at that moment. Each of them has experienced pain as a direct result of being a woman—indigenous or white—and even though that pain is not dealt with, the shared experiences in this female community seems to strengthen each of them. When Elsie later asks Nettie what it is like to work only with women, “Nettie carried on about how it made you appreciate yourself in a strange way. ‘Appreciate men more, too,’ she quipped, though she didn’t say how...The conversation between Elsie and Nettie was as

thoughtfully sensitive and intimate as any Marilyn had ever heard among women” (81).

Although Elsie is in particular need of a supportive female community considering her situation, Maracle makes it clear that all women benefit from the camaraderie and vulnerability of spending time with other women.

In *Daughters are Forever*, Maracle emphasizes the significance of mother-daughter relationships by examining the strained relationships in Marilyn’s family, both in her relationship with her own mother and in her relationships with her two daughters. Despite the centuries-old and ongoing impact of colonial encounters with the Sto:loh, Ojibway, and other First Nations tribal groups, Marilyn eventually begins to develop healthy relationships with her daughters once she is able to connect with the Sto:loh history, culture, and wisdom in personal ways, allowing the academic, political, and professional knowledge she has to impact her personal life. Only when Marilyn understands herself and reconciles the disparate parts of her identity, is she able to understand and reconnect with her daughters, as well as her clients like Elsie. These relationships are important on the individual level, but they also speak to the double colonization that Native women still face; female community, then, is offered as a necessary element in the fight against colonial patriarchy and imperial power.

Furthermore, Maracle avoids creating a false binary between absent men and victimized women that some feminist perspectives are wont to do. Instead, she reveals the colonial underpinnings of the fraught relationships that can exist between indigenous men and women, while also indicating the importance of living a womanist ideology wherein men and women support each other in establishing healthy and independent First Nations in Canada. The Native feminism that Maracle presents in the novel offers a path to achieving sovereignty and the

protection of Native social and cultural values and structures, and this reveals the necessity of Native feminism in the work of (double) decolonization.

Achieving Relationship and Solidifying Identity without Living Forebears

Maracle focuses on the ways in which connecting an individual identity to her tribal identity is a necessary first step in the process of healing chronically strained relationships between First Nations mothers and daughters and in building female community, a step that is so important considering the colonial origins of the stillness that impedes mothers' ability to nurture their daughters and develop healthy relationships with them. Marilyn cannot fully understand her daughters or connect with them until she reconciles the fragmented parts of her identity with the help of the temporal shifts she experiences that blur the line between dreams or the past and reality or the present. The temporal shifts help Marilyn recognize her need to reject some Western attitudes and behaviors that prevent her from being the most effective social worker and mother that she can be, in favor of values that align with her Sto:loh identity. *Unburnable* by Marie-Elena John (Kalinago, Antigua) takes a slightly different perspective on the relationships among women. Rather than revealing the need to understand self before connecting with female relatives, John reveals the need for one woman to learn about and understand her ancestors before she can understand her own identity. The reverse experience expressed in *Unburnable* reveals more complexities in the ways indigenous women writers in the Americas wrestle with the lasting and ongoing effects and remedies of double colonialism.

On a smaller scale than *Almanac of the Dead*, *Unburnable* also spans generations and includes distinct shifts in setting and perspective, although John focuses on three generations of

women in one family. The protagonist, Lillian Baptiste, is born in Dominica and does not know her mother, Iris, and grandmother, Matilda. Lillian only ever hears rumors about her ancestors, including the story that Matilda was hanged for committing mass murder, and the story that Iris was half-crazy. When she is fourteen, Lillian moves to the United States to escape the truth of her family. Despite finding professional success in the U.S., Lillian is never truly satisfied in life, in large part because she is unable to escape her past. She develops a deep-seated need to return to Dominica and learn the truth about her mother and grandmother, and hopefully to prove her grandmother's innocence. Thus, after a twenty-year absence, Lillian returns to Dominica with Teddy, a friend and colleague who has loved her for many years. In the process of piecing together the fragmented stories of Iris and Matilda and of trying to understand these women, Lillian gradually comes to accept her family and herself.

Unburnable is a powerful novel that wrestles with several similar issues of identity and female community, yet very little has been written about its contribution to discussions of Caribbean life, culture, history, and literature. Ena Harris is one of two scholars who has published on *Unburnable*, and her analysis is cursory, as it comprises only a portion of her article on the spiritual landscape of Dominica in John and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Harris focuses primarily on Lillian and the ways in which she is shaped by the events that happen on Monte Diablotin. She argues that both Rhys and John create a Dominica that "keeps secrets from strangers – from those not native who are unable to accept its difference – while offering echoes of the past to those with links to the natural space" (64). Teddy is one of these strangers on the island, uncomfortable as he is on the mountain, whereas Lillian's connection to the island is complex and deep-seated. She hears the voices of her Maroon ancestors on the mountain and is

so drawn to Monte Diablotin that she eventually “allow[s] herself an indulgence” and commits suicide by throwing herself off the side of the mountain in order to earn her birthright: a “*chanté mas* to guarantee her place in history, alongside her grandmother and her mother” (291). This portion of Harris’s assertion is borne out by the text, but in its generalities, her argument loses ground before long.

Building on her interpretation of Lillian’s spiritual engagement with Dominica and Monte Diablotin in particular, Harris later suggests that “Lillian becomes a native of Dominica at the novel’s end when she chooses to merge with the myths surrounding the women of her family. [She] believe[s] that the Dominican landscape, to some degree, influences and helps to shape her fate” (68). Harris further emphasizes this point later: “Both Antoinette [in *Wide Sargasso Sea*] and Lillian...become natives as they complete their journeys home and settle within Dominica’s spiritual landscape” (70). However, both Antoinette and Lillian are natives of Dominica, regardless of where they eventually live, and even if the island and Lillian’s Dominican community do not explicitly impact her behavior or values while she lived in the United States; suggesting otherwise assumes that native identity only exists in the aggregate, in concert with the wider community. As we will see, Lillian’s native identity is both communal and personal.

Lorna Down takes an ecocritical perspective in her analysis that “privileges the spiritual dimension” to show how this particular reading “brings a needed dimension to ecocriticism” (232), but greater depth and insight exists in Down’s interpretation than in Harris’s. Down not only suggests that a focus on the spiritual power in nature “encourages human relations and structures built on ideas of justice, individual rights, and freedom,” but also and more importantly reveals “how relations to nature, in particular the spiritual dimension in nature, allow

central female figures to...effectively challenge dominant (colonial) power structures” (233). In part because Matilda’s village, Noir, is so remote, Down reads the community as a “prototype of modern eco-villages[.] John’s New World African Village is a world where respect for self, others, and nature translates into a world of harmony” (234). Down appears idealistic and is anachronistic in her reading of Noir—the community is not so much a prototype of modern eco-villages as it is a traditional village holding on to pre-colonial ways of living—but she does provide insights on Iris and Matilda that reveal the interconnectedness of place and identity: Iris, whose identity is shaped by the villagers and “not in the spiritual connection to place, is unable to assert herself in the colonial structures and systems of Roseau” (236), while “Matilda’s flying emphasizes the power inherent in a deep spiritual connection to place and people” (238). More specifically, Matilda’s flying draws on Caribbean folklore that suggests the possibility of flying back to Africa.⁸ Down’s analysis of Lillian is most compelling, for she rightly argues that the central theme of the novel is that “what does not burn is the spirit of a people, and so Lillian’s spiritual connection with her mother and grandmother cannot be erased by time or place. Limited knowledge of such connections leads, however, to a limited knowledge of one’s power and selfhood” (238). Even from her ecocritical perspective and as powerful as place is in the novel, Down acknowledges that Lillian’s relationship with the women in her family can override the influence of place and lead to a more coherent sense of identity.

In a closer analysis of each of the women in Lillian’s family and their relationships with each other and other women in the community, it becomes clear just how powerful these

⁸ The protagonist in Paule Marshall’s *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), for example, has an aunt who told her stories about slaves escaping their owners by flying back to Africa.

relationships are in shaping identity and addressing double colonization. Matilda is distinct from other characters examined here in that she is of “unadulterated African descent,” rather than of a people indigenous to the Americas (3). Africans were brought to the Caribbean as slave labor by Spanish, Portuguese, and British colonists, and the slaves who escaped to the mountainous interiors to form independent communities were called Maroons⁹. The communities they formed often preserved their African languages, religious beliefs, and culture. For a time, Maroons had some power in resisting threatening white colonists, but many communities were eventually displaced, re-emerging in different places, including Dominica.

