

Tracing Ideological Creases Through Indigenous Sovereignities:  
The Dynamic Reciprocity of Silko and Vizenor's Storywork

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## Abstract

The question of Indigenous sovereignty in politics and literature is better posed as several questions of Indigenous sovereignties in political literatures. In this thesis, I propose that Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor and Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko's storytelling conveys dimensions of sovereignties that indicate when, how, and where Indigenous sovereignties (plural) are enacted in relation to, and independent of, settler sovereignty (singular), which is defined by a relationship of possession. Silko's novel *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) and novella *Ocean Story* (2011), alongside Vizenor's novel *Treaty Shirts* (2016), memoir *Interior Landscapes* (1990), and the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, deploy Indigenous sovereignties in relationships that elude settler colonial hierarchies of sovereign subordination.

Reading these diverse genres of texts in sovereign contexts, I engage a critical framework of generative incommensurability that catalyses the sovereignties they gesture toward as unequivocal and as unreconcilable with settler colonial sovereignty. Focussing on sovereign aspects of constitution in chapter one, temporality in chapter two, and place and memory in a tripartite chapter three, I offer an extended critical study toward how Indigenous stories realise sovereignties that exceed settler colonial political epistemology but are also not separable from a settler context.

Ultimately, I suggest that an ethic of dynamic reciprocity in work with and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews enables a reorientation of

political hierarchy at a theoretical level that yields material possibilities. Emphasising Indigenous sovereignties as actions expressed, not states possessed—that is, as always active and underway—I discuss the material and conceptual spaces where Indigenous and non-Indigenous sovereignties interact to reveal likenesses and incommensurabilities, encounters that desanctify the singular hegemonic worldview sustained by the settler colonial imaginary. The relationships between and amongst Indigenous sovereignties and settler sovereignty are reimagined by Vizenor and Silko’s storywork to be messy, non-binary exchanges. The stories that carry these sovereign charges emerge as political sites of engagement where scholars take on roles of political agents and assume all of the responsibilities that follow.

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## Introduction

# Indigenous Storywork and Settler Monotheism: Negotiating Incommensurable Sovereignties

## Unsettling Monotheism with Surges of Sovereignties

This project focuses on stories about, of, and *as* Indigenous sovereignties. Engaging the work of Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko and Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor, I demonstrate how attentive ‘listener-readers’ of these stories become political agents with corresponding responsibilities, gaining glimpses of formally rich sovereignties that stand alone and overlap, depending on the angle of one’s orientation.<sup>1</sup> In Indigenous studies, discourses around sovereignty are longstanding and ever in dialogic flux, always navigating the volatility with which sovereignty works as a concept for Indigenous polities. It is a concept with a distinctly European lineage, and often that link either proves exclusive to Indigenous modes of self-determination, or means that self-determination is abnegated in the sovereign process. Moreover, sovereignties are not for one people, for one time, or for one place, what they are for others. Trust lands, for instance, are locations where Indigenous sovereignties are most robust under the auspices of settler legal mechanisms, but also where they can be most vulnerable since ‘injustice is built into the Anglo-American legal system’ for Indigenous peoples’ interests.<sup>2</sup> It is a thorny

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Berry Brill de Ramírez, *Contemporary American Indian Literatures and the Oral Tradition* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 19.

contingency that harries Indigenous sovereignties under settler colonial suppression. Sovereignty forecloses Indigenous alternatives, diverse worldviews that constitute and are constituted by forms of sovereignties that expose the formal imaginary of settler sovereignty as a malapropos medium for genuine sovereign-to-sovereign relationships.

As a listener-reader, I take Vizenor's *Treaty Shirts* (2016) and *Interior Landscapes* (1990), and Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) and *Ocean Story* (2011) to be sovereign exchanges, and I approach them from the appropriate position of political agent. In these storyworks, the authors convey operations of Indigenous sovereignties in specific terms regarding the White Earth Anishinaabe, Laguna Pueblo, and Tohono O'odham respectively. Nevertheless, they frame their narratives in ways that gesture towards the operations of other Indigenous sovereignties too—between one another *and* the monolith of settler sovereignty. I move away from defining common features of these sovereignties that inhere universally, cognisant of the homogenising consequences of the settler/Native binary that entail. Instead, I focus on the common differences that texture the complex relationships between Indigenous and settler sovereignties in theory, practice, and form. Learning about specific manifestations of Indigenous sovereignties is vital, but my project takes the validity of individual Indigenous peoples' sovereignties as an unassailable given. This thesis is, in this way, not so much evaluative as indicative of sovereign pluralities. Indigenous ways of knowing and of coming to know are typically minimised in academic settings as cultural difference rather than as legitimate routes of 'scholarship,' which 'not only [promote] transformative action in pursuit of social

justice for Indigenous Peoples in academic settings but also includes the valuing and validating of our knowledge systems' writ large.<sup>3</sup> I devote my analysis to tracing the frictional connections and concepts that emerge from these contested spaces to understand how ethea of what I call *dynamic reciprocity* between Indigenous and settler sovereignties in scholarship can be better described. I expand on Vizenor's theoretical work to conceptualise these connections as *ideological creases* that help to entrench Indigenous epistemologies not as deviant from settler monotheism but as what Métis scholar Chris Andersen calls 'epistemologically *dense*' worldviews.<sup>4</sup>

Scholarship into Silko and Vizenor's writing is varied and rich. As two of the foremost Indigenous voices on most Native literature curricula, Vizenor and Silko's 'ultracanonial status,' as Matthew Herman frames it, is indisputable.<sup>5</sup> Their works have been the subject of hundreds of articles, dissertations, and book-length studies; particularly those like *Almanac* and *Interior Landscapes* which are nestled within the 'epochal quality of the late 1980s and 1990s' landscape of Indigenous literary production.<sup>6</sup> Admittedly, there is a pressing need to focus on the powerful swell of Indigenous storywork practitioners whose crucial, contemporary efforts are yet to be critically engaged. A perfectly good question, then, is why these two, and why now?

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<sup>3</sup> Jo-Ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo, "Introduction," in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, eds. Jo-Ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo. (London: Zed Books, 2019), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Andersen, "Critical Indigenous Studies: From Difference to Density," *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 97, <https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v15i2.2039>, (italics in original).

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Herman, *Politics and Aesthetics in Contemporary Native American Literature: Across Every Border* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 52.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

Although scholarship into the older texts on my itinerary is robust, a significant proportion is anchored to a temporally important, yet also restrictive, sense of contemporaneity with that aforementioned epoch. *Almanac* and *Interior Landscapes* enjoy particular types of criticism that are frequently linked to particular *times* of criticism. Valuable exceptions exist, of course, and I engage with such cases eagerly. Nevertheless, I seek to recontextualise, revise, and renew these texts with sovereign foci that both engage and trouble the distance between the now and then of Silko and Vizenor's storywork. Importantly, I thicken readings of these texts with *Ocean Story* and *Treaty Shirts*. These are relatively recent works, but not so recent as to justify the near-total absence of critical engagement they have received. Replete with political implications, these texts contribute to what Stuart Christie calls a 'multivariate discourse of sovereign belonging' amongst diverse Indigenous cosmopolitics.<sup>7</sup> More than this, they reconfigure and reassess, performing discursive work that demonstrate timely shifts of perspectives on sovereignties. These shifts through time demonstrate the revitalised valence of the duo's storywork within changing contexts of Indigenous lifeways that are enmeshed with evolving pressures, priorities, and potentialities. I agree with Herman insofar as 'neither form nor content produces literary texts. People produce texts' that tend to be 'ideological reshapings of the social atmosphere one breathes in everyday.'<sup>8</sup> This is also how texts are received; in volatile ideological pressure systems that reveal and conceal critical angles on discussions perhaps thought tapped. *Ocean Story* and *Treaty Shirts*

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<sup>7</sup> Stuart Christie, *Plural Sovereignties and Contemporary Indigenous Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 220.

<sup>8</sup> Herman, *Politics and Aesthetic in Contemporary Native American Literature*, 40.

disturb 'ultracanonical' understandings of Silko and Vizenor. They threaten to reshape them in ways that, I argue, has made them somewhat incompatible with well-established critiques and, thereby, more convenient to elide. Indeed, a mode of 'asking new questions, engaging new problematics, and readdressing old issues with an infusion of new outlooks and energies' describes both my approach to these texts, and these texts' relationships with one another.<sup>9</sup> So, my counter-question is: why is it so often only "then" for Silko and Vizenor's storywork?

Much existing scholarship on Indigenous literary sovereignty tends toward discussions of sovereignty in relatively uniform, declarative terms, even when articulated in unfamiliar ways; the compelling stories and metaphors deployed are still related back to theoretical foundations of sovereignty that do not cohere with Indigenous cosmologies. Silko and Vizenor locate viable responses to the ongoing oppression of Indigenous people, peoples, and their sovereignties in a praxis of storytelling, or, 'storywork.' Stó:lo scholar Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem's methodological notion of storywork describes how 'the engagement of story, storyteller, and listener create[s] a synergy for making meaning through the story and making one *work* to obtain meaning.'<sup>10</sup> This formulation presents more conceptually catalytic practical possibilities than "storytelling" because "work" clarifies the multi-directional responsibilities at play; work conveys legitimacy, obligation, effort, industry, friction, and, above all, engagement and efficacy. Thus, 'storywork as methodology encompasses powerful forms of academic knowledge creation' that

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>10</sup> Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, "Editorial: Sharing Aboriginal Knowledge and Aboriginal Ways of Knowing," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 25, no. 1 (2001): 1, italics in the original.

prime 'Indigenous storytelling for meaningful education and transformative research.'<sup>11</sup> Silko and Vizenor's stories, in particular, do and are work. They demand work from their listener-readers, to engage the incommensurable and explore what emerges from those encounters. Indigenous sovereignties are evinced via the activist ethics of storywork, which escape the 'needless methodological circles' inscribed by dominant discourse and deploy alternative versions of sovereign *doing* that subvert and contextualise the primacy of monotheistic settler sovereignty.<sup>12</sup>

Lenape scholar Joanne Barker explains that after 'World War II, sovereignty emerged not as a new but as a particularly valued term within indigenous discourses to signify a multiplicity of legal and social rights to political, economic, and cultural self-determination.'<sup>13</sup> Since then, sovereignty has proliferated in Indigenous communities as a useful political technology. Yet it has been maligned, too, as epistemologically constrictive, even assimilative, by scholars including Glenn T. Morris (Shawnee), Gerald Taiaiake Alfred (Kahnawake Mohawk), James Anaya, and others. Such critics charge that 'sovereignty as a discourse is unable to capture fully the indigenous meanings, perspectives, and identities about law, governance and culture,' because the concept of sovereignty is irretrievable from its monarchical European political genealogy.<sup>14</sup> Such critiques target sovereignty as it operates in

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<sup>11</sup> Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiem, Lee-Morgan, and De Santolo, "Introduction," 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Joanne Barker, "For Whom Sovereignty Matters," in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, ed. Joanne Barker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 19. Alfred's refutation of the utility of sovereignty as a concept to Indigenous peoples has tempered in his more recent scholarship, though not much. While he maintains that sovereignty is an ill-suited objective for Indigenous political activism, he entertains the notion that a sovereign approach offers potential processes with which to travel forward. He appears to grapple with notions articulated broadly in Christie's thorny question: 'how might otherwise competing constructions of

the dominant settler frame of what I call *monotheorism*, a sort of epistemological hegemony that undergirds the settler colonial state imaginary and the litanic narrative of justice it provides.<sup>15</sup>

Monotheorism refers primarily to the valorisation of Eurocentric scientific theory as a catch-all epistemological infrastructure for political, social, cosmological, and metaphorical dimensions of knowing, such that it enjoys the same aspects of authority, veneration, and singularity as a monotheistic God within the settler colonial imaginary. This is an artificial pattern that is very real for political doctrine. The greatest hazard that monotheorism presents as such a fundamental part of the settler imaginary is its supposed ethical neutrality; as Steven Shapin notes, 'the most powerful storehouse of value in our modern [Western] culture is the body of knowledge we consider to have the least to do with the discourse of moral value.'<sup>16</sup> Monotheorism also draws from the sense of monologue that forbids interpretation or critical engagement. Broadly, the concept describes singularised dominion over multitudes; the authority of one above and superior to many pertains thematically to monotheism and monotheorism, and the blueprints for oppression are a structural watermark upon both.

Though not necessarily articulated as such, monotheorism is a common target of critique in most of Silko and Vizenor's literatures, especially in relation to

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nationality, experienced concurrently as an aggregate in contemporary indigenous imagining, be retained without compromising freestanding notions of indigenous sovereignty? (3-4).

<sup>15</sup> See also Algonquin Métis (Bear Clan) scholar Lindsay Morcom's discussion of interrelated Indigenous perspectives of pedagogical holism in her article "Indigenous Holistic Education in Philosophy and Practice, with Wampum as Case Study" (2017).

<sup>16</sup> Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 164, ProQuest Ebook Central.

expressions and suppressions of sovereignties. Both authors combat monotheism by revealing these singular modes of knowing as parts of a settler colonial narrative, no more or less than Indigenous alternatives. They seek to demonstrate that the abstracted, universally applicable veracity of monotheistic science—the received settler worldview—is itself ‘built on metaphorical foundations.’ In a monotheistic framework, however, these ‘metaphors become solidified through continual usage,’ and ‘the connections they forge between the way the world is and the ways humans should operate in that world becomes less open to scrutiny’ as cosmologically inflected stories.<sup>17</sup> Silko and Vizenor entangle this monotheistic narrative amongst Indigenous alternatives, interpellating multifarious Indigenous stories against, amongst, and about the contradistinctively invisible and hypervisible story of colonial monotheism. Thus, their stories work to contextualise and orient sovereignties—Indigenous *and* settler—in imbricated relationships. A monotheistic formulation of sovereignty as a political science—the variety that Alfred, Morris, and Anaya indict—creates an abstract epistemological funnel whereby ‘the narrow fictions of a single sovereignty’ take discursive primacy as a structural, infrastructural, and even metastructural given for political ontology.<sup>18</sup> So, how can one reconcile the ill-fittingness of monotheistic sovereignty with distinct Indigenous worldviews in functioning ways that do not simply equate to assimilation?

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<sup>17</sup> Brendon Larson, *Metaphors for Environmental Sustainability: Redefining Our Relationship with Nature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 4; 91.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, “Sovereignty,” in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, ed. Joanne Barker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 33.

Concisely, one can't. Indigenous sovereignties, contends Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Sean Coulthard, must be deployed as 'normative lifeways and resurgent practices' apart from and against settler sovereignty in order to make a difference.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, Vizenor holds that a 'native sense of concurrent sovereignty' is a form of geopolitical freedom that requires relentless declaration in 'chancy dialogic circles' to manifest.<sup>20</sup> Coulthard maintains that action anticipates status, while Vizenor champions the power of statement as anterior to realised Indigenous sovereignties. Significantly, both conceptualise sovereignty as unwaveringly verbal, which I invoke in double-duty, as a thing said and a thing done in co-generative ways—an ever-motional process, not a fixed possession/position. This emphasis highlights a fundamental disparity between settler sovereignty and Indigenous sovereignties; the former sits as a noun whilst the latter move as verbs. Alfred posits that European languages foreground 'nouns and are concerned with naming things, ascribing traits, and making judgements' whilst 'Onkwehonwe languages are structured on verbs; they communicate through descriptions of movement and activity' to 'recall relationships and responsibilities through languages that symbolize doing.'<sup>21</sup> These linguistic dimensions inform cosmologies and inform the critical vocabularies and syntaxes that communities deploy in their political worldviews. This is not to say that there is no bleed between the extremes of this spectrum. Rather, I suggest that, as

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<sup>19</sup> Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 179.

<sup>20</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Native Provenance: The Betrayal of Cultural Creativity* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 87; 86, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>21</sup> Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2005), 32. Per Alfred, Onkwehonwe means 'original people.' Indigenous scholars from other communities make consonant assertions, including Anishinaabe poet Margaret Noodin, Potawatomi scientist Robin Kimmerer, and Blackfoot researcher Leroy Little Bear.

a 'composite of sovereignties,' Indigenous sovereignties tend towards the far side as compared to settler sovereignty, which is about states of ownership and the abstract power of distributing rights and responsibilities.<sup>22</sup>

Conversely, a monotheistic, Westphalian formulation of nominal sovereignty delineates who does not possess "sovereignty" as much as who does—perhaps even more so in the case of suppressing Indigenous sovereignties where 'a legal and political term informed by a supposed European rationalism that has been adapted to the United States government's somewhat capricious understanding of the term.'<sup>23</sup> Alongside the territorial borders that such an understanding of sovereignty inculcates, the notion is commodified as a possessive, finite resource. Many such received accounts of sovereignty are restricted by an assumption of ubiquity of type; that is, what sovereignty *is* holds universally. No coincidence, then, that scholars like Alfred, Coulthard, Anishinaabe poet Margaret Noodin, Potawatomi scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer, and Vizenor underscore verbality in their respective theses of Indigenous sovereignties inasmuch as their senses of sovereignties are contingent on vitality, change, and motion; it cannot be held as a timeless state. Sovereignty in this kind of broad frame becomes about doing and moving, not stillness and possession. As part of this shift, I explore Silko and Vizenor's literary activism as *doing* Indigenous sovereignties because '[f]or Indigenous nations, sovereignty animates relationships' as well as identifying them.<sup>24</sup> Importantly, when

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<sup>22</sup> Christie, *Plural Sovereignties and Contemporary Indigenous Literature*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Pdraig Kirwan, *Sovereign Stories: Aesthetics, Autonomy, and Contemporary Native American Writing* (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 9.

<sup>24</sup> Kiiwetinepinesiiik Heidi Stark and Kekek Jason Stark, "Nenabozho Goes Fishing: A Sovereignty Story," *Daedalus* 147, no. 2 (March 2018): 24, [https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED\\_a\\_00486](https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00486).

one thinks about sovereignties as done rather than possessed, the questions one can ask expand beyond binary forms that, like the Indian Reorganization act of 1934 which recodified the terms of federal recognition toward Indigenous peoples in the U.S., rely on yes or no answers. This sense of dynamism, of action, and of movement gestures towards what David Carlson calls 'a fully formed *discourse* of sovereignty [which] has the potential to drive a decolonizing praxis that is more radically engaged' and one which is capable of exploring how Indigenous sovereignties are done in ways that do not track with monotheistic settler sovereignty.<sup>25</sup>

Given that this thesis is intended to steer conversations away from concrete definitions, outlining the critical tools and hinges upon which it turns is a sticky business. It is important to recognise that there is a 'difference between the power of words and the power of worlds' whilst recalling that 'Indigenous sovereignty inheres in both' in ways best described as incommensurable with settler sovereignty.<sup>26</sup> As such, the ideas at play are related to one another in a mesh of network and nodes, and few, if any, function solely on their own terms. Stories of Indigenous sovereignties are at the core, but the mode of enquiry is less a line than a lattice, and becomes clearer as one travels through it. To echo Silko, 'as with the web, the structure emerges as it is made' by speaker and listener, writer and reader.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> David J. Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty: Self-Determination in American Indian Law and Literature* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 5, Kindle, (italics in original).

<sup>26</sup> Christie, *Plural Sovereignties and Contemporary Indigenous Literature*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 49.

## Engaging the Incommensurable Through Hard Storywork

Identifying incommensurabilities between worldviews matters because identifying similarities only gets one so far. I draw on the vital work of Unangax̄ scholar Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang to demonstrate that exclusive focus on similarities yields an assimilative reduction of the differences that invariably skews to favour settler sovereignty. They defend “an ethic of incommensurability” that recognizes what is distinct and sovereign’ between cosmologies.<sup>28</sup> By this ethic, frictional sovereignties are laid out not as two-dimensional, territorially adjacent polities, but as planar—overlaid and inter-contextual. These differences need not and should not be reconciled, but rather situated in relationships of accountability, good faith, and plurality. As Padraig Kirwan notes, ‘the values that a state of sovereignty affords a Native individual or tribe are a complex and multifaceted matter,’ and the complexity increases further as one explores beyond sovereignty strictly as or for states.<sup>29</sup> I understand Indigenous sovereignties to be, in many ways, incommensurable with settler sovereignty, yet no more violable as a result, given they have ‘always cohabited with the structures of whichever (Spanish, French, British, American) colonial modernity failed to co-opt them.’<sup>30</sup> Thus, that one-dimensional enigma of *what* sovereignty *is*—or even the idea that a singular ideal of capital-S ‘Sovereignty’ exists beyond cosmological differences—unspools amongst the flourishing of

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<sup>28</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630>.

<sup>29</sup> Kirwan, *Sovereign Stories*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Christie, *Plural Sovereignties and Contemporary Indigenous Literature*, 8.

incommensurable sovereignties to galvanise more fruitful queries about when, where, and how these incommensurable sovereignties *are*.

Indigenous sovereignties in literature are consistently enlivened with what Vizenor famously terms *survivance*, a multivalent neologistic portmanteau with internally frictional aspects that are, importantly, in constant motion. The manifold meanings lent to the concept by the active suffix are well-represented in existing scholarship. The first half of the portmanteau receives a relative dearth of attention, though. *Surviv-* connotes ongoing existence, evidently, but the Latinate root of the word *survive* also conveys a vital sense of overcoming or going beyond drawn from the truncated form of *super* in *sur-*. Exceeding the scope and scale of monotheism as context and moving beyond the grasp of the settler imaginary, this dimension of *survivance* resonates with *storywork*. It describes something unmistakably *more*. And it is in this spirit of *more*—that is, exceeding settler confines not always necessarily in qualitative terms but always in terms of amplitude—that I propound *storywork* as vector, vehicle, and verve of Indigenous sovereignties as they destabilise the sanctity of monotheism. Indeed, as Christie argues of Vizenor’s constructivist writing, ‘literary liberation is the result [and, I would add, the root], and this literary liberation is not merely representational but has the power to rupture the material world.’<sup>31</sup> Silko and Vizenor’s Indigenous *storywork* and *survivance* energies partake in a co-generative relationship that both buttresses vibrant sovereignties and

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

reveal storywork to be a sovereign exchange, bundled with corresponding responsibilities for exogenous interlocutors.