Even though she is of African descent, Matilda’s community has struggled in the face of colonial power in ways similar to Caribs and other indigenous people in the region. In fact, some Maroons did ally themselves with Amerindians. Simon, one of only a few Caribs still living in the area and the man Matilda eventually marries, acknowledges that both the Maroons and the Caribs may have had a greater chance for survival if they had banded together. He recalls that Caribs in St. Vincent had joined forces with Maroons there, and although the British removed them to Central America, “they had spread, settling in different countries and [were] now numbering in the tens of thousands” (20-21). Although Dominican Caribs did not formally ally

⁹ Spanish, Portuguese, and British colonists began killing and enslaving indigenous people in the Caribbean in the sixteenth century, as Jamaica Kincaid’s “Ovando” illustrates so vividly, but it was the African slaves escaping colonial brutality to form fugitive communities in secluded regions of the Caribbean who were called *cimarrones* by the Spanish, or “maroons” in English. These maroons not only had to deal with colonial plantation societies, but also with the indigenous people living in the same regions. According to Richard Price, “In a number of cases, groups of Indians and maroons ‘fused,’ both culturally and genetically, but their relative positions varied,” with some native people taking maroons as slaves, while other indigenous groups fell under the power of the maroons, while still others more clearly maintained their separate identities (15). However, “maroon men, suffering from a shortage of women, often took Indian wives” (Price 16), which supports Cynthia James’s assertion that “Transculturation and creolization are...central to Caribbean maroon theory” (10).

themselves with Maroons at a crucial point in their history and Noir is considerably smaller, Simon and Matilda symbolically unite these two groups in their marriage.

Despite the symbolic union between Matilda and Simon, their relationship is an unusual one. Matilda's independent spirit bends briefly to Simon's intensity and his vision that together "they could outheal the few white physicians in Dominica—or any other island for that matter" (32). The narrator seems disappointed that, even for a short time, Matilda "behaved like any other woman who thought she was in love, following somebody else's dream" (32). Before long, Matilda reasserts her authority though, banishing Simon from the island under threat of death when he gives an aphrodisiac to a man who breaks unwritten rules about relations following childbirth; because Simon disappears so quickly, everyone believes Matilda killed him. Yet Simon does live on, and for his new life, he assumes "a new identity, naming himself after a bird on the brink of extinction, and he had gone to South America, proselytizing to the mainland Caribs he found there about the few Island Caribs who still remained. He had, without knowing it, planted the seeds of a Pan-Carib movement" (271). In addition to fostering connection across different tribal groups in the Caribbean, Simon also retains his connection with Matilda, returning to the island for her trial as a show of faithfulness and love: nothing destroys the bond between these two people and the cultural groups of which they are a part.

The similarities between the Maroons and Caribs and the bond between them through Matilda and Simon are important for understanding the community of Noir, particularly in this (post)colonial context, but Noir is also remarkable for another reason: it was formed by abandoned Maroon women, and Matilda, a woman, is in charge. According to Isaac Curtis, "Almost all maroon communities were disproportionately male, and the polygamous

arrangements imposed by military strongmen exacerbated the skewed gender ratio” (152). In a culture of male-dominated communities, Noir is distinctly female-dominated, and more specifically, Matilda-dominated. Although Matilda is distinct in her ancestry from other characters by indigenous women writers, her power and influence are noteworthy. Before the community at Noir ceases to exist, outsiders knew the place “only as ‘Up There’—with the rest of the phrase, ‘where Matilda lives,’ left unspoken, understood” (3). Her leadership in Noir is understood, respected, and feared by everyone; she is called “Matilda the Great” across the whole island of Dominica, “a name coined by one of the *chantuelles* who ‘sang on her’” in remembrance of her power (44). Eventually Teddy confirms that “Matilda was out-and-out the Boss Man, openly so. When the police raided, she was the one who ordered the retreat,” and Matilda was also the only woman to represent a spirit in dance (281). As a community formed by women and led by a woman, Noir serves as an important counterpoint to similar kinds of communities in the Caribbean, as well as a suggestion of the significance of female community.

Although little is made of it in the novel, the women in Noir work together to raise the children of the village corporately. Children “were cared for meticulously as a unit, a large tribe of small people-in-training...It was a sensible socialization, one that did not promote mobility, but that gave them a clear understanding of who they were and where they belonged” (4). Despite the drawbacks that accompanied this kind of upbringing, the children of Noir were given the invaluable gift of developing a clear and strong identity in the midst of a world that, outside of Noir, was changing rapidly. Matilda, however, perhaps in part because of her leadership role, was removed from the corporate child-rearing; when Iris was young, she “was worshiped, her every wish indulged. [Matilda] had no idea that Iris suffered no consequences when she

transgressed. The other children of their community were deliberately raised without individual attention, except when they stepped out of line” (4). Moreover, when Matilda does try to involve herself in Iris’s life, the Council intervenes and prevents Matilda from making her own decisions about Iris’s future. For example, the Council anticipates that their isolation from other Dominicans and western influences will not last, meaning they should be flexible to the changes that may soon come to their way of life. Thus, the Council eventually persuades Matilda that Iris should go to school in Roseau, and furthermore that Matilda should not be the one to take her to town: “Matilda would have caused too much commotion and ruined Iris’s chance to be boarded with a respectable family” (56). Although their situations are very different, ultimately Matilda is disconnected from her daughter just as Marilyn is disconnected from hers, in part due to their own decisions, and in part due to systems outside their control.

After Iris is brutally attacked by Mrs. Richard for her involvement with her son, John Baptiste, the community assumes that Matilda is to blame for John Baptiste’s death during Masquerade, even though the coroner determines that he died of a massive heart attack (151). The community presumes Matilda is responsible for killing John Baptiste in retaliation, and when she is arrested in Noir, the police further presume that “this was no ordinary remote village, that this was a place where people kept themselves deliberately hidden from the rest of the island so that they could, each and every one of them, openly engage in their devil worship and aberrant sexual practices” (264); because the religious practices are so threatening to the status quo in Roseau and the rest of the island, the police downplay the number of skeletons they find in order to “give a sense of a serial killer” and “hide the true nature of the killings” (266). Only by the end of the novel do we discover that Matilda confesses to John Baptiste’s murder

and the eleven other charges of murder for Iris's sake, even though she knows that the confession will result in her hanging: "on this earth she was only a woman with healing hands, able to do nothing more for her daughter; but as an ancestor, she would finally have the kind of power they'd always believed she owned" (273). Iris may be oblivious to the sacrifice, but Matilda nevertheless cares for her daughter and seeks to do right by her, even when her options to do so are limited. She could not be described as a particularly maternal figure, but her sacrifice for her daughter indicates that Matilda highly respects the ancestral bond they share, a bond that will continue after her own death and a bond that will give her the impetus to seek justice for what Iris suffered at the hands of a white woman. The racial and cultural equality that Matilda and Iris seek will come in part through the ancestral female community, the "sisterhood," they share despite the many differences between them.

Although Matilda does not for the most part engage in a nurturing or close relationship with her daughter, Iris nevertheless has a power that, although different in kind from her mother's, is no less equal to it. From a young age Iris had been spoiled because of her striking half-African, half-Carib beauty and generous personality, to the extent that women in the community, corporately sharing in the task of raising all the children, "went against instinct and would never cut Iris off [from breastfeeding] when she'd had enough, happily allowing her to suckle them empty," even though they had children of their own to feed (32-33). Even the other children worshiped Iris and "proceeded to overlove her much worse than the women had" (33). Though adored by them, Iris is set apart from her peers and other members of her community. Because nothing was denied Iris in her childhood, the love and attention lavished on Iris does not serve her well, and in fact becomes a liability once she leaves and experiences the world outside

of Noir. Her community “filled her head with a sense of her own importance, warped her mind by making her aware of the difference between her looks and theirs, between the color of her skin and theirs” (55).

When Iris is sent to Roseau for an education at fourteen, she is naïve about how the world works and unprepared for living in it. Elizabeth, the mother superior in Roseau in charge of finding a place for Iris to live, “knew that, as a boarder in any of the elite homes that took such children, Iris would be pregnant within a few months—either by the husband of the household or by the son” (57) because of her remarkable beauty. Despite Elizabeth’s best efforts to protect Iris, she was soon chosen by John Baptiste “for the honor of concubinage” (75), a position of honor because of the Baptiste family’s wealth and influence. John Baptiste is engaged to be married, but due to the frequency of their relations and her naïveté, Iris believed “with all her heart that John Baptiste was going to marry her within the year,” rather than his fiancé (94). As a result of her isolated upbringing, Iris does not understand that Roseau is a society in which lighter shades of skin correlates to higher social statuses; John Baptiste would always ultimately choose his white fiancé over Iris, no matter how emotionally, physically, and sexually captivating she was. The elevated status that Iris enjoyed in Noir cannot exist for long in Roseau where racial hierarchies are deeply engrained in its culture.