### **Sovereign Tease: Immersive Densities in Silko and Vizenor**

Gerald Vizenor remains one of the finest performers of disruptive Indigenous literary activism who at once teases reciprocity, yet refuses to sanction its coming about lightly. Influential and enigmatic, Vizenor's storytelling output heading into a seventh decade is simultaneously consistent and revisionary. The semantic surges of Vizenor's neologistic lexicon are an immanent conjuration of subversive resistance, 'engaged in an instability of familiar reference or tropes that may have given the reader meaning before' but are reshaped in inhospitable ways.<sup>32</sup> Vizenor demands his audiences undertake their critical interlocution from a point of perplexity, and his work is often critically misunderstood as a result, especially outside of the field of critical Indigenous studies. His theories are interactive, not descriptive; his fictitious and non-fictitious works are seldom separable in a worldview whereby '[s]tories are the truth, facts are the vacuous ends.'<sup>33</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko's less prolific but no less prodigious oeuvre of written work is similarly immersive, and indicates a kind of expansive dynamism whereby 'stories have a life of their own' that eludes easy

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<sup>32</sup> Hartwig Isernhagen, *Momaday, Vizenor, Armstrong: Conversations on American Indian Writing* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 108. See Hilary Emmett's "Troubling Language: Storytelling and Sovereignty in Kim Scott's *Benang*" for an account of expressions of sovereignty that can be evinced by the seeming inhospitability of analytically-resistant Indigenous literatures.

<sup>33</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Shadow Distance: A Gerald Vizenor Reader* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 225.

designations of author and audience, writer and reader.<sup>34</sup> 'The reason I write,' she tells Laura Coltelli, 'is to find out what I mean. I know some of the things I mean. I couldn't tell you the best things I know. And I can't know the best things I know until I write.'<sup>35</sup> For both authors, meaning—or comprehension—is endlessly chased but never caught, and subsequently, movement is central to their storywork.

Vizenor argues that Indigenous stories provoke irrefutable senses of sovereign presence, but there is more at work than mere assertions of presence in Indigenous storywork. Indeed, as Silko propounds, the telling, reworking, and active reception of stories is an intrinsically *living* way of perceiving the world and sharing knowledge. She notes that 'after a thing is dead, it dries up,' and the stories she tells impute senses of vitality in the sovereignties those stories express, presenting what Osage scholar Robert Warrior terms the 'intellectual sovereignty' of Indigenous peoples as intractable by the rubrics of the settler state.<sup>36</sup> The presence that Indigenous storyworks declare is multifarious and displays a vivacity that 'transgresses colonial structures of legibility.'<sup>37</sup> In powerful examples of Indigenous storywork there is scant epistemological trepidation to be found; Indigenous literatures rarely suggest alternative worldviews as much as present them without caveat and operate within them. As Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice argues,

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<sup>34</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko and Kim Barnes, "A Leslie Marmon Silko Interview," in *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko*, ed. Ellen L. Arnold (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 72.

<sup>35</sup> Laura Coltelli and Leslie Marmon Silko, "Leslie Marmon Silko," in *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko* ed. Ellen L. Arnold (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 65.

<sup>36</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 266; Robert Allen Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 98.

<sup>37</sup> Eman Ghanayem and Rebecca Macklin, "Indigenous Narratives: Global Forces in Motion," *Transmotion* 5, no. 1 (2019): 1, <https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/03/tm.789>.

Indigenous literatures 'articulate lived truths and imaginative possibilities through spoken, written, and inscribed forms and project them into a meaningful future' because 'writing about the *now* is a powerful refusal to disappear,' and defining the terms of "now" is just as critical.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly Silko and Vizenor present Indigenous sovereignties—or gesture towards them—without qualification or permission in their stories, as 'the visionary motion of continental liberty' through 'great flights of the intuition.'<sup>39</sup>

Vizenor's revision of colonial languages—predominantly English with smatterings of French —serves as a catalytic lens to the political activism that one can engage with in both his and Silko's storywork. It clearly demonstrates 'the contiguity, in the English language, of even profoundly different worldviews' commingling and colliding.<sup>40</sup> Kathryn Hume asserts that Vizenor's semantic slipperiness represents a challenge to his readers to come to an understanding of his messages through reading without necessarily comprehending. More than this, I suggest it is a challenge which one should not aspire to overcome. No amount of concentrated analysis on a single line, paragraph, or book will be adequate to really "get it," because many orientations towards the same idea of phenomenon are necessary to understand. The ideas at play are mutually informative and substantiating as Vizenor's arguments demand constant reorientation. As such, Vizenorean theory is less an exercise in inscrutable play, as some critics argue, and

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<sup>38</sup> Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018), xviii; 56.

<sup>39</sup> Vizenor, *Native Provenance*, 125; Silko and Coltelli, "Leslie Marmon Silko," 127.

<sup>40</sup> Christie, *Plural Sovereignties and Contemporary Indigenous Literature*, 180.

more a consistent problematisation of mastery, of singular definition, and of cosmological reconciliation. As Herman puts it, 'the inflections of literary style' of the kind one sees in Vizenor's mien, 'are ultimately political inflections' in the context of Indigenous storywork.<sup>41</sup> To this end, Vizenor's vignettes are self-paraphrased—reoriented—across his oeuvre and assessed from fresh 'vantage points,' to draw on David Carlson's formulation.<sup>42</sup> These reorientations and their wider contextual situation in literary constellation lends itself to understanding and a triangulation of meaning.

Triangulation is a useful mode for considering the philosophies of both Vizenor and Silko. Indeed, the focus on orientation for tending knowledge is foregrounded in a Laguna Pueblo context as well where Silko 'worried for quite a while about our robins in Laguna because they didn't leave in the winter, until I finally realised that all the big textbook companies are up in Boston and *their* robins do go south in the winter.'<sup>43</sup> Repetition is a technique of reorientation in Vizenor and Silko's writing; it is a rhythmic persistence emanating from Anishinaabeg and Laguna Pueblo practices of storytelling, and bears out the vitality of triangulating knowledge from different places, in line with Silko's averral that 'each telling is a new and unique story. Even if it's repeated word for word by the same teller sitting in the same chair' the relationality to the story's audience means '[t]hat's just this one particular place in time.'<sup>44</sup> Silko's much-discussed concept of witchery holds that the non-linearity of

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<sup>41</sup> Herman, *Politics and Aesthetics in Contemporary Native American Literature*, 53.

<sup>42</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 153.

<sup>43</sup> Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 57, (italics in original).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 51; 55.

alternative Indigenous understandings of time and space mean that domineering behaviours will eventually be compounded and revisited upon those who exhibit them, yet she nonetheless also warns of 'the catch with karma, or curses and witchcraft; they often don't take effect fast enough.'<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, 'it is one thing to simply listen to the stories and quite another thing to think with and through them' and so any critical approach that prioritises Indigenous sovereignties should resist prescribing a definitive interrogative rubric.<sup>46</sup> Vizenorean neologisms are one manner by which 'Indigenous literary methodologies articulate their own demands for literature and the dialogues that surround it.'<sup>47</sup> I take from the idea of incommensurability that, although Silko and Vizenor's literary activism resonates co-constitutionally, they are not in simple harmony and there are frictions and tensions between their approaches and even objectives. Again, these differences are not to be overcome nor minimised. Their disparities are generative too. But before I can begin to illustrate this co-constitutionality, I have to introduce a few key terms into the discussion; they are going to come up a lot.

### **In Creases of Sovereignties: Dynamic Reciprocity in (Trans)Motion**

I conceptualise the messy networks of structural interactivity where sovereignties converge and diverge, where storywork and listener-reader meet, as ideological

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<sup>45</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, *The Turquoise Ledge: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 295.

<sup>46</sup> Val Napoleon and Hadley Friedland, "An Inside Job: Engaging with Indigenous Legal Traditions Through Stories," *McGill Law Journal* 61, no. 4 (June 2016): 735, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1038487ar>.

<sup>47</sup> Evelyn Araluen Corr, "The Limits of Literary Theory and the Possibilities of Storywork for Aboriginal Literature in Australia," in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, eds. Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo. (London: Zed Books, 2019), 193.

creases. For Vizenor, creases are narrative borderlines that trouble the frontiers of unlike worldviews, 'place[s] where two surfaces, literal or spiritual, join or come together, intensifying each' and leaving mutual impressions.<sup>48</sup> Riffing on this metaphor, I suggest that Indigenous sovereign storyworks create and sustain ideological creases with and without the story of monotheistic settler sovereignty. Such ideological creases, stretching between sovereignties, underscore the way that I parse relationships between monotheistic and Indigenous cosmological worldviews, not only for the confluences, but for the incommensurabilities too. The cosmological differences, or as Kevin Bruyneel puts it, the 'boundaries' between such worldviews are 'much more than just barriers. They are sites of co-constitutive interaction amongst groups,' yet it is important to note that they can be sites of oppression, too.<sup>49</sup> Reading Indigenous storywork requires an attentive discursive approach which, in the context of Indigenous sovereignties as a non-Indigenous scholar, entails far more active listening than talking.

The metaphor of the crease is multivalent in the context of Andersen's epistemological density: creases are impermanent yet near-impossible to erase patterns of interactive exchange that deepen the picture drawn by being done; creases have an intrinsic sense of depth and texture and therefore betoken further dimensions than received settler binaries of possessive sovereignty can accommodate; consequently, creases can house multiple worldviews at once and

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<sup>48</sup> Kathryn Hume, "Gerald Vizenor's Metaphysics," *Contemporary Literature* 48, no. 2 (2007): 590, <https://doi:10.1353/cli.2008.0005>.

<sup>49</sup> Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xix.

deepen the commonalities between them; finally creases are mobile/movable—they shift and must be revisited and retraced to avoid fading. Their impermanence and vulnerability to erasure is both strength and weakness, because theories and ideas that exist as creases never threaten to become indelible nor dogmatic. Creases need to be retraced in order to deepen, subsist, and resist erasure. They crack outward, web-like—predictably and unpredictably—and the sense of texture and depth in dimension imparted distances ideological creases from abstract philosophies of smooth epistemological veracity. Creases are co-constitutive, forming pockets of resistance in the shared beats of disparate stories. And, like Indigenous sovereignties, they are best conceived of as done, time and again, without becoming settled.

Keeping ideological creases in mind, Vizenor's concept of transmotion is a salient critical lens through which to discuss these shifting sites of exchange. If ideological creases are the sites of non-contiguous worldviews colliding, leaving residue on one another, then transmotion is the energy that surges through those creases, deepens them, smooths them out, and changes them entirely. Transmotion invokes a melange of generative and altering words, *trans* acting as a modifier of change in its subject. Transmotion is characterised by dynamic movement that is inseparable from storywork in its emphasis on change through time, rejecting the types of temporal and cultural fixity that the settler state foists on Indigenous peoples. Anishinaabe scholar John Borrows argues that 'freezing contact as the fulcrum point for determining the height of Indigeneity works a nefarious colonial purpose' that demands Indigenous geopolitical immobility, whereby, in sovereign

terms, 'we are damned if we move, and we are damned if we don't.'<sup>50</sup> For Vizenor, transmotion is a means and measure of rejecting the compartmentalisation of Indigenous sovereignty. It is intractable and only ever perceived in flight, 'seen in the raised hooves of horses, the voice lines, traces of arrows, the curve of feathers, footprints, and the trail of buffalo blood in a hunt.'<sup>51</sup> Fittingly, transmotion is one of the most elusive elements of Vizenorean philosophies on a definitional level. Largely, this is because transmotion is not a state, it is a process; transmotion is another concept shown and done, not explained.

Transmotion is an important ethic for scholarship with Indigenous worldviews to proceed in dynamic reciprocity. This notion of passage and s(h)ifting connections helps to outline the ways that ideological creases co-constitute encounters of Indigenous and non-Indigenous sovereignties and worldviews across diverse registers. Understanding Indigenous sovereignties through storywork as co-generative yet distinct entities allows for a 'native sense of concurrent sovereignty' which 'is political and judicatory, of course, and native ancestral sovereignty is a sense of motion, the reciprocity of natural motion, or transmotion.'<sup>52</sup> Like Silko's web structure, transmotional sovereignties move through ideological creases in unexpected ways; the journey from one state or place to another is a necessary component in transmotion, but "progression" does not preclude return or retrace. Transmotional pathways are neither linear nor singular, and they always have

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<sup>50</sup> John Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 43; 31.

<sup>51</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 179.

<sup>52</sup> Vizenor, *Native Provenance*, 87.

the potential to return to relevance, reflecting a key dimension of Indigenous sovereignties as they counter the ‘settler colonial project[']s’ propensity to ‘produce and consume antitypes at fierce rates’ in the denial of Indigenous presences.<sup>53</sup>

Transmotion is distinct, however, from another form of mobility that aligns with the settler hallmarks of dispossession and cosmological erasure. Whereas transmotion is inseparable from storywork sovereignties, what I call *desmotion* is marked by distance from storied contexts. Desmotion is calculated, destructive, and mono-directional, linked to a singular narrative of exponential progress. Transmotion is infused with possibility but not promise, travelling forwards, backwards, sideways and otherwise. Desmotion, conversely, is progressive and values the supersession of the present and past in favour of a capially richer future, underscoring monotheorism and ideological stasis. Indeed, as Lorenzo Veracini notes, settler society is ‘often extraordinarily mobile, but the emphasis is placed on fixity’ in geographical, social, and ideological terms.<sup>54</sup> The *des-* prefix indicates privation, removal, and negation—the foremost modes of cultural and geographical conquest employed by colonial European powers in the Americas that have metastasised into a ‘transnational politics of oppression’ between settler states and Indigenous nations.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 5, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Ghanayem and Macklin, “Indigenous Narratives: Global Forces in Motion,” 2. Although many diverse political formations that transcend nationalism are utilised across the Americas by Indigenous polities, I use “nations” to emphasise the necessity of reciprocity in sovereign relations. Nations in this sense are not necessarily participant in nationalism as ideology, and I follow Pádraig Kirwan’s de-binarising approach which foregrounds ‘not so much a case of seeing nationalism as being opposed to cosmopolitanism or sovereignty, as being in conflict with interculturalism. Rather, Native

In methodological terms, transmotion is a useful modality to understand for engaging Indigenous worldviews from non-Indigenous positionalities as a good listener-reader. Transmotion is a force that coheres with an ethic of dynamic reciprocity. This slick concept that resists theoretical finality evinces an ethical current of negotiated encounters between sovereignties that vacillate between distance and proximity. As an ethic of engagement, reconciling fundamental differences in sovereignties is questionable in terms of possibility and impermissible in ethical terms due to the drastic imbalances of power that characterise settler-Indigenous politics. In order to desanctify settler sovereign supremacy and contextualise Indigenous/settler colonial political relationships as something more than the latter ensconced by the former, it is helpful to conceptualise these contested connections as what Osage scholar Jean Dennison calls 'entangled sovereignties.'<sup>56</sup> Dynamic reciprocity is an important facet of working through, with, in, and around the ideological creases of entangled sovereignties.

### **Movement over Stasis, Dynamic Reciprocity over Reconciliation**

"Reconciliation" is an oxymoronic goal striven for by settler colonial polities the world over which seldom benefits Indigenous peoples, according to Indigenous scholars including Coulthard, Tuck, Audra Simpson (Kahnawake Mohawk), Michelle

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communities create their own realities, perform acts of sovereignty, and, above all, tell new stories' (*Sovereign Stories*, 275).

<sup>56</sup> Jean Dennison, "Entangled Sovereignties: The Osage Nation's Interconnections with Governmental and Corporate Authorities," *American Ethnologist* 44, no. 4 (November 2017): <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12566>.

Daigle (Mushkegowuk), and Billy-Ray Belcourt (Driftpile Cree Nation) who calls it in 'an affective mess... stubbornly ambivalent in its potentiality.'<sup>57</sup> Although reconciliation holds special political significance in contemporary Canada (and Australia), it pertains to broader discourses in critical studies of Indigenous sovereignties that are salient to my project. "Reconciling" incommensurable sovereignties falters in the implication of a previous state of ideological parity between colonial and Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation bears ingrained conditionals of peace, forgiveness, and finality that many Indigenous communities dismiss after centuries of colonial murder and cultural abasement. As Daigle observes, reconciliatory tactics fetishise the '*spectacle* of reconciliation – a public, large-scale and visually striking performance of Indigenous suffering and trauma alongside white settler mourning and recognition – which secures, legitimates, and effectively reproduces white supremacy and settler futurity.'<sup>58</sup> Such manoeuvres are engineered to obfuscate other options. Principal amongst these alternative possibilities is the fact that 'Indigenous self-determination lies in the autonomy to remain *unreconciled*' if the conditions of reconciliation transpire to be unsatisfactory.<sup>59</sup> Lumbee scholar Robert Williams notes that the perfidious trope of the 'savage,' spawned in ancient Greek epistemology as the binary opposite to 'civilised' and synonymised with indigeneity, is defined by the savage being

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<sup>57</sup> Billy-Ray Belcourt, "Political Depression in a Time of Reconciliation," *Active History*, 15 January, 2016, <http://activehistory.ca/2016/01/political-depression-in-a-time-of-reconciliation/>.

<sup>58</sup> Michelle Daigle, "The spectacle of reconciliation: On (the) Unsettling Responsibilities to Indigenous Peoples in the Academy," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37, no. 4 (2019): 706 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775818824342>, (italics in original).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 714, (italics in the original).

fundamentally 'irreconcilable.'<sup>60</sup> Consequently, reconciliation as a process involves the enforced enervation of indigeneity since '[w]ithout conflict and struggle the terms of recognition tend to remain in the possession of those in power to bestow on their inferiors in ways they deem appropriate.'<sup>61</sup> In sum, reconciliation is a tonic brewed to treat the symptoms of settler guilt and is effective against none of the underlying causes of Indigenous dispossession. The countervailing 'dangerous space of freedom,' as Alfred conceptualises it, is generable only when something *like* reconciliation is striven for through the dynamism of genuine reciprocal movement.<sup>62</sup> Dynamic reciprocity is important precisely because it is not an invitation to reconciliation; there is no time nor place to get settled.

Santa Clara Pueblo scholar Tessie Naranjo exhorts 'honor[ing] the power and force of movement...and myths because we must continually remember that, without movement, there is no life.'<sup>63</sup> Movement is also bound up with activity and activism; movement is what transforms revolutionary ideas into revolutionary action. Relational protests and reformative initiatives are so called precisely because they are stimulated by an active change of state and the state of change. Movement is vital to any methodological reimagination that aims to dislodge ossified ideologies, to inscribe and explore ideological creases. Such creases abound in Vizenor and Silko's storywork, creating dangerous spaces of freedom in which revolutionary tsunamis

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Williams, *Savage Anxieties: The Invention of Western Civilization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 20. Williams genealogical reading of long-scale Western preoccupation with the savage trope as a cornerstone of Western civilization is vital.

<sup>61</sup> Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 39.

<sup>62</sup> Alfred, *Wasáse*, 36; 266.

<sup>63</sup> Tessie Naranjo, "Thoughts on Migration by Santa Clara Pueblo," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 14, no. 2 (June 1995): 250, <https://doi.org/10.1006/jaar.1995.1013>.

and subversive snowstorms can flourish, sharing a fundamental ethic that ‘places Indigenous theories, methodologies, and methods at the center, not on the periphery.’<sup>64</sup> There is both room and requirement for reciprocity to demand more from one group than from others; reciprocity does not translate to equal obligations. Equality has never been a marker of settler colonialism in the Americas, and it shouldn’t become so when it emerges as convenient for settler societies under whose auspices the ‘abstract concept of *together equal* is easily turned against the political interests of specific individuals, communities, and nations.’<sup>65</sup>

Dynamic reciprocity departs from the idea of cultural interdependence as such because the latter carries problematic connotations of historical equality that smokescreen significant extant inequalities. An incipient dynamic of reciprocity amongst incommensurable sovereignties has the potential to spark ‘a lively and humane discourse’ that ‘confront[s] the gossip theories of cultural fades and victimry.’<sup>66</sup> I do not pretend in the arguments that proceed to be able to offer a methodological blueprint for what dynamic reciprocity of this kind should or does look like. To echo Philip J. Deloria (who is of Yankton Dakota descent), the import of Indigenous literary activism (or storywork), in part, is in ‘softening up the audiences so that they’re receptive to the argument.’<sup>67</sup> Moreover, I am not writing *to* Indigenous audiences; I am in conversation with Indigenous critics, but I situate this thesis firmly

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<sup>64</sup> Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie *Place in Research: Theory, Methodology, and Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 20, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>65</sup> Chadwick Allen, *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), xiii, (italics in original).

<sup>66</sup> Vizenor, *Native Provenance*, 12; 122.

<sup>67</sup> Philip J. Deloria and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, “On Genealogies of Activism and Scholarship,” in *Speaking of Indigenous Politics: Conversations with Activists, Scholars, and Tribal Leaders*, ed. J. Kēhaulani Kauanui (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 118.

in Deloria's colonial-facing orientation of 'softening up' a Eurocentric audience. To this end, I work towards deconstructing what Goenpul Quandamooka scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson terms 'patriarchal white possessive logic,' following her argument that work towards a 'critique of whiteness must also be a central element of any Indigenous studies discipline.'<sup>68</sup> If this thesis is to contribute to the discourse of Indigenous sovereignties in a spirit of dynamic reciprocity, I argue that such work should be undertaken by non-Indigenous scholars across the asymmetric spectra of colonial privileges.

That said, I also will not make sweeping claims about any reductively conglomerate Indigenous Philosophy in this thesis (it is extremely likely that no such thing exists as a singular category). Where such homogenising tenets *do* emerge, they typically represent little more than '[e]thnographic gossip theories.'<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, experiential contexts of relationality—perspectives that cannot exist in isolation—are shared facets of manifold Indigenous worldviews. Thus, speaking about Indigenous worldviews as related but distinct assemblages of experience that participate in convergences and divergences of ideological creases. These frictional encounters co-constitute a powerful yet not bluntly oppositional array of counterpoints against the authority of monothorism. A meaningfully pluralistic approach to cosmologies and epistemologies, allows for a frictional gamut of imperfect knowledge that can be treated and applied with greater flexibility and

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<sup>68</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xiii; xvii, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>69</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Native Provenance*, 10.

pertinence to lived experiences and without the subtract presumption of theoretical unification.

Anishinaabe botanist Mary Siisip Geniusz explains that ‘Anishinaabe knowledge grows like crystals in rock,’ characterised by the generative friction of intellectual movement. Conversely, ‘knowledge that stagnates soon dies, drying up like a mud puddle in the sun or silted over like a stream with too slow a flow.’<sup>70</sup> In this way, transmotional friction—coincident dissent and common nodes in shared stories—lends to the destabilisation of sedimented litanies of monotheistic history and sovereignty. And yet, despite the tumult, creases remain, remarkably persistent.

### **Dynamic Reciprocity in Motion: A Roadmap**

So, through this thesis, I engage three vital yet non-exhaustive dimensions of Indigenous cosmologies that activate sovereignties and help scholars of Indigenous and non-Indigenous politics to reimagine sovereign relationships as complicated interactions between substantively incommensurable worldviews.

My first chapter foregrounds the critical concept of political *constitution* which typically underscores non-monarchically derived conceptions of sovereignty. Throughout, I highlight the ideological creases between Indigenous and non-Indigenous constitutional forms to demonstrate the ways in which Indigenous formal alternatives participate in the active, generative sense of constituting. Vizenor’s

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<sup>70</sup> Mary Siisip Geniusz *Plants Have So Much To Give Us, All We Have To Do Is Ask: Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 4; 3.

authorship of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation (CWEN) and his subsequent novel *Treaty Shirts*, which I read as a literary amendment to that constitution, are not generically discrete endeavours. As exercises of transmotional activism, both texts are examples of sovereign storywork that nestle together in contested ideological creases to navigate the incommensurable dimensions of the U.S. settler sense of sovereignty and myriad Indigenous sovereign worldviews. Vizenor treats what would be received in the monotheistic settler perspective as a “political document” instead as a storytelling practice with the CWEN, thus engaging in a transmotional effort of dynamic reciprocity between distinct worldviews and frameworks of legitimised governance. Then Vizenor insinuates the inverse, framing *Treaty Shirts*—a novel—as a political document which constitutes White Earth sovereignty just as much as (if not more than) the CWEN. I argue that this positioning reflects an ethos of dynamic reciprocity that locate sovereignties amongst the common differences that are textured in ideological creases. The two formally unlike works are quickened by one another—given life, urgency, and momentum—illustrating the generative potential of dynamic reciprocity.<sup>71</sup> After expanding the discussion of formal sovereignty vis-à-vis constitution, I gesture towards a need for monotheism over the temporal trajectory of progressive history to also be discharged and then resituated amongst various Indigenous alternatives.

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<sup>71</sup> One should not confuse my argument for a claim that Indigenous sovereignties require recognition and/or input from settler sovereign bodies to be activated. The dynamic reciprocity that exists between distinct Indigenous sovereignties precedes colonial incursion; there are creases aplenty already. It is settler monotheism that demands uniform absorption and so it is settler monotheism that needs to be brought into relationships of dynamic reciprocity with Indigenous polities and peoples, not vice versa.

My second chapter carries the concepts of ideological creases and dynamic reciprocity forward to trouble the relatively undisturbed sovereignty that capitalist/settler colonialism exerts over time using Mark Rifkin's concepts of settler time and temporal sovereignty.<sup>72</sup> Exploring Silko's temporally dense *Almanac of the Dead*, I emphasise alternative cosmological perceptions of time as deployments or manifestations of sovereignties. Collectively, I call these diverse temporal frameworks Indigenous *atemporalities*. Conversely, I identify the monotheistic history that is enabled/mandated by settler time as a narratively inflected and ideologically flattened settler *chronologue*. I develop Rifkin's work to complicate the oft-cited lodestone of Indigenous presence as a pre-eminent marker and driver of Indigenous sovereignties. I argue that whilst scholarship that calls for pluralities of Indigenous pasts and futures to be accounted for, the present remains widely uncritiqued as a universally shared temporality. Indigenous atemporalities exist in concomitant ideological creases as do Indigenous constitutional sovereignties, which is to say that they are entangled, imbricated, or overlapped in ways that thicken one another. In this spirit, I couple the prescriptively chronologic and narrative monologue facets of the temporal understanding exhibited by settler society. I read the novel as storywork advocacy of manifold Indigenous atemporalities that help to locate Indigenous sovereignties *and* settler sovereignty in ideological creases.

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<sup>72</sup> Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), ProQuest Ebook Central.

Where Vizenor's constitutional storywork loosened the seams of the holdings of sovereign governance, I take atemporal frameworks to be vital in seeing such expressions through history and into the future(s). If atemporalities interweave in places and diverge in others from each other and the settler chronologue, then a similar ethic of dynamic reciprocity can be applied in this context of ideological creases, too. Having traced the ideological creases of atemporalities and constitution, I then examine how both ideas, in conjunction with Vizenor's concept of natural reason, inform the tensions between settler history and Indigenous memory, and Indigenous places and settler territories.

In the third chapter, I draw Silko and Vizenor's storywork together in three parts to address the importance of *emplacement* in Indigenous sovereignties and their interactions with settler sovereignty. I suggest that place is to territory as memory is to history in the tricky spirit of incommensurable proximity that characterises ideological creases between Indigenous and settler worldviews. Territory remains a crucial measure of Indigenous sovereignties in legal terms; however, the way that settler society conceives of territorial land is reductive, engineered to displace Indigenous peoples. Foci on 'certain images of place and homecoming have become conventional to the understanding' of Indigenous literary studies, and invoked as problematic panaceas.<sup>73</sup> My argument differs. It hinges not on placial panaceas, but on the active practice of emplacement amongst Indigenous peoples' storywork as vital in quickening Indigenous sovereignties and desanctifying

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<sup>73</sup> Padraig Kirwan, "Remapping Place and Narrative in Native American Literature: David Treuer's *The Hiawatha*," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 31, no. 2 (2007): 1-2.

settler territorial sovereignty. As Indigenous sovereignties are understood as non-binary, activated verbs, so are Indigenous places. I read Silko's novella *Ocean Story* and Vizenor's collection of 'autobiographical myths and metaphors,' *Interior Landscapes*, as acts of imaginative memory which subvert the settler chronologue. The active dimension of constituting and sustaining memory through storywork emplaces Indigenous altemporalities, disrupts the mainstream narrative of historical disinterestedness and gestures towards the panoply of felt contexts that move in ideological creases. *Ocean Story* emplaces sovereignties in multi-bordered contexts. Where the Tohono O'odham community is split across the United States and Mexico by settler territorial deals, the coast represents an ever-s(h)ifting transnational borderline that demands attentive reimagination and emplacement. In *Interior Landscapes*, Vizenor addresses related tensions in the context of the cityscape, where indigeneity also exists in creases of shadow survivance amongst the high-rises and waterways. By emplacing Indigenous altemporalities amongst settler territories thus, Silko and Vizenor's creative storywork constitutes sovereign relationships of dynamic reciprocity. Significantly, their storywork also emplaces settler sovereignty—it flips the political power structure without reconciliatory motives. Indigenous sovereignties do not 'make space' for settler monotheism, but instead emplace monotheism in ideological creases of entangled sovereignties with various Indigenous polities to enable genuine ethea of dynamic reciprocity to burgeon.

I borrow from Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's work on Indigenous resurgence to conceptualise this relationality. Her

illustration of the concept of 'constellation' as a theoretical metaphor for ordering related yet unlike acts of quotidian resurgence in Indigenous contexts is also helpful for understanding the emplaced relationalities of Indigenous sovereignties and settler sovereignty.<sup>74</sup> In relationships of dynamic reciprocity, Indigenous and settler sovereignties are arrayed as the stars in constellations, and the ideological creases that thicken their co-constitution are the traced, impermanent lines that reveal the bigger, visionary picture. Settler sovereignty is not a Polaris to orient political navigation or constitution, it is a star amongst constellations because, as Audra Simpson contends, '*under* the conditions of settler-colonialism, multiple sovereignties cannot proliferate robustly or equally.'<sup>75</sup> This thesis, then, focuses predominantly upon dimensions of Indigenous and settler encounters of worldview where reconciliation is inappropriate; it is the monotheistic settler sovereignty of and over epistemology that must change. I demonstrate the ways in which Silko and Vizenor articulate the presence of multifarious forms of Indigenous sovereignties through and beyond their literary activism with stories that *are* sovereign dialogue and thus demand that readers approach as political agents with political responsibilities. The ultimate end-point of dynamically reciprocal literary activism between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews occupies a space of non-contiguous equilibrium, but the point of departure and the modes of travel do not.

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<sup>74</sup> Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 211-248, <https://www-jstor-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt77c>.

<sup>75</sup> Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 12, ProQuest Ebook Central, (emphasis mine).

So, let me start by asking: how are Indigenous sovereignties constituted, and who are they constituted by?

## Chapter I

# Constituting Indigenous Sovereignties: Literary Amendments to Settler Governance in the White Earth Nation and Gerald Vizenor's *Treaty Shirts*

'We, the natives of this continent, are the stories of presence, and we actuate the observance of natural reason and transmotion in this constitutional democracy'<sup>1</sup>

Gerald Vizenor

'Vizenor's writing is invitation. As with any invitation, the summons is not the event, but is the ticket to getting there'<sup>2</sup>

Kimberly M. Blaeser

(enrolled member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe)

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 199.

<sup>2</sup> Kimberly M. Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 14.

## The Constitutions of Constitutions Throughout America

In November 2013, a plebiscite referendum of the White Earth Nation returned 79% in favour of withdrawing from the constitutional body of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT). The vote represented a commitment to adopt the Constitution of the White Earth Nation (CWEN), authored primarily by Gerald Vizenor. Three years later, In May 2016, *Treaty Shirts* was published, a novel reflecting on the CWEN's fractious voyage of due process, from design to deadlock. *Treaty Shirts* is in discussion with the CWEN, and the questions and answers that erupt from that discourse are expressions of Indigenous sovereign resistance that complicate conventional constitutional dimensions, especially considered in knotted creases with the U.S. Constitution. I explore the creases of Vizenor's storywork as alternative forms of constitution, as articles and processes articulated by the creases threading between novel and document. I consider *Treaty Shirts* a storywork First Amendment that engages the CWEN's formal deficits to quicken it into a 'creative thesis [that] has continued in exile, and has advanced the notion of transmotion.'<sup>3</sup> Both these pieces of White Earth storywork are constitutive; that is, they make up robust polities by telling stories about who and how the White Earth Anishinaabeg are in associations of cosmological incommensurability with monotheistic settler sovereignty. To recapitulate, that settler strain of sovereignty is an asserted state of supreme authority, or power, over, beyond, and surrounding Indigenous sovereignties. Ultimately, I show that Indigenous narratives and stories might operate as alternative

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<sup>3</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts: October 2034 – A Familiar Treatise on the White Earth Nation* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2016), 116.

formations of constitutions with greater quotidian success than legal documents that remain hampered by colonial fiats of design.

Unlike the measures of settler sovereignty, 'Native identities are more than nominal considerations.'<sup>4</sup> A people, crafting and deploying a self-determined, self-ratified constitution, is sovereignty in action. Yet despite the aura of political power afforded constitutional governance in general, the same underlying formal ubiquity pertains to constitutions as does sovereignty; post-IRA recognition of Indigenous sovereignty by the U.S. settler state requires a written constitution 'as part of the federal acknowledgements process.'<sup>5</sup> In this political layout, the constitutional meta-template of the U.S.A. is A-OK, even though, as Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver highlights, the U.S. 'Constitution contains very few rights' for We, The People, let alone Indigenous peoples.<sup>6</sup> And, even where it does, a 'right – the absence of a legal block – does not create or imply a power' in many cases.<sup>7</sup> To discuss the constitution of, and constitutions of Indigenous sovereignties, it is useful to start at the beginning to examine the respective gains and losses this slow streamlining of tribal polities into settler organisational schemata entails.

Vizenor's 'constitutional praxis,' as Carlson terms it, extends beyond recalibrating or redesigning constitutional form.<sup>8</sup> Vizenor recognises that the White

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<sup>4</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Kirsty Gover, *Tribal Constitutionalism: States, Tribes, and the Governance of Membership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 69.

<sup>6</sup> Jace Weaver, *Notes From a Miner's Canary: Essays on the State of Native America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 104, EBSCO eBook Subscription Academic Collection.

<sup>7</sup> Garrett Epps, *American Epic: Reading the U.S. Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 146.

<sup>8</sup> David J. Carlson, "Trickster Hermeneutics and the Postindian Reader: Gerald Vizenor's Constitutional Praxis," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2011): [www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/studamerindilite.23.4.0013](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/studamerindilite.23.4.0013).

Earth sovereignty deployed by the CWEN is insufficient without supportive revision, so he redeploys it in storywork through time and across generic registers to trouble those places 'where different modalities of oppression, not simply different empires and their agencies, meet.'<sup>9</sup> These stories can be (though do not need be) innovative and avant-garde, rather than tied to a static portrayal of tradition. They can be more robust for their tenacity and surprise by the ideological creases they carve, because 'by knowing and telling our stories that the people of White Earth can both *imagine* and *construct* the past, present, and future.'<sup>10</sup> Euaileyai/Kamillaro legal scholar Larissa Behrendt's insight is trenchant here: 'The colonial system is dismissive of storytelling because it is deeply challenged by it.'<sup>11</sup> Or, at least, the settler framework's own monotheistic narrative is embattled by Indigenous alterity. Curtailing Indigenous worldviews to closed-off spaces of theoreticality (contra practicality) is a well-worn tactic for stymieing activism. Since the monotheistic theory/practice binary works in a similar way to the infamous bind of body and mind, purely "theoretical" engagements of Indigenous sovereign arrays can be harmful. 'Theories,' as Māori scholar Leonie Pihama exhorts, 'are, and must be, more.'<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, "Decolonizing Settler Colonialism: Kill the Settler in Him and Save the Man," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 41, no. 1 (2017): 5, <https://uclajournals.org/doi/abs/10.17953/aicrj.41.1.veracini>.

<sup>10</sup> Jill Doerfler, "A Philosophy for Living: Ignatia Broker and Constitutional Reform among the White Earth Anishinaabeg," in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*, Eds. Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesik Stark (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 176.

<sup>11</sup> Larissa Behrendt, "Decolonizing Institutions and Assertive Self-Determination: Implications for Legal practice," in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology* Eds. Jo-Ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo. (London: Zed Books, 2019), 180.

<sup>12</sup> Leonie Pihama, "Asserting Indigenous Theories of Change," in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, ed. Joanne Barker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 195.

It can be challenging to locate the position of theory in relation action. Which leads to, or derives from, which is often murky. Scholars such as Sean Kicummah Teuton (Cherokee) and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux) have criticised Vizenor for lacking an actionable activist drive in his work. The latter charges that Vizenor's deployment of poststructuralist theories to refute essentialism represents a 'pathetic or cynical aesthetic' and side-lines extant, reified, issues for Indigenous peoples in the United States.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Vizenor's work is cast as at once incisive yet toothless, theoretical to the point of ambivalence. Moreover Vizenor has quite justifiably been pulled up on his literary playfulness and 'sometimes dangerous tendency to dismiss context' as it pertains to material, quotidian challenges to Indigenous everyday lives.<sup>14</sup> Spanning this lacuna may not be so daunting as first appears, though; I agree with Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million's notion that theorising is itself 'a verb, an action' to be defined only in 'suggestive brushstrokes,' which is to say without absolutism.<sup>15</sup>

Speaking broadly, constitutions are bodies of laws, customs, and/or moral tenets that serve as a basal social contract for participants in the construction and maintenance of sovereign collectives. Derived from the Latin *constituere*, constitution signifies "establishing" or "appointing," in addition to loaded connotations of "settling," or emblematising a settled state.<sup>16</sup> Vitally, constitution

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<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "American Indian Intellectualism and the New Indian Story," *American Indian Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (Winter, 1996): 67, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1184942>.

<sup>14</sup> Stuart Christie, *Plural Sovereignties and Contemporary Indigenous Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 223.

<sup>15</sup> Dian Million, "There is a River in Me: Theory from Life," in *Theorizing Native Studies*, eds. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 32-33, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>16</sup> See Lorenzo Veracini's *Settler Colonialism* (2010) for comprehensive distinctions between imperial colonialism and colonialism of the kind spurring the American pursuit of Manifest Destiny.

also gestures towards verbality. As a processual verb, constituting involves communal patterns of creation, content, and is a descriptor of fortitude. To constitute is to make up in complex ways, and in 'a culture where most words are verbs, including the nouns,' writes Noodin, 'it is easiest to understand the characters by what they do.'<sup>17</sup> Per John Arthur, a constitution operates as a set of principles underwritten by a society in its most temperate collective moment to guide future iterations of that society through stormier times.<sup>18</sup> As Shoshone Bannock journalist Mark Trahant comments, however, '[i]t's impossible to have a temperate discussion in a time of war,' and the Constitution of the United States flourished partially as a coalescent response to settler/Indigenous conflict.<sup>19</sup> After 'American Independence, when settler and national sovereignties became coterminous' under the auspices of an egalitarian New World, wide ratification was secured by assuring various undecided states (most notably Georgia) of the Union's pooled military backing to suppress Indigenous communities.<sup>20</sup> In this nascent territorial militarism, one can see plainly that the settler state's 'constitutional genealogy is...tied to indigenous difference.'<sup>21</sup> Therefore, as Nick Estes (Kul Wicasa from the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe)

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<sup>17</sup> Margaret Noodin, "Megwa Baabaamiiayaayaang Dibaajomoyaang," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature*, eds. James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 177.

<sup>18</sup> John Arthur *Words That Bind: Judicial Review and the Grounds of Modern Constitutional Theory* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> Mark Trahant, "Indian Country Needs a Canon of Stories; 'Sovereignty' is one we Should Add," *Indigenous Policy Journal* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2018): 278, <http://www.indigenouspolicy.org/index.php/ipj/article/view/545/534>.

<sup>20</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 72.

<sup>21</sup> Kirsty Gover, *Tribal Constitutionalism: States, Tribes, and the Governance of Membership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.

argues, 'the founding of the United States was a [literal] declaration of war against Indigenous peoples,' not just an act of exclusion.<sup>22</sup>

### The Narrative of the U.S. Constitution

The ideologically inflected politics between embryonic settler states and Indigenous peoples is legible as 'war by any other means,' fighting to dictate the terms of sovereign legitimacy and restrict Indigenous sovereignties concurrently.<sup>23</sup> Arthur's constitutional condition of sobriety leverages a spurious guarantee that the protracted exercise of writing, resolving, and ratifying the U.S. Constitution itself enshrined and insulated the document from furore in the plebiscite, as 'one writing, that memorializes the commitments defining us over the course of time.'<sup>24</sup> Memorialisation is apt; the commitments that define the settler state are of and in the past, hence the sense of continuity over time is something more like immobility in time.

Eric Slauter discusses the ways in which metaphorical descriptions of the American nation, as conceived by its cadre of founders, described the shared impetus of a 'generation [that] believed constitutions were founded or framed like buildings; constitutions were not the products of time or growth but works of human

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<sup>22</sup> Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (London; New York: Verso, 2019), 63, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>23</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "Towards a New Research Agenda?: Foucault, Whiteness and Indigenous sovereignty," *Journal of Sociology* 42, no. 4 (December 2006): 386, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783306069995>.

<sup>24</sup> Laurence H. Tribe, *The Invisible Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14.

art.<sup>25</sup> This enduring motif—which pulses throughout even mundane articulations of “frameworks,” “scaffolding,” “structure,” etc.—reacts to monarchical embodiments of sovereignty. However, this descriptive proclivity works, ironically, to de-vivify the Constitution. It is evident that the state rendered as a person is destined to be despotic. Contradistinctively, the state as an amorphous “people” press-ganged into sanctioning the Constitution is not much better. The United States’ ‘Constitution could only be ratified or rejected’ as part of a binary decision-making process.<sup>26</sup> As ever, ‘settler colonialism as a mode of domination seeks finality. Interrupting its drive is genuine decolonizing work.’<sup>27</sup> Sovereign storywork or, better yet, multivalent mosaics of ideologically creased storyworks—the kind relayed in *Treaty Shirts*—interrupt, subvert, and provoke far wider ranges of affective and effective responses.

The U.S. Constitution emerged from a revolutionary moment spurred by the political vanguard of the young nation’s faith ‘that successful political constitutions should emerge from the manners, customs, tastes, and genius of the people being constituted.’<sup>28</sup> The formula, whilst noble, fails on a few counts. First, the range of mores and values maintained by the people is temporally incarcerated to the ratifying moment, embalmed in a state of societal torpor. Secondly, the genius of the people constituting and being constituted is elevated over the genius of those peoples who are excluded from the constitutive process. Even if the Constitution was expressive of an entire nebulous culture’s unanimity towards abstract virtues, such a

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<sup>25</sup> Eric Slauter, *The State as a Work of Art: The Cultural Origins of the Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 41, (emphasis mine).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>27</sup> Veracini, “Decolonizing Settler Colonialism,” 13.

<sup>28</sup> Slauter, *The State as a Work of Art*, 9.

thin 'veneer of consensus' doesn't cover up the fissures that open up through the increasingly busy centuries.<sup>29</sup> Preserving the cultural values of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as inviolable tenets of the state leaves disparate, contradistinctive, and complicating worldviews funnelled into an equalising crucible that abjures equality in service of social singularity. The Constitution is more societal sepulchre than shelter if manipulated to its worst potential.