For a time in Roseau, though, Iris did enjoy a life in keeping with her indulgent upbringing. Iris became a boarder-servant for the Fadouls, a Lebanese family whose women treated her well and men left her alone; although “the Lebanese might have ignored the population at large...their servants—provided they were loyal—were given honorary Lebanese status and were no different from family” (64). Despite distinct differences from Iris’s country of

origin and cultural upbringing, the Lebanese community in Roseau, having arrived from Lebanon a generation ago to escape oppression from the Ottoman Empire, share similar experiences of oppression with Iris's community in Noir; the Fadouls, though, had become so successful that they could afford a whole host of cooks, maids, and washerwomen. Because the Fadouls offer a kind of sisterhood to her, Iris has access to a segment of society she had not previously seen on an intimate level, now able to attend the customary pre-wedding festivities at brides' homes. Iris observes the mother of the bride, the servants, the guests' maids, but the "real treat" for Iris is to see the daughters, the brides-to-be at these events (71). Interestingly, Iris is struck by the fact that the brides never appear excited on the eve of their wedding day; she only observes them "distressed, pale, and trembling with the swollen-faced look of days of crying" (71). Unfortunately, families make excuses for the brides, leaving the young Iris to believe that they are simply overly excited, nervous, or shedding tears of joy; however, she was

the only one who did not understand that, in the days before the wedding, these girls were finally forced to come to terms with the end of a life in which they had any control whatsoever over what they did, when they did it, and with whom they did it. They would relinquish their ownership over their own selves, and they would swear in front of God to obey their new lord and master until death. These society girls cried because they knew they were about to become a servant: worse, in fact, because servants were paid and could leave when they wanted. They were crying because they were about to become somebody's slave. (71)

These brides face the harsh reality of a patriarchal system that leaves no room for a woman's independence in the same way that colonial systems leave no room for indigenous sovereignty and force communities like Noir to hide themselves to maintain some semblance of independence. On a small scale, Iris's naiveté about marriage in this society further complicates her vision of a future with John Baptiste: had she fully understood that marriage in this setting looked more like slavery than a loving union of two equals, Iris might have been more wary of

pursuing that relationship with John Baptiste. However, this vignette also points to the injustice of double colonialism made manifest in John Baptiste, a product and executor of colonial and patriarchal power.

Although she was oblivious to part of what went on as women prepared themselves and others for marriage, a group of unnamed neighbor washerwomen become an ally for Iris. In lieu of a bond with her mother, Iris grows close with these women who truly understand the possibilities in this society for people like herself. Whereas Amelia, the Fadoul family matriarch, becomes outraged at Iris's burgeoning relationship with John Baptiste, the washerwomen defend Iris, realizing the opportunities that could result from her connection to status and wealth:

A bastard son, born before the marriage [to another woman], could have some of the privileges of legitimate children: financial support, education, an inheritance of land and property. And if the resemblance to the father was strong enough, and if God was merciful with the color, even a girl child stood the chance, the good fortune, of being taken away from the mother and raised in the father's home. (91)

The way a dark-skinned woman could secure her position in this society that valued light skin was through having a son with a single white man; Iris had a chance for a secure future if she was able to have a baby by John Baptiste while also bypassing the "slavery" that was so common in marriage at that time.

Thus, the washerwomen give Iris advice for accomplishing this goal, but it falls on deaf ears. Eventually the women are shocked to discover that "all along Iris had been drinking bush tea so she would not get pregnant" (94), and the women "wept for the poor mad girl" in response (95); this is particularly remarkable considering that these unnamed women "do not believe in squandering tears, who regularly counseled that cry-water should be saved and used only for the death of one's mother, or God forbid, one's child" (94-95). These women identify with Iris and

care deeply about her future, even though they have no real stakes in what happens to her; they lament what they consider to be a golden opportunity wasted, just as they would mourn the loss of a mother or child. As a teenager Iris unfortunately does not realize the significance of this female community, or their desire to see her become as secure and independent as a woman in her position could hope to be. Iris's idealistic desire for love and marriage to John Baptiste clouds her view of the important role the washerwomen hope to play in her life.

Although Iris becomes unable to care for Lillian herself and foster a relationship with her daughter, still she values the bonds between them. As Icilma, Lillian's stepmother, forcibly removes Lillian from Iris's care, Iris urgently tries to communicate the truth about Matilda. Because of Icilma's interference, Lillian does not entirely understand what Iris was saying, except that "She was trying to tell me something about Matilda, I know that, she kept saying her name. And it was something *good*" (254). Only much later is Teddy able to interpret Lillian's last memory of her mother, Iris repeating a word that sounded like "magic": "Lillian was right, but her child's understanding had only allowed her to register the part of the word she recognized. The word Iris was saying was not *magie*, it was *magistrat*" (287). Matilda was a judge, not a murderer, and Iris had been attempting to pass along this proud truth to her daughter before they were separated for good, before Iris kills herself in desperation.

Despite the truth of the situation, Lillian grows up believing the rumors that her mother was crazy and that perhaps she herself had inherited some of that mental instability. In an attempt to stave off flashbacks from her youth in Dominica, Lillian "work[s] herself to the point of physical and mental fatigue" (14) on behalf of women enslaved and in trouble around the world. Lillian's work is admirable and she is successful in it, winning an Amnesty International

award, and yet she seems unsettled, unable to fully put her past behind her, as fragmented as it is. Instead Lillian's past persists. Because of the songs about Matilda and stories about Iris, Lillian's peers isolate her to the extent that "as a very small child, she assumed it to be normal. Later on, after she knew it was not, she learned that it was less painful to just let go of any hope for the privilege of friendship" (46). In addition to peers in Dominica isolating Lillian, Icilma also contributes to Lillian's solitary life by raising her "in complete ignorance of the details surrounding her identity" (44). Thus, Lillian's seclusion is two-fold: she lives in both social and ancestral isolation. As an adult, therefore, Lillian maintains this isolation, portraying an "appearance of complete inaccessibility" to others, and men in particular, perhaps in part as a protective shield against the vulnerability of friendship, but also in part because "she had no understanding of the social exchanges involved in forging friendships" (43) in a way similar to Iris's missed education about race and social hierarchies.

Not only does Lillian refrain from building friendships with others, but for more than twenty years after she moves to the United States, she also refuses to visit Dominica where her stepmother Icilma and godmother Mary-Alice still live. She essentially cuts all ties with her family; her only reluctant connection is through an inherited physical trait, a connection that some would consider superficial. Even though her straight hair "did not match her African features," and "made her look fake, she thought, like a Black Barbie doll," Lillian recognizes that "it was her only inheritance from her mother, Iris—the Carib hair—and she didn't have the courage to cut it" (9), though perhaps she would have preferred to do so. For so many years, her hair has been Lillian's only visible reminder of her family, but at the opening of the novel, it becomes clear that Lillian has finally given in to facing her past, as she works up the courage to

ask Teddy to travel with her to Dominica. The impetus for this change in attitude is unclear, but once Lillian recognizes the deep desire for knowledge of and emotional and spiritual connections with her ancestors, she cannot shake the desire: “She couldn’t let go of the notion that Matilda...had made a false confession” (99), and she desperately wants to find definitive proof of Matilda’s innocence.

The first hurdle Lillian faces is meeting Icilma again, a woman who “could have loved Lillian no less were she her own” (172) and yet someone with whom Lillian could not allow herself to love in return. It had been “Icilma who arranged to have Iris put in the crazy-people part of the jail when she came drunk, staggering into town to take back her five-year-old daughter” (186); the same night Iris died, and when Mary-Alice explains this to Lillian, she runs away, tries to dig up Iris’s grave, and attempts suicide. Lillian is sent to America soon after that, and the conflict between Icilma and Lillian was never resolved. Because of this history, Lillian “had not been able to imagine her homecoming, and even at that moment when she knew the full force of her stepmother’s love was streaming straight to her, she experienced it as if through a filter of sensory white noise, feeling it with a muting distortion” (185). Despite Lillian’s hesitation, she is quickly accepted by Icilma and Mary-Alice, all who remain of her family.

From Teddy’s point of view, the bonds of the female community become clear very early in their visit with Icilma and Mary-Alice: the older women “accepted and dismissed [Teddy’s presence] in one vague acknowledgment...They accorded him no status, nor had they any expectation of him...Right then, their orbit was taking them deep into purely female territory, and the two old women ignored Teddy with benign condescension” (194), paying attention to Lillian instead. As a man and an outsider from this family, Teddy initially has no place, no voice

in this space. At one point he “could sense Lillian slipping away back to where he could not access her thoughts. Submerged into women’s territory or, deeper still, back to the drums in her head” (198) as she already begins to develop spiritual and emotional connections to her mother and grandmother.