The U.S. Constitution has been semantically elusive since ratification, a slipperiness that is in patent conflict with the document's lionised treatment in the settler political imaginary as unshakable. As legal scholar and novelist Garrett Epps explains, 'many proclaim fidelity to a Constitution they seem to have barely read,' thereby 'worship[ping] the Constitution so deeply that they find its actual text a distraction' from its symbolic power.<sup>30</sup> This difference in the national imaginary of settler society versus the legal ramifications of the Constitution itself are no less politically important, and the imagined aspects of it are no more or less metaphorical in fact. Under the conditions of monotheism, the tensions between versatility and verisimilitude, between development and deadlock, are insuperable. Consequently, there is a peculiar schism between theoretical and practical registers in that the U.S. Constitution is 'articulated (and judicially parsed) in a heightened and universalized register that is in constant tension with the highly politicized and contested world implicated in its interpretation and performance.'<sup>31</sup> The abstract licenses it

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>30</sup> Epps, *American Epic*, ix. Just ask the majority of Americans what provision is granted by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Amendment.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Lancelot Mallios, "Tragic Constitution: United States Democracy and its Discontents," *PMLA* 129, no. 4 (October 2014): 710, <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2014.129.4.708>.

undergirds, mired as they are in historical contexts, just do not cohere with the staggered, complex changes of the society the Constitution directs. And, if it is difficult to square the U.S. Constitution with the national sovereignty it buttresses, then it is unsurprisingly even more difficult to position heterogeneous Indigenous alternatives in relation to the settler political imaginary. The *Inter Caetara* papal bull sanctioned by Pope Alexander VI in 1493 “empowered” European sovereign states to enact their ideologically conglomerate sovereignty overseas and proclaim ownership of lands occupied by non-Christian peoples.<sup>32</sup> Riding on this onslaught’s coattails, the Doctrine of Discovery—fully expressed within U.S. law by the Supreme Court during *Johnson v. M’Intosh* (1823)—is not explicitly endorsed in the Constitution, yet underpins the national endeavour it supports. This resonance is clear in legitimising the ongoing occupation of Indigenous lands stolen, or at best coercively obtained, by ‘the transformation of space, fundamentally driven by territorial expansion, the elimination of Indigenous peoples, and white settlement.’<sup>33</sup> With this aura of constitutional exaltation foregrounded, I argue that a dead angle has been encountered.

Explaining exactly what the U.S. Constitution imparts—or imposes—invites the daunting task of prioritising innumerable considerations of context, relevance, and history. Furthermore, speculating as to *what* the Constitution is talking about is

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<sup>32</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation further nationalised this authority, essentially sanctifying imperial colonialism. Indigenous activists like Steven Newcomb (Shawnee, Lenape), author of *Pagans in the Promised Land*, still campaign directly to the Vatican for the revocation of the bull which remains, technically, active. Even the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, typically regarded as a stalwart defender of curtailed rights at the nation’s top judicial table, invoked the Doctrine of Discovery in *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York* (2005).

<sup>33</sup> Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 49.

very different from asking *how* it talks in the first place. Constitutional interpretation, particularly in a literary vein of criticism, illustrates a 'complex national narrative, both text and textual hinterland.'<sup>34</sup> Epps' *American Epic*, for instance, embarks on a reading of the U.S. Constitution that treats it as an epic—almost Homeric—poem, which is in constant reflective conversation with itself. Regardless of whether or not one finds his account convincing, Epps' literary reading of the Constitution interrupts convenient or literalist interpretations that regularly prevail for the sake of settler profit and unity in the courtroom. 'Politics, even at the constitutional level, is at its heart about money' under a monotheistic epistemology whereby 'having convinced ourselves of our basic competitiveness, [colonial societies'] capitalist tendencies... were given free rein' throughout the design and implementation stages of socio-political architecture.<sup>35</sup>

Corporations, for example, have long been afforded the protective legal status of personhood by an ironic contortion of the Fourteenth Amendment. *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company* (1886) typifies this manner of absurdity by which the U.S.' legal framework was, as Silko puts it, 'designed by and for the feudal lords' of Europe. '[T]o this day, money and power deliver "justice" only to the rich and powerful; [the law] cannot do otherwise.'<sup>36</sup> The plaintiff company argued that California's taxation of its revenue was in violation of the equal protection afforded by the Fourteenth Amendment. Bancroft Davis, the court

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<sup>34</sup> James Mackay, "Introduction," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 23, no. 4 (2011): 10, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/studamerindilite.23.4.issue-4>.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 178; Brendon Larson, *Metaphors for Environmental Sustainability: Redefining Our Relationship with Nature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 69.

<sup>36</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and A Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 19-20.

reporter, was responsible for publishing the Court's opinion of the legal issues in the case for posterity. The headnote he prepared included a statement drawn from his memory that had allegedly been made by Justice Morrison Waite that declared:

The Court does not wish to hear argument on the question whether the provision in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution which forbids a state to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws applies to these corporations. We are all of the opinion that it does.<sup>37</sup>

Vizenor notes that 'the rules of evidence and precedent are selective by culture and tradition.'<sup>38</sup> Yet even within the settler legal framework there existed no legal precedent upon which this claim to corporate personhood balanced. Nevertheless, a validation of corporate personhood in legal terms occurred, meaning '[c]orporations were now armed with constitutional prerogatives' courtesy of a solitary judicial opinion, relayed through the interpretation of a solitary court reporter.<sup>39</sup> This precedent became functional legal guidance and was cited as *stare decisis* for twenty years.<sup>40</sup>

All this is to say that once imprinted upon the legal architecture, odd blemishes like this are stubborn. This is partly due to the accretive permanence of the Constitution and that of the U.S.' constitutionally devout legal framework. Tension crackles between contrary legal decisions as precedents accumulate, because '[r]igidly fixed precedents are not dialectical concepts; slavish obedience to

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<sup>37</sup> Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company, 118 U.S. 394 (1886).

<sup>38</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 87.

<sup>39</sup> William O. Douglas, "Stare Decisis," *Columbia Law Review* 49, no. 6 (1949): 738, <https://www-jstor-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/stable/1119147>.

<sup>40</sup> When court headnotes were officially confirmed to be legally impotent (*United States v. Detroit Timber & Lumber Company* (1906)), *Santa Clara v. Pacific Railroad* had already influenced cases that would waterfall into other legal tributaries.

stare decisis is not natural reasoning.<sup>41</sup> And in such a framework—built on fundamentals of Indigenous antipathy— insidious legal legacies against Indigenous sovereignties pervade. In contexts where ‘Indigenous peoples are not seen as full sovereigns under US or international law’ (which are intimately related structures) ‘Indigenous resistance to colonialism—even if for self-defense—is considered criminal.’<sup>42</sup> To pursue the rights provisioned by the Constitution and its amendments requires substantially more in the way of concession for Indigenous peoples, in terms of sovereignties, cosmologies, and geographies.

Borrows writes, ‘recognition and affirmation of Native American rights does not exist in the United States’ constitution’ and the socio-economic worldview it upholds.<sup>43</sup> The Indigenous peoples within, without, and between the United States are afforded little time in the Constitution. Homogenised and deployed as economic considerations, their sovereign presences are necessary yet elided creases of context, despite the fact that ‘[l]egal indigeneity is an incompletely theorized concept that is nonetheless indispensable in settler societies.’<sup>44</sup> Although the Constitution’s formulation of Indigenous polities as distinct from states, the federal government, and foreign nations has promising dimensions, the legal ramifications are deliberately contrary. Indeed, ‘[t]here are instances where recognition is *denied* as a means of repression,’ but there are also ‘other instances where recognition is *enforced* as a tool of repression.’<sup>45</sup> In the enduring matrix of political relationships

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<sup>41</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 159.

<sup>42</sup> Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 64.

<sup>43</sup> John Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 165.

<sup>44</sup> Gover, *Tribal Constitutionalism*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Veracini, “Decolonizing Settler Colonialism,” 8.

between Indigenous sovereignties as 'domestic dependent nations' and the settler state (for '*federally recognized* Indian tribes' only, of course) repression comes up in the coin flip, heads or tails, just as Veracini cautions.<sup>46</sup> Again, imposing a monotheistic, binarised relationship as the scaffolding mode of sovereign exchanges renders Indigenous self-determination possessive not (en)active. Thus, Indigenous sovereignties are minimised and subjugated in the national imaginary to come, placed without or within but never in ideologically creased elsewhere. This binary of recognition has fed the creation of sovereign constitutions by many Indigenous governments, constitutions which concomitantly disrupt and destabilise the superiority of the U.S. Constitution, but are still tied to federal recognition via 'the requirement that the community adopt a written constitution' and therefore conform to a settler mode, if not model, of sovereignty.<sup>47</sup> As it stands, there are over 300 Indigenous constitutions in various states of activity across the North American continent. These range from formal cookie-cutter reproductions of the U.S. Constitution to remarkably divergent structures that operate with the faith that 'a new form of constitution can change the broader legal nomos in which it operates,' regardless of the entanglement between constitutional governance and settler imperatives.<sup>48</sup> Some are 'intended to last ten years' while others are 'intended to last forever.'<sup>49</sup> But there is only one that explicitly promises '[t]he freedom of... artistic irony, and literary expression, shall not be denied, violated or controverted by the

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<sup>46</sup> Janet Reno [U.S. Attorney General], "Memorandum on Indian Sovereignty," *The United States Department of Justice Archives*, 01 June, 1995, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/ag/attorney-general-june-1-1995-memorandum-indian-sovereignty>, (emphasis mine).

<sup>47</sup> Gover, *Tribal Constitutionalism*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 149.

<sup>49</sup> Tatum et al., *Structuring Sovereignty*, 3.

government.<sup>50</sup> There is only one that, I argue, has been amended by virtue of that provision.

### **The Constitution of White Earth, and the Constitution of the White Earth Nation**

Principally written by Gerald Vizenor, the Constitution of the White Earth Nation was ratified by a two-thirds majority of tribal constitutional delegates in April 2009, following two years and four constitutional conventions of deliberation. Despite the legal consequences that promised to accompany the CWEN's adoption, none of the conventions' delegates were lawyers. Pragmatics notwithstanding, this decision reflected a shared belief that a constitution cooked up using the same legal recipe as that of the U.S. Constitution would wind up tasting just as bitter, because the 'United States Constitution sanctioned dominance' over its constituents and beyond.<sup>51</sup> As George Monbiot observes, a democracy, in the most optimistic sense, is a political system that 'allows the people to design the system,' not merely participate in it.<sup>52</sup> It would be naïve to presume that the U.S. Constitution had no influence on the CWEN's design, but it was categorically not supposed to have been

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<sup>50</sup> Gerald Vizenor et al., "The Constitution of the White Earth Nation," chap. 3, art. 5, in *The White Earth Nation: Ratification of a Native Democratic Constitution*, eds. Gerald Vizenor and Jill Doerfler (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 65, ProQuest Ebook Central. (All references to the CWEN hereafter drawn from this text).

<sup>51</sup> Vizenor, *Native Liberty*, 112.

<sup>52</sup> George Monbiot, *Out of the Wreckage: A New Politics for an Age of Crisis* (London: Verso, 2017), 184.

taken as a template (as with many other Indigenous constitutions recognised since the passage of the IRA).<sup>53</sup>

The White Earth Nation falls under the jurisdiction of the federally recognised Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, which encompasses the Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, Grand Portage, Leech Lake, and Mille Lacs reservations, as well as White Earth (which accounts for around half of MCT citizenry, yet only has one vote). A united polity nudged together by the IRA, the MCT was formed in 1934 with an ambiguous imperative: to ‘establish justice for our Tribe, and to conserve and develop our tribal resources.’<sup>54</sup> Modelled heavily on that of the United States, the MCT’s constitution was officially recognised two years later and remains active. As a member of the MCT, the White Earth Nation’s constitution has been interpreted by some as a unilateral act of secession—famously deemed ‘utterly without operation in law’ in *Texas v. White* (1869).<sup>55</sup> The CWEN, however, was not devised as a definitive alternative to the MCT. Indeed, notes from the constitutional convention in October 2007 reveal that many delegates held ‘that the MCT is politically important and maybe each reservation could have more independence and continue to participate in the MCT’ by ‘work[ing]’ to create a new relationship.<sup>56</sup> Put in brief, such a political formation doesn’t fly in the hierarchical settler rubric that insists on subsidiary

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<sup>53</sup> It’s important to note that the CWEN was subject to fewer practical pressures to conform in this regard, given that its development was towards splintering from a larger, already recognised polity in the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, not establishing recognition for a hitherto unrecognised community like, say, the Mashpee Wampanoag. For further depth on the history—and possible future—of Indigenous practices and documents of governance, both Miriam Jorgensen’s edited collection *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development* (2007), and Justin Richland and Sarah Deer’s *Introduction to Tribal Legal Studies* (2004) are solid launchpads.

<sup>54</sup> “Constitution and Bylaws of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe,” preamble, 24 July, 1936, 1, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/american-indian-const/PDF/36026761.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> *Texas v. White*, 74 U.S. 7 Wall. 700 700 (1868).

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix A.

Indigenous sovereignty as beneath settler sovereignty. The notion that multiple constitutional documents can represent co-constitutive sovereign dimensions working in dynamic reciprocity to reimagine networks of '[i]nter-Indigenous recognition... that operated in the multilateral order of indigenous governance prior to the acquisition of sovereignty over indigenous territories' is too divergent, in terms of political possibilities, for monotheorism to permit.<sup>57</sup> The overlaps disturb binary barriers. The ideological creases cannot be flattened out.

Whilst many supported the CWEN in nominal terms after the referendum, others stayed adversarial. Former Tribal Chairwoman of the White Earth Nation Erma Vizenor wrote in correspondence to (her cousin) Gerald that 'it frustrates me to hear our people think in terms of limitations.'<sup>58</sup> Evaluation of the CWEN's contents aside for a moment, the enervation that dogged the project's slowing progress, internal division, allegations of illegality, and, finally, abandonment all speak to limitations engineered and imposed by monotheoristic settler ideas of legitimate sovereignty. That is, even where Indigenous governments participate in settler models of governance willingly, that participation is still inflected by the material impacts of the options on offer and the risks of choosing otherwise. Under this tenor of reconciliation, N. Bruce Duthu (enrolled member of the United Houma Nation) explains that in such dynamics 'tribal sovereignty has been treated as juridical play dough, a malleable substance that can be shaped and formed, augmented or diminished, at the will of the federal sovereign' in order to maintain settler

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<sup>57</sup> Gover, *Tribal Constitutionalism*, 6.

<sup>58</sup> See Appendix B. Erma was censured and resigned from the post in 2015.

sovereignty takes the field as referee and player, both impartial and deeply invested.<sup>59</sup>

Whether the White Earth Nation's recalibration of its relationship with the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe is or isn't legal according to U.S. law is not the most germane question here. What *is* important is what and how the constitutive act itself disrupts. 'Within an internally heterogenous indigenous culture,' such as the White Earth Nation and other linked bands, 'the relatively conservative setting of the tribe is just one, albeit important, constitutive community among many.'<sup>60</sup> Emphasising, not reducing, the frictional encounters between these constitutive communities is important. So, how does interpellating the White Earth Nation in out-of-bounds ideological creases of political expression provoke fresh perceptions of the scope and scales of Indigenous sovereignties? If this new expression of White Earth sovereignty does explore dimensions of sovereignties that do not cohere with monotheistic hegemony, how can one evaluate its successes and shortfalls? Constitution as a process speaks to transmotion, dynamic reciprocity, and entanglements that need not be singular in their relationality. Veracini posits that if 'settler colonialism is a mode of domination premised on a particular relationship, its undoing will be a relationship.'<sup>61</sup> I agree with the sentiment, less so the claim: settler colonialism will not be undone so much as it will probably be ravelled by multifarious

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<sup>59</sup> N. Bruce Duthu, *Shadow Nations: Tribal Sovereignty and the Limits of Legal Pluralism* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2013), 158, Oxford Scholarship Online, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199735860.001.0001>. See, also, Stuart Christie's book-length investigation *Plural Sovereignties and Contemporary Indigenous Literature* for a sustained enquiry into how pluralism is expressed and enacted in literature.

<sup>60</sup> Gover, *Tribal Constitutionalism*, 25.

<sup>61</sup> Veracini, "Decolonizing Settler Colonialism," 7.

Indigenous sovereignties, and this process will emerge from manifold shifting relationships, web-like and transotionally energetic. The CWEN describes, or rather practices, one such set of relationships in motion. Vizenor's own relationship with the CWEN is just as fraught as the rest.

### **Ideological Creases are... An Anti-Nationalist Writing his Nation**

Vizenor's pivotal role in creating the CWEN is a touch out of character, politically at least. Two decades prior he highlighted 'the manifest manners of nationalism' as 'the most monotonous simulation of dominance' over Indigenous sovereignties.<sup>62</sup> In fact, Vizenor has presented as an ardent anti-nationalist throughout his career in literary activism, calling '[n]ationalism... a political reduction of very distinctive, emotive, imagic, and elusive traces in native literature.'<sup>63</sup> Accordingly, Vizenor refused the invitation to be the document's main author on three separate occasions, finally agreeing out of a sense of obligation:

I couldn't refuse again because it would have been a really gross insult and I would have regretted it. But I had no idea how to write a constitution. Where do you start, what is the course? I missed the introduction to constitution writing when I was a graduate student.<sup>64</sup>

Vizenor's neophyte status regarding formal constitutional writing was arguably a boon for the CWEN in the long-run. So, too, was his suspicion of nationalistic ends

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<sup>62</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 59-60.

<sup>63</sup> Correspondence from Gerald Vizenor to Erma Vizenor, 2008, YCAL MSS 539, Box 73, Gerald Robert Vizenor Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.

<sup>64</sup> Janna Knittel, "In the Natural World of Chance: An Interview with Gerald Vizenor," *Great River Review* 61, (Winter 2014): 30.

and origins. Nevertheless, Vizenor's neologistic storywork consistently redirects ossifying pressures towards transmotivational paths. As a piece of communal storywork, the CWEN participates in a relative fluidity in comparison to the U.S. Constitution, or that of the MCT. Importantly, the drafting process engendered—or exposed—ideological tensions that would not be smoothed out, but rather etch complicated creases in the pages of constitutional literature and gesture instead towards vibrant constitutive storywork, 'a tricky visionary resistance [which] is more than a structural reversion.'<sup>65</sup> As Abenaki scholar Lisa Brooks suggests in her critique of the CWEN, 'stories are at the basis of the imagination of nationhood,' and the sense of sovereign narrative that beats throughout the finished document is a result of Vizenor's constitutional storywork.<sup>66</sup>

Vizenor embarked convinced that the CWEN need be 'concise, and yet munificent, or generous enough to accommodate diverse liberal practices and traditions in the community.'<sup>67</sup> His hesitance betrays a suspicion—one that has since been justified—that the CWEN is ultimately insufficient as a catalyst of White Earth sovereignty without a matrix of other support structures which are not apparently forthcoming. Sure enough, the project—plebiscite assent notwithstanding—remains mired in criticism and bureaucratic obstruction arising from the broader governmental upheaval that would be incurred by the CWEN's enactment in more than theory. In 2015, following the marginal election of anti-reform council members,

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<sup>65</sup> Gerald Vizenor and A. Robert Lee, *Postindian Conversations* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 79.

<sup>66</sup> Lisa Brooks, "The Constitution of the White Earth Nation: A New Innovation in a Longstanding Indigenous Literary Tradition," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 58, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/studamerindilite.23.4.0048>.

<sup>67</sup> See Appendix C.

an oppositional majority began stymieing the implementation of the democratically sanctioned constitution. They went so far as to censor White Earth's monthly newspaper *Anishinaabeg Today*, snuffing out any and all reportage on the CWEN by the outlet. Subsequently, the transitional team responsible for embedding the CWEN within White Earth governance dissolved and grant money acquired to facilitate the CWEN's implementation was quietly returned.<sup>68</sup> Thus, despite being a 'pragmatic, visionary, and most politically relevant text of indigenous and tribally specific nationhood,' the new White Earth constitution slips further from enactment and seems all but calcified—a dying constitution.<sup>69</sup>

Between the imposition of settler colonial political arrangements and the convenient assimilative bundling of distinct Indigenous communities under singular political conglomerates, Anna Krausová contends that such reformations often represented 'an exogenously caused *displacement* that replaced the pre-existing system[s] of autonomous political units by a culturally alien model.'<sup>70</sup> This is a blunt strike that perhaps overemphasises the role of cultural alienation. Nonetheless, though, Krausová's argument skirts the incommensurability between Indigenous sovereignties and settler hegemony, illustrating that under the constitution of the MCT, the 'tribe's self-governing ability operates from a [mechanically] deferential

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<sup>68</sup> Adrian Glass-Moore, "White Earth's new constitution, approved two years ago, is stalled," *INFORUM*, November 16, 2015, <https://www.inforum.com/news/3883402-white-earths-new-constitution-approved-two-years-ago-stalled>; Anna Krausová, "Rebuilding the White Earth Nation through Constitutional Reform," *New Political Science* 41, no. 2 (2019): <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393148.2019.1594503>.

<sup>69</sup> Brooks, "The Constitution of the White Earth Nation," 58.

<sup>70</sup> Krausová, "Rebuilding the White Earth Nation," 202, (italics in original).

position to that of the U.S. government.<sup>71</sup> Contradistinctively, the CWEN generates 'a sense of individual and collective sovereignty' formulated to dispel the tacit hierarchical connections to the federal political structure.<sup>72</sup> The MCT stipulates members must be U.S. citizens and also must relinquish citizenship within any other Indigenous nation or community.<sup>73</sup> There are many reasons for these requirements, and I am not positioned to assess their validity. One thing these requirements *do*, though, is leverage a fundamental disparity of legitimacy, yet likeness of form, between Indigenous sovereignties and settler sovereignty.<sup>74</sup> In the case of the MCT, such a nationalist nesting doll model of sovereignty 'recognis[es] an indigenous sovereignty' in a soft approach solely 'in order to deny it' with the sly false clemency of having visibly considered its viability.<sup>75</sup> This is one of many colonial 'systems of normative ordering' whereby Indigenous polities 'are subordinate to and subsist within the shadows of the nation-state.'<sup>76</sup> Shadows, however, 'are vital motion, visionary and animate' entities that cannot exist in isolation, relying on interplays of occlusion and illumination.<sup>77</sup> Shadows are cast in and by creases, and ideological creases between Indigenous and non-Indigenous sovereignties can be understood as sites of what Vizenor calls 'shadow survivance' that explore dimensions of

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<sup>71</sup> David E. Wilkins and Sheryl Lightfoot, "Oaths of Office in Tribal Constitutions: Swearing Allegiance, but to Whom?," *American Indian Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Autumn 2008): 402-403, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25487894>.

<sup>72</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Native Provenance: The Betrayal of Cultural Creativity* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 34.

<sup>73</sup> Revised Constitution and Bylaws of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, art. 2, sec. 2.

<sup>74</sup> The MCT's oath of office for elected tribal committee members also requires that officials vow to 'preserve, support and protect the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe,' in that order, enforcing an evident stratification of sovereignties (art. 3, sec. 1).