As she and Teddy further investigate her ancestors’ stories, Lillian’s spiritual connection to them deepens. Lillian inexplicably sees her grandmother hanging in the Obeahman’s mirror (206). Later Lillian realizes that “she was hearing voices, so many of them, all speaking together, in a language she did not understand, although the urgency and insistence of their calling was clear” (247). Readers, just like Icilma and Mary-Alice, might believe Lillian is losing her mind, a thought that crosses Lillian’s mind as well before she recognizes that “her mind was becoming clear and quiet, and she was in full control of her thoughts” (247). Lillian gains clarity and peace as she newly experiences her ancestors. From Teddy’s perspective, Lillian is “struggling to stay connected—she had, except for her visit to the African priest, practically stopped speaking, letting him do most of the talking” (245). However, these are signs of Lillian’s process to connect more deeply with her true identity rather than a sign of her complete withdrawal from society: she speaks less as she processes the voices she hears and the new information she gathers.

As the novel progresses, Lillian’s spiritual connection to her ancestors allows her to accurately assess Teddy’s story of what happened to Matilda and Noir. He believes that “the skeletons in the forest of Noir were put there because Matilda and her people had remained two hundred years back in time, two hundred years back on another continent, where the sacrifice of a human being to placate an irate god was simply the correct thing to do,” rather than because

Matilda was a murderer (277). He seems relieved to come to the conclusion that religion is the reason for the skeletons at Noir, but Lillian refuses to accept Teddy's story, knowing intuitively that the truth lies elsewhere. Only later when he talks with Bird, Mary-Alice's husband, and Bird mocks him for his story of what happened does Teddy humbly realize his mistake. When Lillian recalls the memory of her mother repeating to her the word that sounded like magic, Teddy "had been so sure that she was losing her mind [that] he never considered that he could be dead wrong" (287). Matilda was indeed a judge, and rather than the Maroons in Noir practicing human sacrifice as part of their religion, the authorities in Roseau used Matilda as a scapegoat for their massacre of dozens in Noir (263). After Teddy leaves, Bird reveals to readers that after Noir burns, the entire community willingly jumps to their death. Only "[a] few of the people of Noir had voluntarily postponed their home-going to give the thousand bodies down in the still-uncharted forest a proper interment befitting their noble lives and glorious deaths, and then they had quietly waited out their time" (288). Tragically, without Matilda as their leader or other means of defending themselves, the community decides that, rather than subject themselves to enslavement or death at the hands of the white authorities, they will go home to their ancestors on their own terms.

In a similarly tragic series of events, Lillian ends up choosing the same fate for herself in an effort to get answers from her mother and grandmother, answers that she believes would come only in death (290); sadly, Teddy eventually learns what had happened in Noir all those years ago, but he cannot reach Lillian in time to tell her the true story of her lineage. As Lillian drives to the place where the Maroons jumped to their deaths, the place where she "not only heard their voices calling to her, she had *felt* it, the sensation of a thousand pairs of wings, beating like

butterflies all around her,” she reflects on her life of self-denial and self-sacrifice which she had hoped “would one day pay for her inherited sins” (291). Now, rather than trying to rid herself of inherited sins, Lillian seems to embrace her inheritance; the Catholicism that Lillian had clung to her whole life now only prevents her from connecting with her mother and grandmother, crucial relationships that had largely been denied her. In the act of committing suicide, Lillian jumps to her female community¹⁰ to continue the legacy of the women in her family: “Let [the people of Dominica] sing another song about another woman whose life had not fulfilled its promise. Let them sing on her—she wanted her own song, it was her birthright. A *chanté mas* to guarantee her place in history, alongside her grandmother and her mother” (291). Lillian is unable to recognize the ways in which her life or the lives of her mother and grandmother fulfilled their promises in unexpected ways. Despite becoming a scapegoat for the authorities in Roseau, Matilda inspires loyalty and solidarity in her own community. Despite Iris’s inability to care for Lillian, she does impart a lasting message of love to her daughter before they are separated for the last time. Although she does not live to see the truth made public, Lillian is the driving force leading to the truth about Matilda’s innocence, and given Teddy’s position and platform, conceivably that truth will be made known.

Not having the time and perspective to recognize the positive truths of her family, Lillian decides to jump in the manner of the Maroons, but as she contemplates her options, each is discussed in relation to traditional female figures of West African and Creole lore. She could drown herself and become *Mama Glo*, the West African *Mami Wata*, a water deity, as her

¹⁰ Although the comparison that Harris makes between Lillian and Jean Rhys’s Antoinette is flawed in many ways, there is a valid connection between these two characters. Just as Lillian jumps to her death in order to join herself more fully in her female community, Antoinette similarly jumps to her death to find Tia, rather than remain doubly colonized in England.

mother was rumored to be. She could let herself rot on a mountain path in Creole dress and become *La Diabliesse*, a devil with cloven hoofs, as her grandmother was rumored to be. Ultimately, Lillian chooses to become for the people of Dominica a *soucouyant*, “a woman who takes off her skin at night and flies around in search of victims whose blood she sucks...she would fly through the air for her country people” (292). The *soucouyant* is a frightening, predatory figure, and yet curiously, this is how Lillian wants to be remembered. Moreover, there is linguistic ambiguity in the description: does Lillian intend to fly *after* her country people and target them as victims or *on behalf of* her country people and defend them from colonial powers or others who would do them harm? Given the intensity with which Lillian has pursued the truth of her family’s history in order to reconnect with them on emotional and spiritual levels, it seems that only the latter could be true. In her life, Lillian defended and gave hope to countless women she did not know, but in her death, she finally claims the legacy of her female forebears and enters into community with them in a way she had never been able to in life.

The mother-daughter relationships in *Unburnable* are fraught as they are in *Daughters are Forever*, and yet, that singular kind of connection becomes necessary, particularly with colonial forces and their vestiges to face. Although Matilda, Iris, and Lillian are directly related, the trajectories of their lives take them in very different directions and each lives a life very different from the others. Despite these differences, we can understand their relationships not only in familial or ancestral terms, but also as one of Mohanty’s imagined communities: the “political threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systemic” (*Feminism Without Borders* 47) bind these women together and especially drive Lillian to relentlessly seek the truth about her forebears and vindicate them from their tarnished

reputations. The notion of imagined communities of women is reinforced by the female communities in each novel that also extend beyond blood relationships to include other women from different racial and cultural backgrounds, such as the women in Maracle's beauty parlor, or the washerwomen in John's novel. Each of these communities fill a personal void for individual characters, but more importantly, they provide a distinct perspective and strength to aid other women as they come up against the challenges of double colonialism. Ultimately though, communities of mothers and daughters conclude each novel—one in life and one in death—suggesting its ultimate significance in the lives of indigenous women as a way to resist double colonialism.

Undermining Assumptions in Isolation

Women on the Run by Janet Campbell Hall (Coeur d'Alene) is a collection of short stories that addresses some of the issues that arise when a female community is unavailable to indigenous women in the United States. Two stories in particular—"Women on the Run" and "Claire"—provide important alternate perspectives of mother-daughter relationships or other ways indigenous women might connect with others, and the former additionally raises transnational and transnational feminist issues as it takes place in the United States and Canada and includes women with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Although Marilyn was able to reconnect with her daughters by the end of *Daughters are Forever* and Lillian was able to reconnect with her mother and grandmother by the end of *Unburnable*, albeit in death, these kinds of resolutions are not possible in every case. Despite the lack of female communities in

Hall's short stories, her characters still manage to find strength by undermining societal assumptions of what they can do or should do, as indigenous people and as women.

The title story of Hall's collection, "Women on the Run," is written from two distinct points of view. Lena Bowman is a struggling Indian writer from Seattle now living in Vancouver. Her tribal identity is unspecified, but Bobbi T., the other primary voice in the story, believes Lena's family "came from somewhere else, Montana or Idaho. Somewhere like that" (95). Bobbi adds that "Lots of Indians from other places settle in or near Seattle and become part of the Indian community" (95). Much of Lena's personal history remains obscure, but we do learn that she has enjoyed some modest success as a writer, having been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Sadly, since a bad relationship casts doubt in her mind about her writing career, Lena is desperate to begin writing again and feel comfortable in her identity as a writer. In fact, she believes "It's a matter of survival" (82). Lena reflects that reviewers have found her work to be too autobiographical in the past, but she finally finds fresh inspiration when she hears a news report about Roberta Trumaine, or Bobbi T. Bobbi and Lena grew up in the same community, but their lives take very different paths: "Bobbi T. was the only commercial Indian fisherwoman at the time" and "became enormously successful" (83, 84). Bobbi also opens the first Indian casino in Washington State, but with pressure from various government agencies, eventually flees to Canada where she is granted asylum from the United States and where she eventually dies. Lena and Bobbi are both women on the run, though for different reasons: personal on the one hand, and political on the other hand.