<sup>75</sup> Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 41.

<sup>76</sup> Duthu, *Shadow Nations*, 9.

<sup>77</sup> Vizenor, *Native Provenance*, 44.

sovereignties beyond the two of binary monotheism.<sup>78</sup> Thus, the positionality of the CWEN amidst shadows harbours the potential to be dispossessive *or* disruptive. The CWEN is not itself a sufficient departure from settler colonial subordination. Sufficiency and necessity, though, are different things, and the incommensurabilities the CWEN's failings and successes draw attention to cast light and shadows on other sovereign forms. This priming work guarantees that, for Vizenor, the CWEN remains 'worth the bother, worth the delusions.'<sup>79</sup>

Though Vizenor 'created at least a hundred categories of critical ideas and principles of governance,' the CWEN does not deviate all that radically from a typical monotheistic constitutional form at first glance.<sup>80</sup> With a little more creative attention to the document, however, the CWEN emerges as transmotional shadow survivance, outlining praxes of storywork 'as a means to draw insights and possibilities to Indigenous experience and knowledge.'<sup>81</sup> So, with these aspects in focus, I read the CWEN as an agent of shadow survivance that operates in transmotional torsion and tension with the constitution of the United States. This is not an easy relationship, but is one that remains creased like 'shadows in the snow, [the] shimmer of light on a wet spider web.'<sup>82</sup> Then, I trace these creases outward as they develop into a vibrant storywork amendment: *Treaty Shirts*.

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<sup>78</sup> Gerald Vizenor, "The Ruins of Representation: Shadow Survivance and the Literature of Dominance," *American Indian Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (Winter 1993): <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1184777>.

<sup>79</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 51.

<sup>80</sup> Knittel, "In the Natural World of Chance," 30.

<sup>81</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Foreword," in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, eds. Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo (London: Zed Books, 2019), xi.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

## Shadow Survivance, Now in 3D!: Constitutional Creases Quickening the CWEN

Shadow survivance can be conceptualised as a mode of dynamically reciprocal subversion which operates both by and on settler colonial assumptions. Anishinaabe activist and writer Winona LaDuke explains that the 'Anishinaabeg world undulated between material and spiritual shadows, never clear which was more prominent at any time.'<sup>83</sup> Slippages between things and their shadows produce silhouettes, grooves that are crisper than their constituent parts, which accommodate multiple worldviews at once. The CWEN is instrument and outcome of shadow survivance—a node in a network of subversive anti-colonial alterities that cannot be straight-up dismissed, because it retains just enough of a resemblance to the received norms it complicates as to give the settler imaginary pause. I maintain this position because the CWEN's relationship with the U.S. Constitution is one of entanglement but not dependence. Again, I invoke Dennison's formulation: 'speaking of sovereignty as an entanglement allows us to differentiate between sovereignty and autonomy,' and thus '[s]overeignty is best understood as requiring continual action and ever-deepening entanglements with other polities.'<sup>84</sup>

The two-paragraph preamble of the CWEN demonstrates an active process of feeling out such entanglements. It is written in such a way as to subtly but unequivocally detail its constituents' specific priorities. These priorities deviate

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<sup>83</sup> Winona LaDuke, *All our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999), 115.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 685; 693.

sharply from those of the U.S. Constitution, yet recall its vocabulary and syntax in a subversively off-key echo:

The Anishinaabeg of the White Earth Nation are the successors of a great tradition of continental liberty, a native constitution of families, totemic associations. The Anishinaabeg create stories of natural reason, of courage, of loyalty, humor, spiritual inspiration, survivance, reciprocal altruism, and native cultural sovereignty.

We the Anishinaabeg of the White Earth Nation in order to secure an inherent and essential sovereignty, to promote traditions of liberty, justice and peace, and reserve common resources, and to ensure the inalienable rights of native governance for our posterity, do constitute, ordain, and establish this Constitution of the White Earth Nation.<sup>85</sup>

The preamble of the U.S. Constitution is briefer, more focussed on nouns:

**We the People** of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.<sup>86</sup>

Given the significant ideological creases at play, these preambles merit close reading; the likenesses that link the two also accentuate their disparities. This contradistinction reveals an acute sense by which, courtesy of the one-two-punch of militaristic and religious diatribes of savagery and salvation that contributed to the U.S. Constitution's ratification, '[u]nawittingly and unwillingly, Natives were the handmaidens of the United States's imperial Constitution.'<sup>87</sup> On a structural level, preambles also represent potent ideological canvases on constitutional literature, occupying relatively liminal spaces between the explanatory, rhetoric, and legal

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<sup>85</sup> The Constitution of the White Earth Nation, preamble.

<sup>86</sup> U.S. Constitution, preamble, *National Archives*, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>, (bold type indicates larger type).

<sup>87</sup> Gregory Ablavsky, "The Savage Constitution," *Duke Law Journal* 63, no. 5 (2014): 1084, <https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/dlj/vol63/iss5/1>. Consider the manipulative federalist promises made to Georgia guaranteeing martial aid against 'savage' incursions if and only if it joined the Union.

registers to exert the 'integrative power' of collective narrative.<sup>88</sup> In *Imagining Sovereignty*, Carlson unpacks the CWEN's preamble, arguing that it evinces sovereignty 'in a radically different manner than the business-committee model of the [Minnesota] Chippewa [Tribe] Constitution.'<sup>89</sup> Now to triangulate the CWEN in a multivalent locations of shifting shadow survivance by following the thread further back to the constitutional format that scaffolded the MCT. Importantly, the CWEN—in preamble and at large—does not disavow the United States Constitution wholesale. Rather, it critically explores what is helpful to emulate and what is vital to forego through an active process of storying the White Earth Anishinaabe.

I mentioned before that one enduring weakness of the U.S. Constitution is its failure to clarify who exactly the nebulous 'People' that are speaking/spoken for happen to be. Epps submits that the celebrated mantra 'We the People' takes on the uncanny tone of an inverted prayer in 'an inspired act of ventriloquism.'<sup>90</sup> The "People" are consequently installed as a presupposition of a group, unmoored to anything that precedes the phrase's very utterance. This incantation also performs the literary legerdemain of somehow speaking to the reader in their own voice. It is an audacious feint which unfolds in three acts: first, it presumes a unity of conviction; second, it cements that unity as anterior to all that follows; and only third does it finally attempt to evidence that cohesion, far later down the line. These People are, for all intents and purposes, a collective pool of political conscripts who are

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<sup>88</sup> Liav Orgad, "The Preamble in Constitutional Interpretation," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 8, no. 4 (October 2010): 715, <https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/mor010/>.

<sup>89</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 154.

<sup>90</sup> Epps, *American Epic*, 4.

irretrievably homogenised and may therefore be inculcated with whatever characteristics, viewpoints, or authorities as are beneficial to the state going forward. If diverse forms of Indigenous 'sovereignty [are] inherent and [are] not a privilege that the United States has granted Native nations,' then it is evident that the MCT's constitutional subsidiarity to the U.S. Constitution is incompatible with sovereign dynamics of reciprocity.<sup>91</sup> This incompatibility, which is not the same as incommensurability, yields an uneasy 'coexistence of the antithetical doctrines of tribal sovereignty... and federal plenary power' in a relationship of the 'utmost uncertainty' regarding jurisdiction and the cosmological possibilities of unlike politics.<sup>92</sup>

As an imagined archetype, this orthodox notion of a people is isolated, abstract, and without societal or historical context has proceeded unqualified into 'an age where the market value of history has fallen' and, as Rob Nixon contends, 'America [tends] to side with amnesia.'<sup>93</sup> Conversely, the CWEN's 'postindian preamble' takes care not to emulate such a declarative gambit.<sup>94</sup> So keen are its framers to avoid de-historicising the CWEN's constitutive preamble that its corresponding statement of intent fails to make the cut for first paragraph. Bumped to the second, the possessive purviews of White Earth sovereign qualities follow more significant constitutive matters. Rooted in a consciousness that the 'way

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<sup>91</sup> Jill Doerfler, "A Citizen's Guide to the White Earth Constitution: Highlights and Reflections," in *The White Earth Nation: Ratification of a Native Democratic Constitution*, eds. Gerald Vizenor and Jill Doerfler (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 82.

<sup>92</sup> Wilkins and Lightfoot, "Oaths of Office in Tribal Constitutions," 407.

<sup>93</sup> Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl Ann Michael, "An Interview with Rob Nixon," *Contemporary Literature* 43, no. 3 (Autumn, 2002): 431, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1209107>.

<sup>94</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 155.

forward' often 'requires bringing to a halt the mad rush forward,' history, memory, and community are the wellsprings from which the CWEN draws its dynamism.<sup>95</sup> Suitably, the opening words are not a vehicle by which its people are spoken *for*, but instead as one by which its people are spoken *about*. These people are the White Earth Anishinaabeg, leaving no room for doubt as to whose voices this constitution strives to amplify. Subsequently, this specific group, defined by the 'how' of their practices, is implicitly linked to their community's past as successors in the original legacy-oriented meaning of survivance. In relief, the U.S. Constitution's represented populace look more like orphans suddenly sprung into existence or, at best, actively emancipated from their background(s). As successors, the constituents of the White Earth Nation are established as a group who continue to endure through time, 'actuat[ing] a presence, not an absence' that is sustained by much more than the 'crude racial arithmetic' of the blood quantum, which the delegates to the CWEN conventions perceived as a slow bleed to communal diminishment.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth Ammons, *Brave New Words How Literature Will Save the Planet* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 152.

<sup>96</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 14; Gerald Vizenor, "Constitutional Consent: Native Traditions and Parchment Barriers," in *The White Earth Nation: Ratification of a Native Democratic Constitution*, eds. Gerald Vizenor and Jill Doerfler (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 44. The CWEN has been extolled and excoriated for rejecting blood quantum as a valid method of deciding citizenship, which promises to expand the plateaued population of the White Earth Anishinaabeg. Proponents highlight the ensuing stabilisation of shrinking numbers; critics caution against the added strain that such a recalibration could exert on the White Earth's strained financial resources. Although support for blood quantum as an isolate metric of tribal citizenship is scant, too many academic interlocutors (particularly those distanced from the quotidian operation of tribal governments) side-line the quandaries simply nixing it as a qualifier pose. In either case, as with many aspects of federally engineered identification politics, excising one racist lynchpin of a flawed system does not fix the system. It might not even change it substantively. Without fail, it imperils the marginalised people living within the system. This ideological tension speaks to a facet of the complicated ramifications when available options are laid out in dichotomous, monotheistic terms.

Little Peguis Anishinaabe scholar Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair provides a useful context here, observing that as ‘life is constantly moving, fluid, and interconnected, the most meaningful relationship with it is to embody these same principles in a reciprocal and ecological exchange.’<sup>97</sup> Sinclair describes here something very much like the interplay of natural reason and transmotion that I argue underpins dynamic reciprocity between and amongst unlike worldviews, and through which Indigenous-settler relationships might be brought into more faithful relationships of sovereign exchange. Put succinctly, White Earth sovereignty takes work and abjures inertia. As Brooks suggests, citizens are exhorted ‘not merely to “be” Anishinaabe by relationship to ancestry or territory, but to “do” Anishinaabe by participating in the activity of survivance’ in dynamic ways that may not look the same one day as they do the next.<sup>98</sup> This attitude deploys and declares sovereignty in co-constitutive interplay. The resurgence of Indigenous sovereignties may be easier said than done, but each helps the other along.

The second paragraph in the CWEN’s preamble is far more structurally reminiscent of that of the United States’ Constitution. And yet the fact that there is a second paragraph at all once again needles the U.S. Constitution for its paucity of demographic context. The U.S. Constitution strains to speak into being that abstract, *more perfect Union*. Of course, it does so without a base—that is, an acknowledged and interrogated history—that it seeks to perfect further. Where Chapter 8 of the

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<sup>97</sup> Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, “K’zaugin: Storying Ourselves into Life,” in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*, eds. Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 86, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>98</sup> Brooks, “The Constitution of the White Earth Nation,” 65.

CWEN explains that the community's societal goals are 'taught,' 'demonstrated,' and 'encouraged' via storywork and communal effort, the U.S. Constitution's simply are. Justice is 'established,' Welfare is 'promoted,' Blessings of Liberty are 'secure.' These things are all past-tense and achievements—all ready and already. They are qualitative states, not processes. They are proper nouns, not responsibilities. Not much wonder, since the U.S. Constitution 'was drafted by property owners, with the protection of territorialised property a central focus and, consequently, with a range of specific and ideological features tied to the political subjectivity of the possessive individual.'<sup>99</sup> The settler concept of territorial property is, as with many other provisions in the Constitution, entirely too focused on that individualistic abstractions of rights unbalanced by responsibilities that Moreton-Robinson marks as core to the liberal project of white possessive cosmology. This is not to presume an insurmountable ideological impasse; the 'universalism of liberalism and the particularism of Indigenous rights should not be perceived as mutually exclusive but rather as reference points to begin a new form of negotiation.'<sup>100</sup> Rather, the provisions of the CWEN and its commonalities and disparities with settler governance are entangled. Congruent with a framework of dynamic reciprocity, this sovereign-to-sovereign relationship recognises the complicated spaces of ideologically creased shadow survivance in which the CWEN works.

The symbiotic 'silence and sense of motion in memories' at work in the CWEN reconfigure Indigenous *and* settler political orientations, contextualising the U.S.

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<sup>99</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 65.

<sup>100</sup> Moreton-Robinson, "Towards a New Research Agenda?," 385.

Constitution as a simultaneous technique of resistance against colonial domination and insistence upon its inversion.<sup>101</sup> Ironically, the CWEN's nod toward the U.S. Constitution's wording is a story of its own, reminding the reader of Indigenous nations' subjugation within the U.S. and the way that Indigenous folks have changed and have been changed by that history. By this mode of constitutional shadow survivance, the U.S. Constitution's lack of context is repurposed as context for the CWEN; a story emerges out of silence.

**'The magical clouds of her breath lasted in the cold night air': Indigenous Sovereignties Always on the Move<sup>102</sup>**

Despite the shortfalls of the CWEN, it represents a strong demonstration of White Earth sovereignty. Or, maybe more accurately, it is a strong start. Nevertheless, as with any political statement left isolated, the CWEN is liable to enervate in short order. In traditional terms of governance, it already has. 'Sovereignty,' writes Seneca scholar Michelle H. Raheja, 'is a process that is kinetic rather than a rigid set of principles that transcends time and space unchanged,' and the related emphasis placed on momentum and procedural continuance in her summation can be seen as wanting with the CWEN.<sup>103</sup> Vizenor has called the CWEN a 'hermeneutical *event*' inasmuch as it signifies the culmination of two years' worth of communal

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<sup>101</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 71.

<sup>102</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 125.

<sup>103</sup> Michelle H. Raheja, "Visual Sovereignty," in *Native Studies Keywords*, eds. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle H. Raheja (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 28, ProQuest Ebook Central.

interpretations and debates regarding the White Earth Nation's traditions, practices, rights, and responsibilities.<sup>104</sup> He also claims that there exists 'no other constitution in the world that contains the profound sentiments of survivance, natural reason, and the native capacity of continental liberty.'<sup>105</sup> Perhaps so, yet the transnational sentiments of sovereignty the CWEN enfold are, formally, squeezed too tight. Distilling the fluid elements that comprise Vizenorean philosophy into a conventional constitutional makeup gives rise to the most problematic dimensions of the CWEN and, consequently, its current purgatorial position in White Earth political life. White Earth praxes of constitution, which are 'defined as mobile and contested,' are 'threatened by institutionalization' in monotheistic grammars of political legitimacy, 'and by forms of recognition that entail institutionalization.'<sup>106</sup> Indigenous sovereignties typically resist envelopment within settler political normativity. Whilst the formal constitution of the CWEN destabilises such norms by 'innovatively register[ing] a particular vision of the real complexity of the indigenous political life *in our present historical moment,*' the fact that it nevertheless accedes to a decoctive, definitive structure, however revolutionary, contributes to an inadvertent contradictory solidification and abstraction of those ideas.<sup>107</sup>

Vizenor's relentless revisioning and reassessment of his own theories indicate a worldview that troubles the Platonically derived metaphysical arrangements of universal form and particular prevalent in Eurocentric monotheism. Perfect ideals

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<sup>104</sup> Vizenor, "Constitutional Consent," 17, (emphasis mine). This nods to Sheldon Wolin, for whom the U.S. Constitution was simultaneously a political and hermeneutical moment.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>106</sup> Gover, *Tribal Constitutionalism*, 23.

<sup>107</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 156. I don't buy Carlson's implied temporal ubiquity of a shared present here, but I will address that in Chapter Three.

are invoked in such metaphysics as nebulous exemplars of moral imperatives, and I cannot help but return to possessive, static qualities like Tranquility and Welfare in the settler imaginary. Such forms are definitionally beyond visualisation or instantiation and so run contrary to the embedded particularity that is shared by many Indigenous cosmologies. Vizenor upends this epistemological hegemony. He asserts that Indigenous worldviews are 'personal creations of the real, not the decorative lace of metaphysics' entrenched in a monotheistic narrative of power.<sup>108</sup> Rebuffing universality in favour of natural reason's experiential particularity, Vizenor conveys a 'consciousness and sense of incontestable presence that arises from experience in the natural world, by sudden storms, by migration of cranes... and faces in the stone.'<sup>109</sup> Where Platonic philosophy derives all particulars from rigid universals in top-down definitions characterised by tones of hierarchy, superiority, and one above many, natural reason articulates variegation, incommensurability, and many overlapping one another.

Treating the CWEN as paradigmatic veers toward an abstraction that places the wrong emphases to yield an amorphous indigenous Sovereignty, not specific Indigenous sovereignties. It is not, however, terminal. This part of the CWEN's trajectory and the processes of constitution it engages can be thought of as something like the neck of an hourglass through which the swirling incommensurabilities of sovereignties must pass. The concentration of these political ethea into such restrictive epistemological spaces as a constitutional document,

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<sup>108</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 73.

<sup>109</sup> Gerald Vizenor, "The Aesthetics of Survivance," in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 11.

although probably necessary, carries risks in the long term. The stories are more and they have further to travel. Even if '[t]he narrative of [Vizenor's] strategy to write a constitution is an original Native story,' the CWEN as a 'hermeneutical event' is a dicey endgame.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, I think Vizenor slips inasmuch as conceptualising the CWEN as a discrete event. At least, he was mistaken at the time of writing. I am reminded of Justice's assurance that multi-generic Indigenous storyworks are not only constructive, they are also attritional, representing 'just one of many volleys in that long rebellion' against settler dispossession.<sup>111</sup> Events are started and finished, but the CWEN is ongoing, despite the obstructions. Although the writing of the document and its ratification are events, the holistic constitution, as a process, is better articulated as a transmotional process. Six years since ratification, the CWEN is dormant. Let's see how it looks after twenty.

Vizenor's constitution for the White Earth Nation did not end with Chapter 20, Article 1. The constitutive process extends into *Treaty Shirts* where it is suggested that '[t]he Constitution of the White Earth Nation was set more than sixty years too late in any critical calendar of continental liberty.'<sup>112</sup> Vizenor has spoken about the difficulty of authoring the CWEN through a range of interviews.<sup>113</sup> Weaving creativity and received legal validity is no mean feat. The vivid storywork follow-up to the task, however, both performs and invites far more nuanced critique of the CWEN and its efficacy as an article of White Earth sovereignty. *Treaty Shirts* is the aperture that

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<sup>110</sup> Vizenor, "Constitutional Consent," 51.

<sup>111</sup> Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2018), xxi.

<sup>112</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 12.

<sup>113</sup> See: "In the Natural World of Chance: An Interview with Gerald Vizenor" conducted by Janna Knittel, and "'You're Always More Famous When You Are Banished': Gerald Vizenor on Citizenship, War, and Continental Liberty" conducted by Colleen Eils et al.

opens up into the other side of the hourglass. Reading the CWEN or, indeed, *Treaty Shirts* in isolation is invariably stunted. The two are co-creative perspectives on White Earth sovereignty and work together to triangulate a stronger sense of Indigenous sovereign presence that combats settler monotheorism in the trenches of ideological creases. Casting shadows of survivance upon one another, these two formally dissimilar yet cosmologically co-constitutive 'literary works disseminate or contest ideological structures related to legal norms or institutions.'<sup>114</sup> Thus, the ground I have covered until now has not been a mere framing exercise for the way I read *Treaty Shirts*. Instead, I have covered it because the only way to perform an adequate reading of either text is by reading both in dynamic reciprocity, the latter functioning as a storywork set of amendments of the former.

### ***Treaty Shirts* Amending the CWEN: The Crew of the *Baron of Patronia***

Published just after the CWEN was cast into formal uncertainty, *Treaty Shirts* invites its listener-readers to entertain a speculative future in which the Great Peace of Montreal (1701),<sup>115</sup> the CWEN, and by extension the White Earth Nation in its entirety have been legally dissolved, 'abandoned overnight' by one devastating act of congressional plenary abrogation.<sup>116</sup> Vizenor foregrounds the Great Peace early on (and by reference in the novel's title) cognisant of the fact that 'treaties, as texts,

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<sup>114</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 6-7.

<sup>115</sup> The 1701 peace treaty between 39 Indigenous Nations of North America and what was then New France.

<sup>116</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 1. Congressional plenary power was entrenched in *Lone Wolf v Hitchcock* (187 U.S. 553, 1903) and derived from the ruling that the judiciary remains unable to supersede congressional plenary power over legally dependant—and increasingly materially dependent—Indian tribes. This ruling still holds.

expose with particular clarity the relationships between literary and legal interpretation.<sup>117</sup> Treaties undergird some of Indigenous peoples' earliest entanglements with colonial interlopers. They represent the most robust legal deployments of sovereignty within the settler legal architecture in theoretical terms, especially as treaties with Indigenous polities are the supreme law of settler state sovereignty. Accordingly, the unilateral nullification of treaties disavows 'a trustworthy entente after more than three centuries of diplomacy, territorial wars, colonial turnabouts, separatism and reservations, and the many obscure resolutions of sovereign nations.'<sup>118</sup>

Seven outcasts constitute the storytelling cadre of *Treaty Shirts*, all of whom present fresh ideological stances on the CWEN and the White Earth Nation as a sovereign entity. Shortly following the abrogation, Archive, Savage Love, Gichi Noodin, Waasese, Justice Molly Crèche, Moby Dick, and Hole in the Storm, artists and activists all, are 'renounced and rebuked as extremists and exiled' in direct contravention of the constitution that they strive to defend, which proclaims '[c]itizens shall never be banished from the White Earth Nation.'<sup>119</sup>

The exiles tender f(r)ictional accounts of their joint banishment from the White Foxy Casino, 'a strange world' and the ersatz seat of power for new 'sector governor' Godtwit Moon and his cadre of what Vizenor terms 'tradition fascists.'<sup>120</sup> Structurally, the novel moves in recursive circles with the same basic anatomy retraced on seven

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<sup>117</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 131.

<sup>118</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 1. See John Borrows' work on the relative efficacy of sovereign treaty agreements as political bedrocks on which to build reciprocal Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 6; The Constitution of the White Earth Nation, chap. 3, art. 16.

<sup>120</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 36; 24; 66.

occasions by each of the crew of exiles. Each version hits common beats, and yet each also recalls the finer details with almost as much dissonance as accordance, further exposing the inarticulacy of the U.S. Constitution's unwarranted claims to a unified "we." Each chapter is narrated by a new voice, each providing contained individual constitutions, as Stina Attebery observes in her review.<sup>121</sup> From the outset, these seven proponents of White Earth Sovereignty bicker and squabble amongst themselves; none are presented as "right" in their explanations and expressions of White Earth sovereignty. Moby Dick 'moaned' as Gichi Noodin 'shouted' as Savage Love 'declared' their contrary, frustrating, and important diagnostics and prognostics for the constitution. Yet despite the 'marvellous contradictions,' they seldom say much that invites definition.<sup>122</sup> There is no final thesis statement to take from *Treaty Shirts* other than a demonstration of the potential of dynamic reciprocity not only between Indigenous sovereignties, but between constitutive dimensions within Indigenous sovereignties. The co-generative process of storywork evinces the tangled nature of the sovereignty it expresses.

One common crease of each telling of the story is their mutual adherence to a consistent two-part structure that includes a meditation on the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the White Earth Nation, and an account of the exiles' voyage on the *Baron of Patronia*, getting underway 'to carry out the virtue and integrity of the democratic constitution.'<sup>123</sup> Only Archive serves a second term as

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<sup>121</sup> Stina Attebery, "Speculative Constitutions: Gerald Vizenor's *Treaty Shirts*," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, November 26, 2016, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/speculative-constitutions-gerald-vizenors-treaty-shirts/>.

<sup>122</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 13; 4.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

narrator, and, as Carlson puts it, '[o]nly at the end of the book,' during Archive's narrative reprise, do 'we move forward a bit, in narrative terms.'<sup>124</sup> Developing this line of thought, I suggest that it is only at the end of the book that we are actually critically equipped to move forward, having explored the ideological creases that each of Vizenor's transmotional raconteurs notch in the narrative weave. In this sense, *Treaty Shirts* does not so much unfold as a story, but enfolds as many stories. 'Single stories,' writes Justice, 'are shallow, but easily mobilized to support inequality, bigotry, and self-interest.'<sup>125</sup> And, in the same way that a single, mono-perspectival telling of the story contained within *Treaty Shirts* is not enough for it to be a transmotional piece of literature, a single reading of the novel is also unsatisfactory.

In *Treaty Shirts* more so than anywhere else in his catalogue, Vizenor makes the process of reading hard work for his audience because he relentlessly 'demands their involvement' in the effort and exercise of that storywork.<sup>126</sup> At the edge of progression in the narrative, the listener-reader is denied access time and time again. Teased by 'the fakery of literary denouement,' one is bidden to backtrack and traverse the landscape of this constitutive storywork afresh with a new guide.<sup>127</sup> The route the guide leads one down may vary at times; at others, it will be similar, but there are other footprints nonetheless. Thus, listener-readers are exhorted to pay attention to the 'gray areas of reality' where the trails between the narrative routes both meet and part and the creases that emerge.<sup>128</sup> In this fashion, one's repeated

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<sup>124</sup> David J. Carlson, "Review of *Treaty Shirts* by Gerald Vizenor," *Transmotion* 3, no. 1 (2017): 185, <https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/03/tm.349>.

<sup>125</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 37.

<sup>126</sup> Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor*, 12.

<sup>127</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 4.

<sup>128</sup> Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor*, 91.

readings come to operate as something like a mobile triangulation of perspectives that must be respected and revised before one is finally prepared to advance with the necessary context to draw whatever inferences we may. Of course, this is reflective of the idea that, as with the pursuit of sovereignty, 'sometimes it will be uncomfortable. Sometimes it will not be expedient.'<sup>129</sup> The gradual triangulation involved here is a transmotional process, which is by no means a smooth exercise, and hence the novel is laid out as a site of methodological resistance to monotheorism and binary modes of political legitimacy.

With this in mind, I interpret the novel in a concordantly transmotional style by tracing characters' accounts as recitational storywork, influenced by Laguna Pueblo poet Paula Gunn Allen's averral that recital 'has an entrancing effect. Its regular recurrence creates a state of consciousness best described as "oceanic"' that emphasises both commonalities and subtle divergences.<sup>130</sup> I explore *Treaty Shirts'* communal story through three linked thematic foci: tradition fascism as a surmountable barrier to transmotional sovereignties; the exiles' creative re-envisioning of the CWEN as Indigenous shadow survivance in action, quickening the document; and the role of productive transgression expressing sovereignties in familiar and unexpected ways, whereby those sovereignties are emboldened both by the legalities and illegalities of their deployments. By considering these themes

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<sup>129</sup> Gyasi Ross, "Democrats Turn on Native Communities Once Again & Kill Tribal Sovereignty Bill," *Daily Kos*, April 17, 2018, [https://m.dailykos.com/stories/2018/4/17/1757701/-Democrats-Turn-on-Native-Communities-Once-Again-Kill-Tribal-Sovereignty-Bill?\\_=2018-04-17T00%3A59%3A06.847-07%3A00](https://m.dailykos.com/stories/2018/4/17/1757701/-Democrats-Turn-on-Native-Communities-Once-Again-Kill-Tribal-Sovereignty-Bill?_=2018-04-17T00%3A59%3A06.847-07%3A00).

<sup>130</sup> Paula Gunn Allen, "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 250.

alongside the inconsistencies of opinion offered by each of the exiles, I contend that we can track where *Treaty Shirts*' ideological creases run deepest.

As they sail along the U.S./Canadian border on the *Baron of Patronia*, 'that marvellous houseboat of survivance,' the group participate in an unsanctioned government in exile that confounds the territorial border between the two settler states on waves of transmotion.<sup>131</sup> These are 'the first political exiles with a constitution,' and they broadcast nightly radio shows in an ongoing storywork tattoo of Indigenous presence that crosses the settler-imposed border, 'which has divided North America's Native peoples between separate nation-states, and thus between different experiences of colonialism,' freely.<sup>132</sup> This border transgression is potent since it demonstrates White Earth sovereignty in action: not constrained, defined, or contingent upon a form of identity constructed in opposition to settler colonial states. 'Motion is a human right that is not bound by borders,' Vizenor writes, and, in crossing the border, Canada and the United States are rejected as national containers for a diluted, amorphous model of monotheorised Indigenous sovereignty.<sup>133</sup> The 'easy wake of the houseboat' criss-crosses the invisible border, creating reified (albeit temporary) creases—scoring paths as well as points—against the cadastral ideology of settler colonial superiority.<sup>134</sup> Thus, 'Vizenor's fiction explores mobile forms of citizenship' that elude the monotheoristic settler narrative

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<sup>131</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts* 6.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 2; Maggie Ann Bowers, "Discursive Positioning: A Comparative Study of Postcolonialism in Native Studies Across the US-Canada Border," in *Parallel Encounters: Culture at the Canada-US Border*, eds. Gillian Roberts and David Stirrup (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013), 111.

<sup>133</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 188-189.

<sup>134</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 69.

of 'dominance, covenants, and territorial boundaries... the means and declarations of separatism and nationalism.'<sup>135</sup>

The justification for the dispossessive turn that abrogates the CWEN is, predictably, couched in financial means and ends; it follows the salted earth trajectory of neoliberal colonialism, which Elizabeth Povinelli usefully articulates as 'not a thing, but a pragmatic concept' of dispossession, and it does not target the White Earth Anishinaabeg specifically.<sup>136</sup> Instead, the federal government swings an indiscriminate scythe over what it perceives to be the contingent, subsidiary, and homogenous sovereignty of Indigenous communities en masse by terminating over three hundred treaties in one special session on October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2034, the date that will mark Vizenor's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. In response to a catastrophic stock market crash, Congress 'substituted federal sectors for reservations and state counties to manage the burdens of social security and hundreds of other national strategies, entitlements, and endorsements.'<sup>137</sup> Woven from the tattered filaments of treaties like those of Fort Laramie, Pickering, and Walla Walla, this speculative betrayal of treaty agreements illustrates the stakes presaged by Coulthard in his warning that for 'Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die.'<sup>138</sup> From the settler perspective, many treaties with Indigenous polities were constructed on the provisions of the

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<sup>135</sup> Danne Jobin, "Gerald Vizenor's Transnational Aesthetics in *Blue Ravens*," *Transmotion* 5, no. 1 (2019): 33, <https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/03/tm.572>; Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 185.

<sup>136</sup> Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 19.

<sup>137</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 5.

<sup>138</sup> Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 173. In Vizenor's forecast, the worst outcomes of engaging in politics of reconciliation with the settler state have been realised. One of the greatest risks baked into the CWEN is its partial deference to the authority of the United States. Though less contingent than the MCT constitution, it is clear that Vizenor envisions this specific vulnerability of the CWEN as a likely target.

monotheistic economics of property. So, unsurprisingly, the value of adhering to those treaties adopts, or even becomes, a market value, and the settler state keeps eyes peeled for better deals.

As a case in point, the Trump administration sought to rescind federal recognition of tribal nationhood as part of implementing new work regulations to Medicaid in 2018, contending that Indigenous communities are racial collectives instead of sovereign polities. Therefore, exempting Indigenous people—who suffer drastically higher rates of chronic medical conditions and unemployment than other demographics in the U.S.—would represent illegal preferential treatment based on race. Former Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye called the scheme ‘termination thinking revisited,’ noting that the undercutting of sovereignties achieved by this proposed shift is merely the latest in a string of examples that prove ‘[w]hen laws and precedent are ignored or blatantly disregarded, our citizens pay the price.’<sup>139</sup> The plan hasn’t come to pass, yet. But it is one in a string of flexes designed to assess which agreements can bend without breaking, and which ones can break without mattering to the settler state. In the midst of such developments, Vizenor’s portrayal of the future of White Earth sovereignty and the CWEN does not look especially fantastical. Moreover, as Anna L. Tsing reminds us, ‘stories may be simultaneously

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<sup>139</sup> Russell Begaye, qtd. in Native News Online Staff, “Navajo President: Medicaid’s ‘Unconstitutional’ Work Requirements Undermine Tribal Sovereignty,” *Native News Online*, 23 September, 2018, <https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/navajo-president-medicaids-unconstitutional-work-requirements-undermine-tribal-sovereignty/>.

true and fabulous' in fields of Indigenous cosmologies and the sovereignties they inform.<sup>140</sup>

But the dispossessive machinations of the settler state are not news to Indigenous communities. The risk posed by congressional plenary power resembles a poorly ventilated basement with old books and oily rags kept next to an ashtray; the explosion doesn't come as a surprise. *Treaty Shirts* departs from this point of settler-inflicted injustice, but refuses to dwell on it for long. Instead, Vizenor focuses on the aftermath and the necessary strategies for re-constituting White Earth polities whereby opposition to the settler state is inadequate as a mode of sovereignty. So, despite its resonances with the broader, stormier climate of Indigenous sovereignties, *Treaty Shirts* is not a direct rejoinder to any one particular danger. The novel is profoundly intertextual, braiding the loose strands of Vizenor's other collected works (the CWEN included), and its concerns are commensurately extensive.

The novel is rich with reference and reprise, summoning forth characters, locations, and themes from *The Heirs of Columbus* (1991), *Hotline Healers* (1997), and *Father Meme* (2008) to name a few. Intertextual slippage is a hallmark trope in Vizenorean storywork, regularly brimming with nods and nudges that contribute to a persistent haze of disorienting "have we met?" moments. The question Vizenor's host of familiar transmotional poly-tagonists elicits is seldom "who are you?" More frequently, his listener-reader is caught trying to remember "what did you do?,"

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<sup>140</sup> Anna L. Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), viii.

re-envisioning a legacy of Anishinaabe trickster storytelling that ‘illustrate[s] a tradition of action’ over ‘abstract principals of rigid behavioural codes,’ and so impelling listener-readers into suspenseful states of uncertain attentiveness.<sup>141</sup> Whilst reminiscent of this Vizenorean verve, *Treaty Shirts* is palpably distinct in significant ways. The intertextual hooks and crossovers that it encompasses seem more urgent, turning the sovereign expressions of older characters to sharp new generations and even sharper purposes. This is reflective of the increasing importance of transmotion in the ideological creases of Vizenor’s aesthetic worldview of politics (or, likewise, his political worldview of aesthetics). Moreover, I argue that this speaks to the ways in which Indigenous sovereignties function as unfolding processes, as at least one plane of the complex answer to Estes’ question: ‘what proliferates in the absence of empire?’<sup>142</sup> The recurrent figures and events of *Treaty Shirts* frequently jar with the listener-reader’s prior encounters with them—or shades of them—and the narrative itself seems cognisant that ‘[t]he similarities matter’ in storywork about Indigenous sovereignties, ‘but so, too, do the profound differences’ in ethea of dynamic reciprocity between worldviews.<sup>143</sup>

*Treaty Shirts*’ winding subtitle stakes the claim that the novel is ‘*A Familiar Treatise*,’ connoting remembrance and recursion in ways that prime listener-readers for its re-visionary project.<sup>144</sup> The looping narrative structure and its whorls of resistance to chronological progression will be recognisable to listener-readers of Vizenor’s other stories—a discursive strategy of Indigenous presence that invites

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<sup>141</sup> Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, 7.

<sup>142</sup> Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 153.

<sup>143</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 24.

<sup>144</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, title page.

'Indigenous forms of time [to] push against the imperatives of settler sovereignty.'<sup>145</sup> Significantly, though, *Treaty Shirts* is also familiar insofar as it is *familial*, concentrating as it does on a cadre of seven co-narrators who are mostly directly descended from characters in his earlier novels.<sup>146</sup> This genealogy recalls the narrative creases of previous stories for more than just an encore; the inheritance—the succession—of family and tribal history is a literary manifestation of one of the principles of citizenship detailed in the CWEN, and is survivance in its most elementary form. Chapter 2, article 1, lays down the following provision pertaining to citizenship:

Citizens of the White Earth Nation shall be descendants of Anishinaabeg families and related by linear descent to enrolled members of the White Earth Reservation and Nation, according to genealogical documents, treaties, and other agreements with the government of the United States.<sup>147</sup>

The wording of this section of the CWEN is concurrently promising and dangerous, a duality which Vizenor confronts in *Treaty Shirts* as the White Earth populace seems to be an aging group largely 'pleased to live in the hotel residence' of the reservation casino, 'eat at the three casino restaurants, and easily walk or motor in a chair to the slot machines.'<sup>148</sup> Ostensibly, the CWEN's model of recognition operates to abolish the federally introduced measures of blood quantum as a firm criterion for citizenship. Reducing the influence of this attritionally genocidal rule, protected by those Vizenor decries as 'blood-count connivers,' is both an important step in

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<sup>145</sup> Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), ix, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>146</sup> The only narrator to whom this doesn't apply is Vizenor's own great-nephew, and I would suggest that, at this stage, Vizenor is himself as much a character in the storywork tapestry of the CWEN as any of his fictional polytagonists.

<sup>147</sup> The Constitution of the White Earth Nation, chap. 2, art. 1, 64.

<sup>148</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 23.

preventing the definitional demise of Indigenous communities and in deploying self-determinative methodologies of delineating tribal membership.<sup>149</sup> As Dennison warns, when membership of Indigenous groups becomes exogenously individualised and ‘citizenship has been transferred from territory to the body’—a settler sleight-of-hand special—it becomes far more difficult for nations to assert authority over a territory.<sup>150</sup> Territorial sovereignty, as conceptually controlled by monotheistic ideas of land as property, is an issue I will discuss later. However, it should be clear enough that transferring the focus of legitimate identities from body politics to politicised bodies challenges Indigenous sovereignties wherever they deviate from received biopolitical modes of expression.

The problem does not come from the underlying motivations of Chapter 2, Article 1, which involve reclaiming the apparatus of constitution for the White Earth Nation. Rather, the risk lurks in its inelasticity once concretely worded. As *Treaty Shirts* details, the ‘ratified articles in the constitution were mere intentions’ and it is once these intentions are converted into specifically worded, interpretively tighter articles that they start to ossify and insinuate a dichotomised ‘choice between formal, totalizing tribal membership on the one hand and atomic individualism on the other.’<sup>151</sup> Ceding their transmotional energy, these words are preserved as scenes of Indigenous absence rather than vital presence and they subsume the ‘negotiable, multiple, and fallible truths—constantly emerging and based in principles of

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>150</sup> Dennison, “The Logic of Recognition,” 5.

<sup>151</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 13; Gover, *Tribal Constitutionalism*, 10.

complexity' that 'makes Anishinaabeg who they are.'<sup>152</sup> That such an article brings about yes/no binaries of division over possessive sovereignty fails to shock. Indeed, this discord is a key aspect of the CWEN's political fatigue. White Earth scholar Shaawano Chad Uran criticises the CWEN with four main charges that, ironically, seem intimately related to the kinds of criticisms that inspired the CWEN in the first place. Uran agrees that a departure from the MCT is needed, but maintains that the CWEN fails because:

1. It does not consider our sovereignty first, and it extends outside power over White Earth citizens, without recourse.
2. It does not build upon our traditional practices. In fact, it actively denies some of these practices.
3. It does not adequately define who it applies to, and makes possible disruptions from outside "persons."
4. It denies White Earth citizens the powers that define constitutional democracy.

**It does not consider our sovereignty first**<sup>153</sup>

For Uran, predicating the decision of citizenship in *any way* upon agreements and treaties with the U.S. government is irretrievably concessive. Correspondingly, Alfred maintains that 'continued cooperation with state power structures is morally unacceptable' and, whatever else may be the case, it does seem clear that writing another *specified* nation's rights into a constitution constrains the constituted polity's sovereignty.<sup>154</sup> To be clear, certainly don't equate these perspectives to anything

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<sup>152</sup> Sinclair, "K'zaugin," 89.

<sup>153</sup> Shaawano Chad Uran, "Why I Do Not Support the Proposed White Earth Nation Constitution," *Shaawano*, n.d., <http://shaawano.com/index.php/politics/71-why-i-do-not-support-the-proposed-white-earth-nation-constitution>, (original emboldened).

<sup>154</sup> Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2005), 36.

approaching Vizenor's charge of tradition fascism (nor do I presume to glean his own take on the matter).

Qualms of this and other stripes have derailed the CWEN. Crucially, however, this is not to say that they have stopped it dead as a transmotional vehicle of White Earth sovereignty. If anything, such derailment serves to inscribe new routes toward sovereignty in hitherto unarticulated ideological creases that require more action, and less declaration, to be substantiated. James Mackay observes regarding the CWEN that 'a single constitution is, strictly speaking, *inessential* to the business of governance,' (no doubt with a wry glance towards the tricky terrain of essentialism in Indigenous studies).<sup>155</sup> Relatedly, however, some form of formal constitutional plurality *is* essential to the perdurance of Indigenous sovereignties. As rejection of settler monotheism, dynamic reciprocity between forms of distinct Indigenous constitutions is itself a co-constitutive network of dynamic reciprocity.

The CWEN's torpor does not stop it being provocative; the complications, and the tensions that arise out of them, quicken the document, turning into something more formidable as an instance of staunch resistance to Indigenous erasure in an Anishinaabe context where the community is 'not only a name of an identifiable group, but a way of life—a way of stories.'<sup>156</sup> I use quickening here to evoke a contrast against the *undeadness* of the U.S. Constitution, which displays many of the marks of vitality that a "living" document should, but without a certain something or

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<sup>155</sup> Gerald Vizenor and James Mackay, "Constitutional Narratives: A Conversation with Gerald Vizenor," in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*, eds. Jill Doerfler Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 134, ProQuest Ebook Central, (*italics in original*).

<sup>156</sup> Sinclair, "K'zaugin," 88.

some things. The origins of the word “quick” are in something living. In this context, a quickening—the moment medically defined as the point where a pregnant mother first perceives foetal movement—suggests an active process that rouses motion and enkindles possibility in living and in doing literary constitution.

*Treaty Shirts* is discursively responsive to the roadblocks that have beleaguered the CWEN in such a quickening mode, faithful to the idea that ‘words should open up, not close down possibilities.’<sup>157</sup> White Earth scholar (and member of the CWEN’s Constitutional proposal team) Jill Doerfler argues that storywork sources such as *Treaty Shirts* are ‘place[s] where tribes who are engaged in the reform process can find fundamental values that can be employed as a means to guide the process of reform’ as well as being interpretive extensions of constitutional praxis.<sup>158</sup> Throughout this storywork amendment, one encounters ideological creases between politics and perspectives that complicate one another, that constitute one another as the ‘end bec[omes] another round of creation stories... in natural motion, in the clouds, and out of the hands of sector agents’ of settler colonial hegemony.<sup>159</sup> These are ideological creases of White Earth sovereignty, tenacious pockets of resistance against erasure that evince a politically generative ‘strategy that was partly created in the process. In other words, the narrative of the [constitutional] strategy is a native story’ at the convergences of various planes of shadow survivance.<sup>160</sup> Positioning *Treaty Shirts* as mere exegesis of the CWEN, however, is reductive. LaDuke avers, ‘[t]here is no way to quantify a way of life, only a way to live it,’ and *Treaty Shirts*

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<sup>157</sup> Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor*, 183.

<sup>158</sup> Doerfler, “A Philosophy for Living,” 175.