The title character in "Claire" also finds herself on the run for personal and institutional reasons. Claire is a seventy-nine-year-old Coeur d'Alene widow from Idaho, whose son, Ozzie,

has convinced her to move to California where he and his family live. Claire is healthy and sound of mind, but before long, her daughter-in-law forces her into Loma Vista, a retirement home that feels more like a prison than a safe and comfortable community for the elderly. Claire continually refers to herself and the other residents as inmates due to callous staff who practice gross negligence. After a friend in the community commits suicide, Claire escapes by disguising herself as a man, selling her diamond ring for cash, and taking a series of buses back to Idaho. Although her nephew and dog are the only family she still has on the Coeur d'Alene reservation, still it is more a home than anything with her son and daughter-in-law proves to be.

Double colonialism and its lingering effects drive the drama in Bobbi T.'s life, in part because her work so directly engages in issues of sovereignty and in part because she is the only woman working in male-dominated industries. Bobbi's specific tribe is not named, but we do know she is part of the broader group of Coast Salish Indians who live in British Columbia, Oregon, and Washington. As a fisherwoman and the owner of the first casino in Washington, the state takes particular interest in Bobbi and her work since it has laws against certain kinds of fishing and gambling. By the books, however, Bobbi is allowed to earn a living in these ways because she is Indian and "Indian nations are sovereign entities not under state law. A nation within a nation, as it were. Gambling was against the law in Washington State, but it didn't or wasn't supposed to matter. Washington State had no jurisdiction on Indian land. And the feds do only insofar as federal crimes are concerned" (85). The United States signed treaties with Coast Salish Indians as they had with so many other tribal groups that were supposed to protect at least some of their rights as a self-governing people: they could fish in their accustomed waters and build and operate whatever businesses they liked on what was left of Indian land.

Because of these treaties, Bobbi should be free to operate her fishing company and casino as she pleases, but she does not have the freedom to do so as she has the right to expect.

According to Alice Frye, Bobbi's secretary and rumored lover, "Washington State, the FBI, the BIA, and a lot of other representatives of the American government had it in for Bobbi and were persecuting her because they just couldn't stand it that a poor Indian, and a *woman* Indian at that, made it big in the white man's world" (86). Double colonization is clearly at work here as Bobbi strives for success in the midst of a culture that values white men. Indigenous men struggle in this environment as well, but not to the extent of Native women. Skeptics might claim that Alice's remarks stem from intense loyalty to Bobbi, rather than from an honest assessment of the political situation in which Bobbi finds herself. This might perhaps be true if Bobbi's was an isolated incident. However, "Washington State was forever arresting and fining them [Indians], refusing to recognize the federal treaties" (91). The state simply ignores their sovereignty and tries time and time again to assert control over this group of people, just as colonial settlers had done more than a century before. Bobbi is one among many Indians pressured to bow to American—colonial—power and priorities. Moreover, because Bobbi was the only fisherwoman in the state fish-ins and she "flaunted her wealth, kept a high profile" (84), she receives a lot more press than other Indians who make their living by fishing.

To escape illegal pressure from Washington and the United States to scale back or stop her businesses altogether, Bobbi eventually applies for political asylum in Canada, concluding that the only opportunity for freedom would be in another country with perhaps more sympathy for her cause. As we have seen, Canada has enforced its own share of injustices against the indigenous people who live within its borders, but Lena recalls an incident in which an AIM

radical was caught in Canada and extradited back to the United States because of lies the FBI told Canadian officials. In considering Bobbi's case, then, "It was not at all implausible to the Canadians that, like [Leonard] Peltier [the AIM radical], Bobbi was the target of political persecution," and unfortunately for the Americans, her case could take seven or eight years to process (91). Canada does not seem willing to have American officials make a fool of them a second time, suggesting a dual motivation for helping Bobbi.

Not only does Bobbi receive support from the Canadian government, but she is also publically welcomed by the Indian community in western Canada: "Indian politicians welcome her and issued statements criticizing the American government and its bad treatment of its Indians. A son of a traditional chief, a popular entertainer, held a big ceremony down at the Vancouver Indian Center in which he adopted Bobbi as his blood sister and pledged his support" (92). Again, specific tribal groups are not named, but the solidarity that Bobbi enjoys, at least initially, with indigenous people who have similarly faced colonialism is important in shoring up their collective sphere of influence. Toward the end of her life, however, Bobbi's security in Canada becomes less certain as a Micmac couple in Ontario with whom she lived when she was first on the run from the American government brings charges against her for allegedly molesting their daughter. Not only does she need to leave the west coast to be in Ontario for the arraignment, but she immediately loses any support from her new-found family there: "The Indian community renounced Bobbi then, as quickly as it had welcomed her before," even before she is allowed due process (104). Bobbi maintains that the couple's daughter did not live with them when she was there and wonders "if the Micmacs turned [her] in hoping to collect the \$20,000 reward the FBI offered for information leading to [her] arrest and conviction... The

Micmacs went on *Hard Copy* and sold their story to *The National Inquirer*” (87). Even if they did not receive the reward money, this couple’s interest in financial gain clearly overshadows any sympathy they may have at one time felt for Bobbi’s situation.

Even Bobbi cannot escape the lure of wealth. Bobbi hopes to have Lena, an Indian writer, “write a book that will set things right. Tell my version of the story. The word according to Bobbi” (94). She hopes that the book would have an even larger audience than what she currently has as a “cause célèbre” (90) and that through the book, more people would recognize the ongoing colonial power that the government tries to exercise on indigenous people like herself, thereby bringing about understanding and freedom. After her heart attack, Bobbi tells Alice “she had a good feeling about the book I was going to write. It would be a bestseller and would be made into a major motion picture. If they couldn’t find an Indian actress to portray her, she hoped Sigourney Weaver got the part. She and Alice would have money. Everything was going to be fine in the end” (102). Ultimately, the only security Bobbi can imagine is in money: governments, communities, and even family betray her. Money may not be able to manufacture community, but it certainly gives her some measure of power and freedom.

Unfortunately, even a published book may not be the solution Bobbi was hoping for. Lena describes what happened to another author who wrote a book, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, about conflict between the FBI and AIM: both the author and the publisher were being sued for a total of \$49 million by the governor of South Dakota and an FBI agent. Lena has to break the news to Bobbi that publishers “were all afraid to publish anything that would in any way say anything bad about the FBI or any arm of the American government” (96). This kind of intimidation is simply another instrument that the government uses to control its image and

information related to the mistreatment of Indians; unfortunately there is little to no recourse for such behavior.

The lasting colonial oppression that Bobbi faces and runs from echoes in subtler ways in “Claire,” though Hale nevertheless comments on systems of injustice that indigenous people face, even in modern America. Claire does not have any run-ins with the American government in the present-day of the story as Bobbi did, but she has clear memories of living on the Coeur d’Alene reservation as a little girl and being forced to attend a Catholic mission school “where she was forced to learn to speak English and to read and write and learn about white people’s manners and way of life and about Jesus and the Virgin Mary” (34). The Coeur d’Alene, or Scheet-su-umsch, were first exposed to Catholicism through Mohawk-Iroquois trappers in the seventeenth century who had been Christianized by French Jesuits in Canada. By the early nineteenth century, the Coeur d’Alene sought out priests in the midst of great social and political change: “Guns, horses, trade goods, and rapidly shifting territorial boundaries had invaded their homelands in the previous one hundred years. As the American West expanded the frontier, diseases preceded the white settlers coming from the east” (Fortier 6). Thus, facing these seemingly insurmountable challenges and having heard from the Iroquois trappers and French traders that priests “possess[ed] strong medicine” (34), Catholicism seemed to be an answer. And indeed, “For a brief time the Indian-Jesuit partnership staved off total annihilation and even brought about a period of relative prosperity” (134); furthermore, “the early Jesuits in the Northwest helped to negotiate treaties with the U.S. government for the Indians, and the tribe used Catholic religious structures to keep a modicum of uniquely Coeur d’Alene identity” (139).