<sup>159</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 114.

<sup>160</sup> Vizenor and Mackay, “Constitutional Narratives,” 144.

holds tight to a comparable mantra.<sup>161</sup> Through it, Vizenor emphasises the precarity of strict mandates as models of governance and presents lived (albeit fictional) cases of active, unlike sovereignties that are given voice and character. Thus, *Treaty Shirts* becomes a functioning part of the White Earth Nation's constitution, not in the received sense of a regulative canon, perhaps, but as an alternative means of amendment that protects the CWEN from ossification with 'the natural bounce and motion of spider webs.'<sup>162</sup> *Treaty Shirts* is a remarkable piece of sovereign storywork that quickens the CWEN, and I subscribe to the notion that '[t]he actual story of the constitution started with the exiles' who co-narrate the events and aftermath of the CWEN's speculative abrogation, not at the ratification conventions between 2008 and 2009 at the Shooting Star Casino in Mahnomon, Minnesota.<sup>163</sup>

If '[c]onstitutions are [typically] created as narratives and ratified as political documents,' *Treaty Shirts'* recursion reasserts the CWEN as narrative and disrupts the clean trajectory from narrative particular to abstract universal that inheres in monotheistic constitutional paradigms (or the perception of such, at least).<sup>164</sup> Constitutive documents should not be abstracted from the stories they are extracted and extrapolated from. Denying specific vested interests doesn't dispel them in political settings; it highlights them, and the ambitiously abstract 'Justice' established in the U.S. Constitution starts from an ersatz point of societal parity. Contrarily, as Silko elucidates, communal storywork co-creates murmurations of truths that 'live somewhere within the web of differing versions, disputes over minor

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<sup>161</sup> LaDuke, *All Our Relations*, 132.

<sup>162</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 72.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>164</sup> Vizenor and Mackay, "Constitutional Narratives," 145.

points, and outright contradictions tangling.<sup>165</sup> A rare mote of sure truth, then: the framers of the U.S. Constitution, among many other things, told a speculative story of sovereignty. *Treaty Shirts* tells another, of another.

### The Constitutional Exiles and the Tradition Fascists

'Tradition fascist' is an accusatory moniker that first appeared in Vizenor's *Shrouds of White Earth* (2010). The novel centred on Dogroy Beaulieu, an exiled White Earth painter and great-uncle to *Treaty Shirts*' Hole in the Storm, and is evidently a response to the perils of dogmatizing or valorising nationalism in insular power-centric terms.<sup>166</sup> Borrows explains that the best notions of 'living tradition' manifest in an 'intermingling of agreement and dissent' and 'must be drawn from living, complex relationships to be freely constitutive.'<sup>167</sup> I am distinguishing the notion of Indigenous tradition fascists from those that I call non-Indigenous *ethnographic taxonomists*. The latter group is exemplary of the forces of classification and restriction that engage in what Vizenor has called 'transethnic triage,' or, the sacrifice of Indigenous presence/presents in favour of Indigenous peoples past—of taxidermic likenesses of an apocryphal "Indian" culture.<sup>168</sup> Ethnographic taxonomists are those non-Indigenous compilers of Indigenous traditions who follow a racialised Linnaean paradigm of classification to sap Indigenous cultures of political and social relevance.

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<sup>165</sup> Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 32.

<sup>166</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 100.

<sup>167</sup> Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, 12-13.

<sup>168</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 50.

Tradition fascism, contradistinctively, is perhaps best understood as the ‘bane of native sovereignty’ and transmotional survivance.<sup>169</sup> It becomes most visible in stagnant dispositions toward power that insist on monotheistic understandings of the past in order to retain authority predicated on that past as a possessed thing, similar to the way that sovereignty is conceived in the settler imaginary. Where transmotion can be considered as a ‘dialectical consciousness,’ tradition fascism is a dictatorial monologue.<sup>170</sup> The adherents of tradition fascism are, for Vizenor, committed to the proliferation of vapid ‘cultural nostalgia, the presence of tradition in a chemical civilization’ of a sort that, in *Treaty Shirts* at least, is typified by ‘kitschy scenes at casinos, the conceit of culture’ and ‘vain drumbeats.’<sup>171</sup> Tradition fascists are central—if often unintentional—agents in the decoction of vital Indigenous cultures to a prescriptively past existence and represent ‘hearsay gatekeepers of hazy sacred traditions.’<sup>172</sup>

This misguided protection of tradition is a travesty of Indigenous cosmologies as expressed through stories, whereby reverence for ancestral traditions is either lip-service without significance, or a desmotional play for profit. In either case, tradition fascism is possessive and abjures transmotion and ‘tradition as *practice*.’<sup>173</sup> Tradition fascists typically hold so tight to the permanence of (sometimes artificial) customs and conventions over any notion of communal storytelling that the ideals they try to preserve are suffocated. If ‘Native is a presence, not a permanence,’ then traditions

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<sup>169</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 73.

<sup>170</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 146.

<sup>171</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 38; Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 2.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>173</sup> Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, 11, (italics in original).

must be revisited, reimagined, and reinterpreted in order to evade stagnation, which is to say, in order to articulate life.<sup>174</sup> 'All the tradition in the world,' warns Noodin, 'won't heat a house in winter.'<sup>175</sup> Transmotional survivance, flush with creativity and the triangulating potential of manifold perspectives, is an unfamiliar concept to Vizenor's tradition fascists, who steadily 'create a tighter seam of tradition' which engenders closure in stories and histories.<sup>176</sup>

In *Treaty Shirts*, the tradition fascists' avatar is Godtwit Moon. An recent ex-convict, Moon is catapulted to governorship in the newly formed federal sector that stands in place of what was the White Earth Nation after the nullification of the CWEN. Godtwit is empowered in recognition of his 'gentle poses of native culture and compassion as a supervisor of the bars, restaurants, and slot machines.'<sup>177</sup> In his first full day as Governor, Godtwit posts a declaration banishing the seven exiles who are known strictly by their 'earned nicknames' that arise from their various enactments of Indigenous shadow survivance.<sup>178</sup> Generative shadows abound in *Treaty Shirts* and resemble the CWEN's employment of shadow survivance tactics in its relations to the U.S. Constitution. The exiles' faithful use of each others' nicknames throughout the novel creates an elusive sense of transmotional identity and evokes one such sense of irrepressible shadow survivance to 'overturn the terminal vernacular of manifest manners, and the final vocabularies of dominance.'<sup>179</sup> These

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<sup>174</sup> Vizenor, *Native Liberty*, 261.

<sup>175</sup> Margaret Noodin, *Bawaajimo: A Dialect of Dreams in Anishinaabe Language and Literature* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 151, EBSCO eBook Subscription Academic Collection.

<sup>176</sup> Vizenor and Lee, *Postindian Conversations*, 91.

<sup>177</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 21.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>179</sup> Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, 68.

names exist in the penumbræ of ideological creases with the settler political imaginary. 'Naming in some cultures equates with possessing,' but here names like Hole in the Storm and Moby Dick are the microcosmic stories that comprise sovereignties as communal endeavours of storywork.<sup>180</sup> Since the exiles cannot be tightly bound to an incidental birth-name, their epithetic identities are inseparable from what they *do*, and thus the nicknames activate that transmotional component of self-determinative sovereignties.

### What's in a Nickname?

Archive, our first literary guide, is a flawed chronicler of the White Earth's history and a curator of stories of Indigenous survivance. Waseese, 'a wild flash of lightning,' uses lasers to create fleeting 'holoscenes' that flourished 'in motion, faded, and then vanished into the night sky.'<sup>181</sup> Justice Molly Crèche's handle is ascribed thanks to the crèche of papier mâché miniatures of totemic animals, crafted by schoolchildren, that is housed in her courtroom and embody the immutable rights of animals' 'auras, spirits, and shadows' in her court.<sup>182</sup> Moby Dick nurtures deformed fish in aquaria at the centre of the casino floor. Savage Love, 'direct descendant of Chance,' protects the constitution by denying its efficacy as a conventional tool of governance.<sup>183</sup> Gichi Noodin skips the *Baron of Patronia* by day and takes up position as 'the spirited broadcast voice of Panic Radio' by night.<sup>184</sup> And Hole in the Storm paints 'the center

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<sup>180</sup> Noodin, *Bawaajimo*, 120.

<sup>181</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 7.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

of a cyclone... that perfect panic hole' to combat 'nasty politics on the reservation.'<sup>185</sup> These White Earth visionaries reflect the prioritisation of activity over assertion that arose in the preamble of the CWEN; they are who they are because of the diverse sovereignties they do, rather than owing to blood quanta, genealogical, or administrative descent in isolation.

Quickening this section of the CWEN's preamble through storywork, these characters occupy positions as literary activists deploying experientially textured accounts of storied sovereignty, as 'vital expression[s] of that imaginative commitment, righting—and *writing*—relations across time and space.'<sup>186</sup> A preamble enjoys particular valence at democratic crisis points, so it is apt that the CWEN of *Treaty Shirts* falls and then is salvaged in the crisis of exile.<sup>187</sup> Godtwit's refusal to use the exiles' given names is intended as a slight, but it serves as an ironic reminder of the insecurity of noun-couched, absolute sovereignty as an owned (or disowned) quality. Whether or not it (or its structure) is recognised by external actors is only one factor. The outcasts are able to take their constitution into exile with them because they evince the transmotional sovereignty that emerges from *doing* their cultural (and personal) identities. The names come with shifting stories, underpinned by praxes, and combat monotheistic abstractions of sovereignty—an 'unstoried life [which] is a terrible thing to comprehend, a soul-deep desolation.'<sup>188</sup> In this way, one can appreciate the ways in which the exiles contribute towards the declarative force

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>186</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 116, (italics in original).

<sup>187</sup> Orgad, "The Preamble in Constitutional Interpretation," 738.

<sup>188</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 34.

of White Earth sovereignty such that the CWEN as rubricised in chapters and articles is perhaps unequipped to. Archive's early assertion that 'any history must be envisioned with native stories' is borne out even in the everyday ritual of a personal name, highlighting the broader concept of tradition's contingency upon change.<sup>189</sup>

Playful, powerful nicknames are a longstanding motif in Vizenor's storywork. Quite simply, the nicknames are crucial because 'with each nickname there [are] stories to be told.'<sup>190</sup> In *Treaty Shirts*, though, the exiles' nicknames are imbued with a peculiar transmotional charge. In *Treaty Shirts*, just as Chris Lalonde argues of Vizenor's earlier work *The Trickster of Liberty*, 'the act of naming, the names themselves, and the way in which the names' meanings and origins are revealed constitute a complex constellation of boundary crossing.'<sup>191</sup> The individual sobriquets are, as I've touched on, elusive and contingent, which is to say that they are ascribed communally on the strength of each character's behaviours and actions. The implicit suggestion is that if one were to cease doing that name, it would naturally cease to identify that individual, similar to the way in which the CWEN communicates the importance of doing White Earth sovereignty for it to exist. Waseese, for example, is in fact 'given several nicknames, Tree House, Laser Carpenter, Crazy Beam, Chicago, Timber Maven... but Waseese, a wild flash of

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<sup>189</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 2.

<sup>190</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *The People Named the Chippewa: Narrative Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 13. Scouring five decades of Vizenor's manuscripts, papers, and plans at the Beinecke archive, it struck me that amongst the scrawls of ideas and notes on napkins, phone pads, and newspaper cut-outs, the most consistent starting point that Vizenor appears to occupy while brewing new stories is brainstorming characters' nicknames. Vizenor thus often nestles them first within their own storied contexts, rather than as moving parts of the greater plot. See Appendix E.

<sup>191</sup> Chris Lalonde, "The Ceded Landscape of Gerald Vizenor's Fiction," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 21, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/20739382>.

lightning, outlasted the other nicknames.<sup>192</sup> It is important to stick with the verbiage at work in this excerpt; it speaks to the potency of nicknames as transnational expressions of shifting ideological creases throughout the novel. Waseese might 'outlast' the other nicknames, but this doesn't entail the ousting of the others, nor that they were in some grand way unsuited to the visionary laser artist. Indeed, in some circumstances, they may well appear again. But the names do oscillate through time—alternative temporal frames and measures that may not tessellate neatly with a monotheistic settler chronology. Indeed, nicknames seem to function to an extent in alternative creases of time; not only do nicknames and their transience signify dimensions of ideologies that are in flux, they may even be ascribed to a *different* person at a different time.

Nicknames can be plural and they refer to 'the shadows heard in stories... personal stories that would, to be sure, trace the individual to tribal communities rather than cause separations by pronouns of singular recognition.'<sup>193</sup> They are, in a sense, equivalent to the naming of one or more facets of that person—a perspectival viewpoint of them based on vignettes. So, nicknaming is a kind of storywork, and this develops the multi-perspectival make-up of the novel as a whole, expanding the network of ideological creases. The given names of the exiles are relatively immaterial, empty signifiers in sovereign terms. I am not suggesting that birth names are tools of control *per se*, but that under the auspices of settler colonialism they can be co-opted to domineering ends. That said, nor are nicknames inherently liberatory,

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<sup>192</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 7.

<sup>193</sup> Vizenor, *Shadow Distance*, 177.

since 'nicknaming can aggravate or alleviate derogatory attitudes' depending on effect and affection, source and significance.<sup>194</sup> Of course, names can hold deep meaning by virtue of familial tribute, social importance, and any other number of factors. For here and now, however, I do think that Vizenor's elision of the characters' birth names performs some important conceptual heavy-lifting. Noodin explains that 'Anishinaabe authors write about naming and use names in a way that reveals names to be stories, if they are thought about and understood.'<sup>195</sup> The nicknames performed in *Treaty Shirts* are transnational perspectives that all gesture in one way or another towards the contested character of the CWEN itself: a panic hole at the eye of a political storm painting a new scene of self-determination; a living Archive of Anishinaabe values; a streak of lightning across the political firmament, its afterimage an ideological crease; the White Whale of Indigenous sovereignty, pursued obsessively; Justice as a trait not established, but cultivated and nourished in a crèche. Each exile is a description, or a facet of a complicated history of White Earth sovereignty. Each enacts dimensions of what the CWEN *could* be, which is precisely why they are able to bear it, crumpled and marred, on a journey 'along the international border on Lake of the Woods... in the natural motion of continental liberty.'<sup>196</sup>

As constituents of the CWEN's torsional ethics, the exiles each occupy a distinct role in the storywork to energise and liberate the CWEN from

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<sup>194</sup> Kennet M. Roemer, "Naming Native (Living) Histories: Erdrich's Plague of Names," *Studies in American Fiction* 43, no. 1 (2016): 125, <https://doi.org/10.1353/saf.2016.0002>.

<sup>195</sup> Noodin, *Bawaajimo*, 120.

<sup>196</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 83.

institutionalisation within a monotheistic ideological infrastructure. 'Anishinaabe names and words' are, according to Noodin, 'infamously mercurial.'<sup>197</sup> That is, they move, they resist calcification, and they are marked by the changes they undergo. In short, these names are transmotional, racing back and forth through the creases. Archive insists on the importance—though not the sufficiency—of the CWEN as a document as a historical record of sovereign government, 'a magical and moral flight,' and a bold attempt made without regret.<sup>198</sup> Waasese illuminates the necessary transience of the CWEN in that self-same legislative format and, as an 'innovative storier with lasers, those beams, shimmers, and emission of radiation but no words or paint,' buttresses the notion of ongoing, recreative expressions and pursuits of tradition.<sup>199</sup> Her laser extravaganzas set on canvases of clouds and lake-mists are 'light stories' that are 'similar to silhouettes,' akin to creases of sovereignty in the shadows.<sup>200</sup> Gichi Noodin, or the Great Wind is the voice of Panic Radio—a hat-tip to the recurrent appearance of Panic Holes in the Vizenorean oeuvre—and accordingly reinforces the concept that the constitution is impotent without 'native voices of liberty' to speak it into being as a dynamic part of an affective tradition of storytelling sovereignty, demonstrating that visibility and presence are not synonyms.<sup>201</sup> Justice Molly Crèche propounds an innovative and dynamic appreciation of the law in her courtroom, reflecting the need for an Indigenous constitution to sustain traditional values while avoiding calcification; it is a place

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<sup>197</sup> Noodin, *Bawaajimo*, 4.

<sup>198</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 116.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 87; 89.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

where justice is taught and created, not simply had. Hole in the Storm's 'grotesque art' is the 'serene moment of creation... in the painterly storm,' and exposes the capitalistic desmotivation of the 'cash cow and senior sanctuary' that is the White Foxy casino, which sits at the heart of the new White Earth Federal Sector.<sup>202</sup> Hole in the Storm employs the same style adopted by his great-uncle Dogroy (the banished protagonist of Vizenor's *Shrouds of White Earth*). Hole in the Storm's triptych *Casino Whalers on a Sea of Sovereignty* lampoons 'the catastrophe of native sovereignty' as having been abstracted, unitised, and subsumed by monotheistic misrepresentations of Indigenous cultures.<sup>203</sup> This notion of a Sea of Sovereignty, though rendered in momentary stillness by the painterly medium, embodies the surge and shiver of Indigenous sovereignties in collisional scenes of messy natural reason (I will return to this in Chapter Three). The oceanscape abounds with ever-roiling creases and so becomes an ideal place to convey Dennison's understanding whereby 'sovereignties are deeply interconnected, to the point that none can make a move without contention and negotiated compromise' into new political assemblages and spaces.<sup>204</sup>

Savage Love, meanwhile, interpenetrates a sobering slant amongst the broadly resolute, if frictional, approbations of the CWEN. She is a ruthless critical voice who 'write[s] to an absence, not the cultural nostalgia of presence' and is convinced that the CWEN was doomed at the very moment its ethics were taken out

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 74; 73.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>204</sup> Dennison, "Entangled Sovereignties," 685.

of the natural motion of Indigenous stories and abstracted in constitutional articles.<sup>205</sup> She personifies the sum of those doubts I have explored that have been levied towards the CWEN by interlocutors such as the current White Earth Reservation Business Committee, the MCT Council, Uran, and, of course, Vizenor himself. It is not cynicism or victimry that she expresses, though. It is a necessary kind of care, alert to the ever-redoubled mechanisms of settler suppression. Savage Love is aware that, in Justice's formulation, 'even in our successes we have to acknowledge the losses,' which is 'not to be solely defined by them.'<sup>206</sup> Her nickname is enacted in her zealous rejection of abstract sovereignty and procedural assimilation which she deems to result from the way that 'the pretense of presence ran wild with delusions' in the White Earth constitutional reform project.<sup>207</sup> I liken this to the type of fury that Coulthard identifies as resentment, or 'collective expression[s] of anger' that 'can help prompt the very forms of self-affirmative praxis that generate rehabilitated Indigenous subjectivities and decolonized forms of life in ways that the combined politics of recognition and reconciliation has so far proven itself incapable of doing.'<sup>208</sup> Savage Love, though acerbic, reminds interlocutors that any singular approach to sovereignty is likely imperilled, particularly because 'it is vital that we use the term judiciously, and remain constantly mindful that varied—but not entirely disparate—versions of indigenous independence often co-exist and overlap within a single sphere.'<sup>209</sup> She is a novelist who claims that novels are dead, 'a savant with

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<sup>205</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 49.

<sup>206</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous literatures Matter*, 50; 53.

<sup>207</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 49.

<sup>208</sup> Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 109.

<sup>209</sup> Kirwan, *Sovereign Stories*, 15.

words' who denies that words have 'meaning or native story.' She is the one who acts to persuade Godtwit 'to inhale a hefty mound of blue powder served on a short cedar stave' on the night he dies.<sup>210</sup>

Finally, we have Moby Dick who defends the overlooked rights of animals and totemic associations which are mentioned in three separate sections of the CWEN: in the preamble where 'totemic associations' immediately follow 'a native constitution of families'; in Article 4 of Chapter 6, providing that totemic association is a legitimate measure by which communities may be established or altered; and finally in Chapter 8, which sketches out the role of the Council of Elders, naming 'thoughts on totemic associations' foremost amongst their remit of advice to the Legislative Council of the White Earth Nation.<sup>211</sup>

It is evident that the constitutional exiles and their nicknames, along with their disparate narratives, function as performative transnational perspectives on the CWEN. As they board the *Baron of Patronia* to embark on their indefinite voyage on Lake of the Woods, they simultaneously embark upon a project to provide a constitutional alternative couched in White Earth practices. Together, they interact with a shared reverence towards their community's histories and strong projections of its sovereign future without easy consensus. Unlike the closed constitutional conventions that produced the CWEN baked and ready to serve up for approval by the White Earth citizenry, the exiles (and other citizens) literally broadcast their debates, 'getaway stories' which directly or indirectly complicate 'selected articles of

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<sup>210</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 76; 13; 25.

<sup>211</sup> The Constitution of the White Earth Nation, preamble; chap. 6, art. 4; chap. 8.

the constitution' via Panic Radio.<sup>212</sup> The constitutive processes, with all of their stutters, bursts of static, and unscripted moments is transparent; the citizenry hears the revived constitution cooking and is encouraged to call in with their thoughts. Like the irregular crests, falls, and sways of the houseboat over the sometimes-erratic winter waters, the exiles' constitution—meaning act and code—is not smooth. The constituents make, break, and take waves. In this sense the transmotional view of traditional futurity that they espouse is re-visionary, not just atavistic. Where storywork is transmotional and its specifics are restless, '[l]ike virtual particles in a quantum field, multiple futures pop in and out of possibility' in what Tsing terms 'temporal polyphony.'<sup>213</sup>

Godtwit Moon, conversely, exhibits no clear respect for historical, sovereign, or ideological plurality. Thus, where the exiles represent facets of the CWEN, he is an embodiment of sovereign monotheorism operating by settler machinery. As a paragon of binary forms of thinking, Godtwit is a caricature of both wholesale critics of the CWEN *and* those who would herald it as some kind of political deliverance. He is a personified binarisation of possessive have/have-not sovereignty who evinces the common terminus of oppositional terminal creeds. Moby Dick sniggers that Godtwit's 'pious fury' towards the exiles' disruption of "traditional" practices is artificial, undercut by the way in which the 'name of his home state and maternal stew changed with the time.'<sup>214</sup> Godtwit stands in for proponents of blood quantum as an absolute metric of citizenship. Vizenor sees this as a descent into both

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<sup>212</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 63.