However, despite the benefits the Coeur d'Alene enjoyed in their partnership with the Jesuit missionaries who settled in their region, there were also significant social and cultural losses associated with it: "By transcribing an oral language into a written language, the uniqueness of the Coeur d'Alene worldview was translated into Western European terms. As land marks, hunting and fishing grounds, traditional seasonal rounds and kinship structures disappeared, so did the effective knowledge of the Coeur d'Alene," and now, "Only about a half dozen Indians...speak the language, and they do so only with some fluency" (56, 12). Again, as is the case with so many of the tribal groups discussed here, the land, language, and cultural traditions and relationships have been inextricably linked in the history of the Coeur d'Alene.

The complex relationships between these elements of their identity were irreversibly impacted by Euro-American settlers, and on a smaller scale, individuals like Claire faced abuse from unsympathetic teachers at the mission school she attended. Claire's childhood memories are jogged at Loma Vista when one of the nurses "grabbed her roughly by the arm and pulled her to her feet. It reminded her of the nuns when she was a little girl...The nuns treated children like that, grabbing, manhandling, scolding. She never dreamed she would spend her old age in the same way she had spent most of her childhood, under lock and key, keeping her guard up at all times, being rudely spoken to and physically abused" (12). Claire also remembers students being whipped for speaking their own languages and having chronic diarrhea after being forced to drink milk, "never catching on that Indians lack the enzyme to digest it" (34). All of the brutality in that mission school rises to the surface of her memory when Claire is mistreated at Loma Vista. Of course, the indignity and abuse suffered by the residents at Loma Vista are not limited to indigenous people like Claire; she describes the place as a "house of detention for those who

committed the crime of getting old. Loma Vista's inmates were *all* on death row with no possibility of a last minute reprieve" (21). Elder abuse is a horrible phenomenon that demands attention, particularly from policymakers and individuals with elderly loved ones, but what is so remarkable about Hale's horrific portrayal is its direct comparison to the abuse that indigenous children suffered under colonial rule, abuse that has been purposely forgotten by governments and societies for so long.

In addition to the colonial systems that Bobbi T. and Claire face, their situations are made considerably more difficult due to the isolation they experience without family, without mothers or daughters to turn to for strength. Marilyn in Maracle's *Daughters are Forever* eventually makes a connection with her daughters, and Lillian in John's *Unburnable* does not have the physical presence of family but does eventually find a spiritual connection with her mother and grandmother. Bobbi T., on the other hand, seems to have no one. She buried her daughter Claudia, and her son, Wes Jr. seems to want nothing to do with her. Alice, her assistant, is her only female companion, and as loyal as she is, without a stronger community of family or close friends for support, Bobbi's only remaining option is to run and leave behind the land and work she has known. Alice does go to Canada with Bobbi, and when Lena visits them, she reflects that "it wasn't hard to see why there were rumors concerning their relationship. They seemed like a loving couple, happy to be together again. Alice beamed at Bobbi in a frankly adoring way. Whatever their relationship, whether they were cousins (Bobbi told me Alice was her cousin and secretary), employee and employer, devoted friends, or lovers, it was their own personal business" (95). Bobbi creates a family for herself in Alice and finds some measure of stability with her, so the rumors about Bobbi's relationship to Alice have her fired up, even though Lena

has no interest in asking her about it. Before Lena can ask her first interview question, Bobbi asserts, “There’s one thing I want to get straight right off the bat...I am not now nor have I ever been a lesbian. That bullshit about Alice and me being lovers made me the angriest of all the bullshit I read about myself” (96). Bobbi is so adamant that some might question her need to be so defensive. In fact, Bobbi herself questions her sexuality, wondering if her past crush on Lena’s brother and marriage to Wes were proof of her heterosexuality, or if her love for Alice, “the truest friend [she] ever had [who she would] give anything to have...near” was proof that she was perhaps “One of those latent lesbians” (97). Whatever the case may be, Bobbi is fortunate to have a dear friend like Alice, a woman with whom she can count on in the midst of her turbulent political life.

Although Bobbi takes center stage in “Women on the Run” in many ways, Lena’s life and isolation is perhaps more tragic than Bobbi’s. Bobbi has Alice, but it is unclear that Lena has any community, particularly female community, in which to participate. Her closest thing to a community seems to be the characters in the novels she has written or plans to write. She describes at length her idea for a novel about a woman named Helen, who she admits “is sort of like [her]self” (73). Helen is an overworked social worker whose three husbands reject her in favor of other women. Helen has no mother or father to turn to, as she was orphaned at a young age, and though she has three grown sisters, they have similarly rejected her in resentment for her imposition on their lives after their parents died. Helen “always feels like an outsider” and after attempting suicide “comes to understand that deep down she believes her husbands have left her because she is a defective person unworthy of love” (74, 77). Helen is eventually on the run, deciding to leave her Indian community in Seattle for Vancouver where reminders of the

past cannot haunt her as they do in the place where she has grown up. If Helen is indeed similar to herself, Lena has no family nor female friends who can support her through failed marriages and difficult work environments. Her only solace seems to be in writing, so Lena's desperation at overcoming her writer's block is more urgent than we realize upon first learning of it at the start of the story. Work is Lena's only companion, sadly.

Claire similarly has no female community to surround her and support her through the challenges she faces with her family or the staff at Loma Vista. Only Ozzie, the oldest of her three boys takes any active interest in Claire's safety and care, convincing her to live with him and his wife, Maybelle, after an elderly widow in the neighboring county was killed in her home. When Claire recalls the incident, she indicates simply that it was "a gang of teenagers" who committed the crime (3). The assumption, though perhaps hasty, is that these teenagers were boys; however, very quickly Claire nonchalantly reveals that they were in fact girls. It is almost unbelievable that a group of teenage girls could commit such a heinous crime simply "because they wanted to see what it felt like to kill someone...either a young child or an elderly person," neither of whom would be able to defend themselves (4). Though it occurs before "Claire" begins and primarily serves as an opportunity for Ozzie to convince Claire that living alone is not only impractical but also unsafe, this incident illustrates to the furthest extent what can happen when children grow up without healthy families and communities guiding them toward compassionate and productive living.

Maybelle, Claire's daughter-in-law, is the closest thing to a daughter Claire has, but Maybelle seems determined to antagonize her and force her to move out of their home. She invades Claire's privacy by going into her room to "give it a more thorough cleaning than Claire

was obviously capable of giving it,” sneaks into her dresser drawers to find Claire’s journals, and reads them (5). Healthy communication seems impossible in this house as Claire finds her only opportunity to express her feelings is in writing in her journals since her husband died, and rather than speaking to Claire about her unhappiness in California, complains to Ozzie about what an “ingrate” Claire is, demanding that Ozzie force Claire to move out before she does (6). Claire does not have particularly warm feelings toward her daughter-in-law either, but the strained relationship only further contributes to Claire’s isolation. Much later, on her way back to Coeur d’Alene, Claire reflects on her only daughter who died when she was a baby: “If her daughter had lived, Claire wouldn’t have been sent to Loma Vista. Daughters don’t allow their mothers to be put out and not many sons-in-law would make the demands as daughters-in-law were known to do” (51). Sadly, little Clairice did not live and Claire finds herself with no one to advocate for her in her old age.

Even at Loma Vista where she could conceivably have a lot in common with other residents, Claire “tried to keep quiet and cause no stir, to be as unobtrusive as she could be. She didn’t want anyone to know how she felt” (6). Like Claire, Henry and Martha McIver were sent to Loma Vista by their son, even though they were still living comfortably by themselves in their home, but because they were outspoken, Henry was taken away and Martha committed suicide. Claire’s discontent and homesickness only deepens at Loma Vista, but she has no one with whom to talk to about it for fear of experiencing backlash from the nursing staff. Claire’s only source of joy seems to be in her great-grandson, Buddy, her *tupiya*,¹¹ whose drawings she hangs on the walls of her room at Loma Vista. Buddy is Claire’s only ally and the only one who seems

¹¹ *Tupiya* is translated in a footnote in the text as a Coeur d’Alene Salish word for both “great-grandparent” and “great-grandchild” (15).

to see what a horrible place Loma Vista really is. Buddy tells Claire, “When I grow up, I’m going to come here and break you out” (16). Buddy is only eight, though, and Claire cannot wait that long. Following Martha’s suicide and flashback to colonial mistreatment she experienced as a child, Claire decides, “*You’ve got to get out of this place. If it’s the last thing you ever do*” (12, italics in original). Just as Bobbi becomes a woman on the run in the midst of her social isolation, so too does Claire, though for Claire, her escape from Loma Vista is not her first.

Hale deepens the connection between colonial injustices at the mission school of Claire’s youth and the systematic oppression at Loma Vista when we eventually learn that Claire also ran away from the mission school to escape the cruelty she witnessed and experienced there. Claire finally decides to make this first escape after learning that she and the other children “would not be allowed to return to their homes for the summer, but would have to stay there and take piano lessons and learn how to embroider and work in the laundry and kitchen and scrub the floors on their hands and knees (mops were never allowed—down on all fours with a scrub brush was more thorough” (34-35). Her mother had already died, but Claire finds her way home to her own *tupiya* and together they escape into the woods to avoid government agents who would be looking for her. Claire remembers thinking, “*Whatever they did to her when they caught her, it was worth it to have this time with her beloved tupiya, this sweet period of freedom. She would remember it always*” (38, italics in original). As the weather turns to winter, Claire and her *tupiya* have to leave the woods to survive the cold, but at least for a time, Claire experiences a special kind of freedom: freedom from colonial power coupled with freedom to enjoy her ancestor’s company without interruption for weeks on end. The female community Claire enjoys for that summer is unparalleled in her experience up until that point and beyond.

Among the stories that her *tupiya* tells, Claire hears the story of how she was named.

Again, as we have seen in several other works of fiction thus far, names have particular meaning and significance for many indigenous people in the Americas. Claire learns how her mother

gave her two names, one after a woman... Claire, a white woman who was both pretty and kind. The white name she would need in this white world they lived in. The other, She-Is-Free, was what she would call her...this would not be a true name [though]. It expressed the mother's hopes for her child more than anything else. The child would have to earn her true name when she became a woman. (40, italics in original)

Though not her “true name” at the time, the initial, short-lived escape Claire made from the mission school does help her earn her second name, She-Is-Free. For most of her adult life, Claire may or may not have lived in relative freedom—we simply do not know very much about that part of her life—but with her escape from Loma Vista, Claire certainly lives into her mother’s hopes for her life, finding freedom from the restraints of the nursing home and those of her family who wished she would remain there.

Despite her isolation from most of her family and without any friends to rely on, when Claire runs away, she is able to run home, back to the Coeur d’Alene reservation, back to her nephew’s farm, and back to her beloved dog. Although her nephew does not recognize her initially, Claire’s dog knows its owner and eagerly welcomes her home. As we have seen in the works of Diane Glancy, Pauline Melville, Jamaica Kincaid, and Eden Robinson, land is extremely important to many indigenous groups in the Americas, so although she has had to endure much systematic injustice through the mission school of her childhood and most recently the nursing home, Claire is fortunate to be able to find her way back to the land that is familiar to her and to her ancestors.

Both Bobbi and Claire are isolated from supportive families and communities, but the isolation they face does not prevent them from becoming strong people of action. In fact, both characters, and even Lena, find ways to subvert societal assumptions about them as indigenous women as they make ways for themselves in the world. Bobbi perhaps stands as the clearest example of undermining assumptions through her successful career and public activism. She is the only Indian woman in commercial fishing, and hers was the first Indian casino. Bobbi was successful in her work and with so many forms of systematic oppression, it was unusual for an Indian, let alone an Indian woman to make a name for herself. According to Alice, “even well-meaning white liberals only liked Indians as long as they remained downtrodden, as long as they had a ‘plight’ and were ‘vanishing Americans.’ But if they become wealthy and successful? Forget about it!” (86). Bobbi does not seem to mind bucking the status quo, however. The rumors about her relationship to Alice frustrate her, and yet Bobbi continues to do what she pleases. Even after her escape to Canada and her arrest by the Mounties, Bobbi is relieved because she knows that if it had been the FBI, her life could be at risk (89). Instead, Bobbi is savvy enough to understand the legal security she has in Canada. When she reads newspaper reports about the incident that describe her as resigned, Bobbi scoffs: “*Hah! I was calm not resigned. They didn’t know I had an ace up my sleeve...I won’t be leaving Canada anytime soon*” (90, italics in original). Even as she is under arrest, Bobbi subverts readers’ understanding of what that means, although Alice is perhaps the only other person in her life to know it.

Bobbi’s perseverance and inner strength is even more remarkable when one considers that by the end of her life, she had lost all her wealth. Bobbi reflects, “*I loved being rich. It could have all been a fantasy, though. It all seems like another life now. Lena asked how it felt to lose*

my wealth and become a person so poor I didn't have enough to eat and sometimes no place to crash. Sort of like a return to childhood. To the simplicity of childhood. All I want, really, is peace" (104, italics in original). Lena recalls that Bobbi continued living in the same poor community where they grew up, even after she became wealthy. Lena assumes Bobbi is flaunting her wealth, but these later reflections suggest a greater depth to Bobbi's character; instead of moving away to a more affluent community where she perhaps would have been more easily accepted by "even well-meaning white liberals" (86), Bobbi values the simplicity and familiarity of her own community.

Although Lena takes an unassuming role in the story, she also subverts assumptions about indigenous women. More recently Lena has struggled in her work as a writer, but when she sees an opportunity to make money with Bobbi's story, she does not hesitate to pursue it. She is not motivated by the possibility of helping to improve the lives of other Indians or seeking justice from the American government through Bobbi's story. She is motivated by the act of writing itself since she "believed [her] destiny was to write" (80), but she talks about that destiny in the past tense, as though her earlier idealistic beliefs have now met with reality of the publishing industry. Lena knows, at least in the abstract, that "writing *is* a spiritual practice" at its best (81), but her conviction seems to wane as the story progresses. Lena knows that Bobbi's story gives her "a good chance of making serious money here. Nothing wrong with making money. A writer, unlike a priest, takes no vow of poverty" (86). Lena is nearly broke and in desperate need of the money, and yet she seems to be rationalizing her pursuit of this subject for herself as much as for readers.

It does not take long for her to fully accept the direction she is taking in her work, though. Even before she meets Bobbi, Lena reflects on her excitement at meeting and talking with Bobbi, “Even though [she] might not ever write the nonfiction book [she] had in mind” (92). Lena proceeds to describe the difficulty she faces in finding a publisher because of the unresolved lawsuits surrounding Peter Matthiessen’s book *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, but the unconscious hedging of her statement suggests that although she might not be able to write a nonfiction book about Bobbi, perhaps the idea of a fictionalized account could be sold to a publisher. Indeed, by the end of the story when Lena is contemplating her next writing project, perhaps about Bobbi, she almost immediately second-guesses the option of non-fiction since she “never got a chance to discuss important issues with Bobbi” (109). Very quickly, then, Lena considers the possibility of writing a novel based on Bobbi, and her first thought for that novel is to “Make Bobbi a man” (110). Lena is not afraid of writing female protagonists as her other novels all feature women, so her decision to make Bobbi a man is somewhat startling. Furthermore, one might expect Lena to champion Bobbi’s accomplishments as an Indian woman with the hope that attitudes might change about and conditions improve for other Indian women like herself. And she does imagine “set[ting] everything right,” so that Bobbi’s daughter goes to rehab and lives and her husband, a composite of Wes and Lena’s ex-husband, renamed Wynona, “and one of her promiscuous playmates could suffer an unfortunate accident after smoking in bed” (110). Perhaps, though, Lena knows that a novel based on Bobbi’s life would be too unbelievable if Bobbi remained a woman; there simply have not been enough Indian women who have experienced the extremes of wealth and poverty, of living as a successful role model and a criminal on the run, all in the

public's eye. The society she lives in is not ready to accept that women like Bobbi exist, so in order to publish anything, Lena would have to make Bobbi a man.

Although very different than a nonfiction account of Bobbi's life, Lena still envisions some justice for Bobbi and for herself in this reimagined, fictional story. Furthermore, after living in poverty, the lure of money is greater for Lena than idealistic activism through writing, which may or may not make a difference to the overwhelming power of the government and societal norms. The story ends with Lena again defending her idea for a novel as though she knows it might prompt criticism, asserting "There's nothing wrong with wanting money. I have taken no vow of poverty" (111). Although some might want her to be more community-minded rather than focused on her personal opportunities for success, Lena has every right to seek independence and financial stability, particularly because she lacks family and community support. Even though Lena is considering having a baby with Tom with whom she has settled down, the legacy of betrayal from her ex-husbands and having seen the strained relationship that Bobbi had with her son cause her to question the wisdom of having a baby with this man. Experience has only taught Lena to avoid vulnerability with and dependence on others, but as she subverts expectations, she makes more opportunities for her own success.

Whereas Lena simply imagines Bobbi as a man for the purposes of a novel, Claire becomes one in order to escape from Loma Vista. In direct opposition to Ozzie, Claire decides that she would indeed be better off living in the country alone than she is in the prison of Loma Vista. Claire devises a plan, which includes dressing in another resident's clothes—a man's—and climbing out a window in her disguise. Once she is dressed in Arthur's clothes and sees her own reflection, Claire thinks that "She looked like a man, except for the long braids. They might

be a giveaway down here. You didn't see men, like up on the reservation, in long braids" (20). Even without a hat to help hide her hair, Claire makes her escape. Claire is "very slim and, for an old person, very agile" (20), but even so, slipping out the window and making the twenty foot drop to the ground safely is beyond anyone's expectations for a woman of her age. The next morning when Claire sees her beloved *tupiya* once more before leaving town, Buddy gives her his baseball cap: "Now you *really* look like a guy!" he proudly exclaims (22, italics in original). Indeed, Claire's disguise is so good that "The cops didn't give Claire a second look" when they kept a bag lady moving along (25), and "Nobody looked at her. Nobody at all" when she used the men's restroom (26). Claire even exchanges some pleasantries with a conversational woman on the bus and a young man who gives her a ride to her nephew's house and still maintains her disguise.

Claire's successful escape is made possible in large part because she dresses and conducts herself like a man. The police would surely have approached her as they had the bag lady if Claire had wandered undisguised and unaccompanied into the city. Hale draws attention to this double standard as Claire relies on society's assumptions to assist her in her nearly effortless escape, but what is most remarkable about Claire's disguise is the way Claire embodies this character by the end of the story. The perspective shifts to Joe, Claire's nephew, who is not expecting a visitor, let alone his aunt, so Claire is described as "A small, old Indian man with long braids [who] walked down the road towards the house, not at all daunted, it seemed, by the dogs...The old man waved to Joe and Joe waved back, though he didn't recognize him. He was sure the old man was somebody he knew. He did look familiar" (54). Not even her own nephew recognizes who has come down the road to his house. Even as she is described as an old man,

however, Claire's true identity is not hidden from her dog, Mike. In her first language, Coeur d'Alene Salish, Claire calls to her long-lost pet: "Mike! Mike! *Whui 'nech nep I ill ish uss. Ah, Dune,*" which is translated for readers as "Mike! Mike! Come here, boy. Come greet your mom" (55, italics in original). Claire disguises herself as a man to escape home, and significantly, only the truest members of her family—Buddy, a child, and Mike, a dog—recognize her and affirm her for who she is. Claire, like Lenas, use societal expectations to her advantage to achieve personal happiness on the one hand and professional happiness on the other, while Bobbi very publicly bucks colonial assumptions of Indian women and eventually pays the price for her desire to be treated as an equal with protected rights.

Approaching Some Conclusions

Lee Maracle's *Daughters are Forever*, Marie-Elena John's *Unburnable*, and these two selections from Janet Campbell Hale's collection *Women on the Run* together reveal the significance of relationships between women in a family and women in a community, particularly in the context of pervasive double colonialism, the (post)colonial and patriarchal powers and attitudes that continue to dictate so much of current society in the Americas. These relationships and communities of indigenous women can provide a measure of strength and stability from which individual women can work against oppression and toward decolonization. In the absence of such a community, as we see in Hale's short stories, successfully subverting the systems that attempt to circumscribe the lives of indigenous women becomes considerably more difficult. Without homogenizing the experiences or attempting to mask the historical and political specificity of the tribal groups represented in these texts as Richards warns against,

reading these transnational texts together enriches our understanding of the varied expressions of double colonialism, as well as some of the opportunities for seeking and achieving equality and sovereignty.

As we have seen, Maracle's Marilyn seeks stability and justice for the women on her caseload, but not until she acknowledges and addresses the emotional abuse and neglect with her own daughters, in part a consequence of destructive systems of double colonialism, is she able to experience genuine depth and pleasure in those relationships and thus promote the survival of her family and people. John's Lillian similarly yearns for relationship with her mother and grandmother, even though the yearning is unconscious for many years and despite the fact that they both died long ago. Finding the truth about her family and building a spiritual connection to bridge time and space are what motivate Lillian's actions, even choosing her own death to escape the shackles of double colonialism and cement the enduring relationships that extend beyond this life. Hale's Bobbi, Lena, and Claire, meanwhile, reveal various pictures of indigenous women struggling against colonial powers and systems without the support of mothers and daughters, without the distinct female community that Marilyn and Lillian eventually find. Their stories are in some ways more tragic, but for each of them, once they find some freedom—in Canada, in writing, in the outdoors en route to Idaho—there is life. As Claire asserts, "Life could be good. No it *is* good. Despite everything, despite heartache and loss and meanness and unfairness and the fact that we all must die, life is good and in these perfect moments we know the goodness" (33). Indeed, each of these strong female characters evokes various measures of hope in the face of imperialism and patriarchy, both of which are forces that these modern characters and the people like them continue to face and fight against with determination.

CONCLUSION

“Throughout the Americas, from Chile to Canada, the people have never stopped dancing; as the living dance, they are joined again with all our ancestors before them, who cry out, who demand justice, and who call the people to take back the Americas.”¹

In this study, I have explored issues of identity present in the fiction by contemporary indigenous women writers in Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean. As I have argued, these short stories and novels are closely related in their representations of common struggles against ongoing colonialism. Some of the most important and recurring concerns in postcolonial literature are related to issues of land, language, and cultural memory and community, and as I have shown through careful analysis of a wide variety of texts, these same questions about indigenous identity appear in the fiction of native women writers today. The difficulty with calling these texts *postcolonial*, however, is that for indigenous people in the Americas, the colonizer has not left. The Spanish and British stayed when they arrived, killing native people with foreign diseases and guns, and modern governments continue to marginalize and oppress indigenous people by upholding unjust laws. Thus, I developed the term (post)colonial to maintain a clear link to relevant theory, while also recognizing that the fight for sovereignty and identity by indigenous people in the Americas is not over yet.

Despite varying perspectives on the validity of such studies, other scholars—both native and non-native—have interpreted Native American literature through the lens of postcolonial theory. Several of the texts under consideration in this study have not been studied in this way,

¹ Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* 724.

but what really makes this project distinct is its transnational approach, analyzing texts from Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean. Some scholars have begun this work with anthologies and studies of literature from Canada and the United States, but none have also extended south of the U.S. border, despite the fact that the Caribbean was the first area in the Americas to experience the effects of colonizing forces. However, as I have pointed out in this study, these texts can be read together productively, despite the many miles and distinct cultures that separate them. Together, these texts deepen and add complexity to postcolonial studies by revealing the distinct ways in which indigenous writers wrestle with similar issues that writers from truly postcolonial countries do. Reading and understanding these texts together also offers a fresh understanding of what it means to be a Native in the Americas in the face of ongoing colonization. Finally, even though Native American literature has garnered more attention from the academy in the past fifty years in the wake of the Native American Renaissance, many of the texts under consideration here previously have not been the subject of scholarship; in a small but important way, this research helps to balance the scales by drawing attention to rich and complex literature dealing with significant issues that matter for both Native and non-Native readers.

As ambitious as this study is in its scope, there is ample opportunity for extending the research to fiction from other Caribbean countries and ones in South America where indigenous people were and are also affected by colonialism. As the epigraph suggests, Leslie Marmon Silko's vision, at least as she communicates it in her fiction, is for an even more comprehensive transnational movement through which indigenous people from Chile to Canada join together to "take back the Americas" and demand justice regarding ongoing colonialism (*Almanac* 724). Because indigenous people in the Americas have been colonized and marginalized for centuries,

there is a sense among some like Silko that there is greater opportunity for individual tribal groups to finally gain sovereignty if they all work together toward that cause; thus, a transnational study that encompasses all of the Americas could contribute not only to the larger implications of the literature, but it could also contribute to bringing about justice for indigenous people.

In addition to extending this research geographically, it could also be expanded through analyses of poetry, drama, and creative non-fiction by indigenous writers, or by including works by other indigenous women writers. Admittedly there are few in the Caribbean who have not been treated here, but there are a number of other writers in Canada and the United States from different tribal groups who would offer complementary viewpoints on the issues at hand, including Debra Magpie Earling (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation, United States) and Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan, Canada). Furthermore, I limited this study to women writers for the distinct perspective they have as people who face oppression due to colonialism and patriarchy, but certainly male writers also offer important perspectives on these same issues and would be worthy of study. As Joseph Bruchac asserts, “There are so many stories, as many as the leaves on those trees. And all of them remain rooted in this soil, this earth that has never been given up by its people” (8-9). Therefore, further research that includes both male and female writers would help to honor the diverse stories that represent the experience of ongoing colonialism in the Americas.

In short, this study has value not only for its contribution to postcolonial and Native American studies, but also for the ways in which it opens the door for further research in these areas. Indigenous people of the Americas have faced colonial injustice for centuries, and it is my

hope that, in addition to contributing to research in these areas, it would also help pave the way for greater scholarly and cultural justice where it is needed.

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