<sup>213</sup> Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, viii.

<sup>214</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 39.

unsustainability and elitism. Harlan Douleur (Pain, in French)—an acidulous guest speaker on Panic Radio—cautions that ‘[f]ull heavy blood turns blue’ in short order amongst the ‘bloody fractions of native identity.’<sup>215</sup> That Harlan has bone cancer, which typically requires blood platelet transfusions to treat, gestures towards the sanctity of “pure” blood as being degrees of importance beneath other, more pressing threats to White Earth sovereignty. Godtwit Moon, meanwhile, suffers high blood pressure, and this resonates with Douleur’s assertion that the ‘full blood poseur had thick blood and heavy hearts, too many hard bumps and thumps to move that brawny blood with an ordinary rush of compassion.’<sup>216</sup> Compassionate rejections of authenticity narratives are a common crease of sovereign expression amongst all of the exiles. Of these multivalent refutations of clichéd Indian culture, Moby Dick and his story stand out especially.

Moby Dick’s sobriquet derives from a childhood theatrical performance at the head of a three-person papier-mâché version of the white whale. During this turn, the young Moby-Dick-to-be thrashes about so enthusiastically that the head portion tears away from the rest of the costume. Yet this nickname, as one might expect by now, is not tethered to one source. Moby Dick’s aunt took out a copy of Melville’s epic following his stage debut and ‘read the incredible stories of Ishmael and the white whale to [Moby Dick] at night,’ hence ‘[his] native nickname was a tease that became a cue of crippled fish and great literature.’<sup>217</sup> Moby Dick collects and cares for deformed ‘totemic fish’ with ‘crooked spines, twisted humps, gnarled bellies...

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 44.

and other incomparable exotic shapes and comic features.<sup>218</sup> He bestows these fish with ironic nicknames after infamous European explorers like Walter Raleigh and Christopher Columbus and homes them in a pair of aquaria in the middle of the White Foxy Casino gaming floor. Thus, Moby Dick's nickname subsists and develops through time—the same words, textured by different practices. The malformed fish under Moby Dick's stewardship are amongst a host of new totems, new traditions 'secure in memory, original, personal, and visionary' that do not conform to Godtwit and the tradition fascists' preconceptions of tribal purity.<sup>219</sup> Mutations in their genetic makeup are the result of both fundamental natural chance and the kind of adaptability that undergirds shadow survivance; their aleatory nature safeguards them from neat absorption into a homogenised form. As mutants, these animals are thoroughly immersed in the world and this is in part what gives them such an active verve.

These totemic animals are shunned by the tradition fascist for being allegedly inauthentic and therefore lacking traditional ties. This position is thrown into swift ironic relief when we hear that traditional totemic animals of White Earth kinship systems are pasted on slot machines 'in place of the cherries, numbers, and bars on the reels of regulated chance.' Thus, the totemic animals sanctioned and recognised by Godtwit's tradition fascists in the new White Earth Federal Sector are most visibly revered as 'tawdry casino tokens, the new crave of peltry' on the spinning tableaux of gambling stations around the resort.<sup>220</sup> In the White Foxy Casino, these sacred

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 39; 42.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 3.

totems have been commodified, 'superseded by contrivance, the simulations that have no shadows of survivance,' and in this commercialisation one can spot desmotion in action. That is, capitalistically spurred movement along a linear line of progression that precludes reverse or detour.<sup>221</sup> The commoditisation of traditional totems runs parallel to the attempted restriction of Indigenous people to solitary moments, snapshots, stances of "Indianness." The turning panels of the slot machines *are* in motion. Yet despite the stochastic haze of excitement, that very sense of movement is manipulated by stringently designed and regulated matrices of weighted outcomes, emblematic of the tradition fascists' 'circular patriarchy, a fishy patchwork tradition of absolute authority.'<sup>222</sup> Instead of transmotion the motion portrayed here connotes an Indigenous ossification that one might term patrifying. The totemic images printed on the reels are static, ordered, interchangeable, and—by their very nature as pattern-based gambling games—defined by an abstract conversion of those images into monetary value, reflective of the 'purchase of totemic animal pelts' previously 'murdered in the continental fur trade.'<sup>223</sup> The house always wins, in Congress and casino. Whatever semblance of movement the 'electronic animals, fruit, and other scenes on the slot machines' is therefore not transmotional, but rather desmotional.<sup>224</sup> Ironically it is the traditional totems that are snagged by the reels and set into endless spins of artificial chance in the service of capitalistic desmotion. Moby Dick's mutant fish, on the other hand, are transmotional, inhabiting the creases between the traditional and the unexpected,

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<sup>221</sup> Vizenor, *Shadow Distance*, 156.

<sup>222</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 19.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

reducing the distance between the then, the now, and the then again. Moby Dick's fish elude the reels of Godtwit's 'crafty union of avarice and sovereignty' as they reimagine what representations of indigeneity could be, what sovereignties could look like if unspooled from the reel of settler monotheism.<sup>225</sup> And Godtwit is terrified.

Moby Dick explains that Godtwit's desmotion is not intrinsic. His practices are learnt. Before his governorship, '[Godtwit] was truly enamored with the glorious fins, mouth, and easy motion' of the misshapen totemic fish in the aquaria, even if only fleetingly.<sup>226</sup> Eventually, though, Godtwit's desmotional attitude renders him unable to abide the sense of alterity and intractable experiential vitality that these mutated fish symbolise. The fish' mutations are incommensurable with his conception of tradition, just as diverse Indigenous sovereignties are incommensurable with the constructs of settler power. So, mirroring the congressional plenary (necro)power that hangs over Indigenous polities, he cuts off power to the filters while Moby Dick has his attention elsewhere for just a moment. In the unaerated water the fish list as gamers all around remain oblivious, 'obsessed with the electronic animals,' and so beguiled by the artificial totems on the reels that they 'never noticed the gasps and yawns of the fish, or deathly bumps on the dark glass.'<sup>227</sup> The scene is a chilling deployment of state necropower, concentrated through the Sector Governor. The confluent threats of silence, stillness, and

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<sup>225</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 53.

<sup>226</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 39.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

suffocation that Vizenor conjures imperil the enactment of incommensurable Indigenous sovereignties. And Moby Dick is angry.

Godtwit's violence precipitates his own demise, having 'concocted native traditions in a federal prison' and a 'perverted and concise version of the native *midewiwin*, a sacred, obscure, and traditional dance' in the hunt for casino money.<sup>228</sup> He manipulates Anishinaabeg traditions in order to make himself a palatable and profitable avatar of "Indianness," conscious that '[c]asino avarice with no moral traditions is a mean measure of tribal wisdom.'<sup>229</sup> This game-plan garners Godtwit his series of regular promotions by (federal) casino management, culminating in ascension to Sector Governor. He morphs into a quasi-federal mouthpiece for control over the 'Pale of the White Earth Nation.'<sup>230</sup> Godtwit converts the White Foxy Casino into the Coy Care Resident Hotel/Casino and replaces staff with his fellow parolees, whom the exiles sardonically dub the 'Peace Hookers.'<sup>231</sup> Elderly White Earth Anishinaabeg are forcibly relocated from nearby urban hubs and housed at the facility. Each receives an electronic tag with gaming credit functioning like Disney Dollars, and at the implied behest of the U.S. government Godtwit arranges it so that the residents' social security and disability welfare payments are rerouted directly to the casino's on-site bank. There the money is converted by default into non-refundable resort credit, rendering the guests physically, financially, and socially inert as the federal state 'distribut[es] the right to reside within the bounds of the

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>229</sup> Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, 148.

<sup>230</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 79.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 22. Vizenor's occasional invective against ex-convicts is critically shallow and can be tantamount to calumny. Nonetheless, it should be noted that chapter 6, article 10 of the CWEN disqualifies felony ex-convicts from holding office.

settler polity' without alternative.<sup>232</sup> Those residents who gamble their monthly allowance away before their various living costs are satisfied are forced to work at the casino to balance their debt, each indentured by their electronic tags in 'the pose of a continental fugitive.'<sup>233</sup>

Shortly before their banishment, the exiles attend the Debwe Heart Dance and taunt the Governor with laser shows and verbal trickery, leaving him in a stupor, 'weakened by subdued rage... his crotch... stained with urine.'<sup>234</sup> Godtwit's physical inability to cope with the exiles' transmotional performances—particularly Waseese's visionary laser images that exist in fleeting bursts and rely on retrace—reveals the brittle, uprooted state of the tradition fascists' conception of their Indigenous identities. In utter delirium, Godtwit flees from the event into the cold night and is discovered later, minced in the snow under the bloody tracks of an automated plough. Archive tells his listener-readers with glee that many of the exiles-to-be and resident-detainees of the Coy Care facility had fantasised elaborate methods of murder for the Sector Governor. The schemes under imagination include drowning in the aquaria filled with the deformed fish he detests; dismemberment and division into sandwich bags; even strapping Godtwit into an microlite set to autopilot with precisely enough fuel to plummet into the great border lakes off to the east, plunging into the imagined cartographic ravines of the settler borders they whelm. '[C]rushed by a snow machine,' however, 'was never mentioned as a strategy' by the exiles.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 67.

<sup>233</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 145.

<sup>234</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 25.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

Godtwit's murderer goes unidentified throughout, and this element of anonymity is important because it emphasises that accountability for the accident(?) remains squarely with Godtwit himself. His desmotional exploitation of Indigenous people can be understood as cannibalistic, resonant with LaDuke's indictment of the anthropophagic Windigo economy. Kimmerer suggests that under neo-colonial economics 'the table is laid with food that nourishes only emptiness, the black hole of the stomach that never fills.' But the Anishinaabeg 'have always had those who fight the Windigo.'<sup>236</sup> The exiles are instrumental in dispatching Godtwit, but no one member of their band can negate his desmotional energy alone. Godtwit's death is not a cause for any great hurrah in and of itself. It doesn't affect the banishment proclamation, which holds its validity regardless, and we are left to assume that he will be replaced by a new fascistic figurehead from the same covetous mould. The Coy Care Resident Casino/Hotel is not saved nor redeemed by the elimination of one dispossessive agent. The tradition fascists have already reduced the White Earth Nation to recipe tropes of tragedy, stoicism, and the vituperative settler caricature of "rich casino Indians," and this transformation is not reversible.<sup>237</sup> It is, however, open to change, contextualisation, and reimagination through formulations of

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<sup>236</sup> Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 308; Paul DeMain and Winona LaDuke, "Interview with Winona LaDuke: The Windigo Economy," *Indian Country News* July 17, 2018, <https://www.indiancountrynews.com/index.php/columnists/winona-laduke/14585-interview-with-winona-laduke-the-windigo-economy>.

<sup>237</sup> For reasons of space, I will not go into great detail on the volatile discourse of casinos operated by Indigenous communities in the United States; to do so would be another chapter or thesis entirely and would deserve appropriate effort. The issue is one that informs and is informed by a torrent of socio-economic factors and creates rifts across inter-, intra-, and extra-tribal registers throughout Indigenous America. A useful, if somewhat broad, exploration of the genesis of casino culture and the ramifications for Native sovereignty can be found in Steven Light and Kathryn Rand's *Indian Gaming and Tribal Sovereignty: The Casino Compromise* (2005). I also recommend Jessica Cattelino's extensive work on the interstices of Indian gaming and sovereignties within a Seminole context in *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty* (2008).

sovereignties that are incommensurable with settler hegemony. With this in mind, the outcasts take to the lake and, in Archive's words, 'envisioned on those marvellous nights a constitution of continental liberty that was in motion, and not restrained by the metes and bounds of any treaty. The exiles had recovered the spirit of the voyageurs and the natural motion of liberty.'<sup>238</sup> And they did it all wearing stained, smelly Treaty Shirts.

### **Creased Treaty Shirts: Wearing Sovereignty on the Sleeve**

Just what is a Treaty Shirt? According to Hole in the Storm, *Treaty Shirts'* eponymous garments are 'an easy tease, a native coat of arms with singular conference stains, or the á la carte menus of liberty, and only worn by the gutsy crew of exiles.'<sup>239</sup> Put less grandiloquently, they are unwashed shirts that represent ceremonial attire for the White Earth Nation's constituters. These vestments are commemorative; many members of the community wore them to the constitutional conventions at the Shooting Star Casino where Vizenor and the other delegates hashed out the CWEN. This new tradition was instituted on the day that the White Earth citizenry endorsed the CWEN via a referendum, and the Treaty Shirts become 'ceremonial vestment[s] of liberty' that are donned at legislative councils for the following two decades until the CWEN's abrupt abrogation.<sup>240</sup> This new tradition is a clear abjuration of the

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<sup>238</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 35.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

tradition fascists' resistance to transmotion, illustrating Borrows' assertion that '[t]ransformation is the life of law' as much as it is the law of life.<sup>241</sup>

The Treaty Shirts worn by those delegates go unlaundered. They are soiled, 'nasty, and the conventions and native seminar stains were ironic archives, the traces and citations of hors d'oeuvres, silhouettes of chicken wings... wine, mayonnaise, and fry bread ooze were the distinctive codes of cryptic stories and native reciprocity.'<sup>242</sup> These shirts are worn and lived in, messy and creased, and intimately connected with Indigenous bodies. They allude to an everyday existence of the sovereignty that is marked and creased through time, and the constitution that the exiles do, that Vizenor does via his storywork. Thus, the Treaty Shirts emblematises the evasion of settler colonial moves to immure Indigenous peoples in a monotheistic history of decline. Although the exiles were not delegates at the original constitutional conventions, they carry this sartorial tradition with them into banishment as 'tribute to continental liberty and the busted constitution.'<sup>243</sup> The *Baron of Patronia* becomes the transmotional site(s) of new sovereign expressions and constitutional work. The ever-shifting ideological creases within which White Earth Sovereignty must be negotiated are reified in the Treaty Shirts and are, appropriately, borne away into the sea of sovereignty by the exiles aboard the *Baron of Patronia* in a storied act of shadow survivance. They leave the White Earth Federal Sector and their community's territory, yet the outcasts' cast-off is not part of a sovereign displacement as much as it conveys an ethic of sovereign emplacement, a

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<sup>241</sup> John Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 285.

<sup>242</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 12.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

distinction I discuss in Chapter Three. Hole in the Storm tells us that the 'Treaty Shirts were motion, sovereignty was motion, liberty was motion, and the settler masters wore only the masks of fixity and a fade away democracy.'<sup>244</sup> The simple reclamation of autonomy involved in staining the Treaty Shirts, in thickening the context of them, and in refusing to sterilise them renounces the historical whitewashing that has occurred in settler engagements with Indigenous treaties and histories. If, as Ojibwe/Dakota scholar Scott Richard Lyons suggests, the 'moment of treaty was literally the invention of the modern Indian nation,' then the moment of the exiles' Treaty Shirts might indicate the (re)constitution of something otherwise.<sup>245</sup>

The Treaty Shirts illustrate that transmotion is not incompatible with reverence towards Indigenous histories. In fact, transmotion demands such remembrance so as to be distinguished from desmotion. Nonetheless, atavism is firmly at the core of expressions of tradition fascism, and situating Indigenous sovereignties solely in the past—if recognising them at all—denies Indigenous peoples' ongoing presences and futures. Archive concedes that the CWEN is likely too late in the coming to effect a substantial sovereign break from the settler state, and that its accordant inappropriateness for the modern circumstances of colonial oppression is partially to blame for 'the ruination of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation.'<sup>246</sup> Indeed, the pick'n'mix attitude with which the federal government approaches 'the abstract patois' of Indigenous treaties is evidence of the fragility of

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Scott Richards Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 126, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>246</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 12.

forms of Indigenous sovereignties which rest upon the political rules laid out by various states of settler colonialism. By spiriting the constitution away from the shrinking territorial confines in which it was bound by settler land-grabs and the 1887 Dawes Act, both geographically and formally, these 'seven constitutioneers' themselves constitute a transmotional redeployment of sovereignty that is specifically White Earth and coalitional-ly Indigenous.<sup>247</sup> They appreciate it 'is time to change the rules' of unilaterally legitimated polities under settler hegemony and that 'a sustained denial of indigenous sovereignty cannot make it disappear. The settler colonial present is also an indigenous one.'<sup>248</sup> Likewise, *Treaty Shirts*' speculative Indigenous future is also the settler one. This recalibration illustrates the generative potential of transmotion, the potential to go even so far as to re-envision what might constitute constitution as speculative storywork 'presence[s] the Indigenous unexpected to unsettle... dominant ideological formations' that, when untroubled, stay unnoticed as the broad context for Indigenous resurgence.<sup>249</sup> With *Treaty Shirts* and the Treaty Shirts, Vizenor has quickened the CWEN, shepherding it towards what, perhaps, was always going to be its natural course of progression, reversion, and resurgence. As an activist expression of Indigenous storywork, the CWEN—as documented and depicted—becomes all the more active as a destabilisation of monotheistic settler notions of constitutional validity. Thus, *Treaty Shirts* is a trenchant (though not unique) exercise in opening up space for readings of

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 4; 14.

<sup>248</sup> Alfred, *Wasáse*, 268; Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 9.

<sup>249</sup> Darren Edward Lone Fight, "The Indigenous Imposition: Settling Expectation, Unsettling Revision, and the Politics of Playing with Familiarity," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 31, no. 3/4 (Autumn/Winter 2019): 21, <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/749191>, (italics in original).

Indigenous sovereignties that reveal Indigenous storyworks as forms of constitution that are vital, viable, and incommensurable with settler sovereignty.

So, if Indigenous sovereignties can be so divergently constituted in comparison to settler sovereignty, how can one engage in an ethic of dynamic reciprocity? For non-Indigenous listener-readers, it is not simply a deferential mandate; the contents of the monotheistic settler worldview are not without place in a relationship of dynamic reciprocity. They are, however, displaced from their current position of unitary, central, and boundless authority. They are emplaced in different orientations that reimagine not only the ideological creases between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cosmologies, but also the conditions under which those encounters occur. These overarching paradigmatic structures are colonially articulated and, as Kimmerer attests, '[g]etting scientists to consider the validity of indigenous knowledge is like swimming upstream in cold, cold water.'<sup>250</sup> Dynamic reciprocity between and among Indigenous communities and settler communities is contingent on destabilising this unified emplacement and centring Indigenous sovereignties in a pluralistic way that does more than replace one type with another. Audra Simpson argues that the settler state's purview over Indigenous sovereignties constitutes a domineering assemblage of 'biopolitical regime[s] of recognition.'<sup>251</sup> Deploying what she terms a 'grammar of action' in response to this relationship can reduce the pressure of possession and catalyse dynamic reciprocity between

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<sup>250</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 160. Kimmerer speaks to "science" in an expansive fashion that is not disciplinarily compartmentalised by Western epistemological scaffolds.

<sup>251</sup> Audra Simpson, "Why White People Love Franz Boas; or, The Grammar of Indigenous Dispossession," in *Indigenous Visions: Rediscovering the World of Franz Boas*, eds. Ned Blackhawk and Isaiah Wilner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 172.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous sovereignties, and therefore the mutually impactful worldviews they are shaped by.<sup>252</sup> One of the prodigious cast that comprise Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* is the commun(al)ist revolutionary Angelita. Her appreciation of Marxism is distinctly one of dynamic reciprocity, and she claims that there is 'no revolution and there would be no revolution as long as "outsiders" like [Cuban communist agitator] Bartolomeo were telling the people how to run their revolution.'<sup>253</sup> This example articulates the bundled nature of dynamic reciprocity in Indigenous activism and its reminiscence to the entangled sovereignties of shadow survivance I have explored in this chapter. Non-Indigenous folks are not debarred from the project, but it is non-negotiable that they are decentralised. Their centres of power and authority must be relocated.

The dominant drive of monotheorism to "consolidate" or "pin down" knowledge in definitional rubrics is an inherently hegemonic one that runs against the more dynamic types of 'ideological wanderings' common in the creases of many Indigenous worldviews.<sup>254</sup> "Theory" is a designation that is safeguarded in the Western academic imaginary, given ample time and resource. Yet theories that emanate from positions of institutional precarity, in spite of their positions, are acts of resistance, of revolution.<sup>255</sup> Evidently, different kinds of theory and theorisation emerge from different sources and thus accomplish different things. As Bridget

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<sup>252</sup> Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 178, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>253</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead: A Novel* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 292.

<sup>254</sup> Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, 22.

<sup>255</sup> It is important to remember that for the vast majority of Indigenous theorists the anatomy of academia places very palpable economic and social risks alongside pursuing alternative ways of knowing. Funding, job prospects, available resources, and grades all depend more often than not on avoiding more than superficial alterity, institutionally speaking.

O'Meara explains it, the "suggestiveness" of theorists like Silko (and Vizenor, I would add) and their '[a]ctivism is complex, often messy' and an 'apparently counterhegemonic position, in the absence of an ongoing *politics of criticism*, can deny that complexity.'<sup>256</sup> The Constitution of the White Earth Nation and its visionary storytelling amendment *Treaty Shirts* are co-generative actants in this effort, testimonies to the decolonial potency of interrupting settler socio-historical narratives and centring Indigenous perspectives. These storyworks develop notions of constitution that are temporally complex, concerned with futurity, history, and presence in unfamiliar ways. They imagine senses of temporal scope and scale that are incommensurable with settler political doctrine as a dimension of White Earth sovereignty sails into a decolonial yet-to-come. The question of *when* Indigenous sovereignties are is thorny, and I look for answers in *Almanac of the Dead*.

### **There's Still Time**

The control over, and de-narrativisation of, time is one of the most powerful and most covert mechanisms of settler colonial oppression. Savage Love, amid all her rueful misgivings towards the CWEN and her fellow exiles, is especially conscious of how significant this settler tactic of temporal collapse is as a mode of Indigenous erasure. Indigenous rhetorics of resurgence typically foreground presence, but the temporal dimension of that load-bearing word remains un-actualised in important ways. To Savage Love, Archive's exultant praise of the CWEN and its words 'were

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<sup>256</sup> Bridget O'Meara, "The Ecological Politics of Leslie Silko's 'Almanac of the Dead,'" *Wicazo Sa Review* 15, no. 1 (Autumn 2000): 70, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1409463.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A8a268bb5a114b36f6dd4e9d92d09ab3d>, (italics in original).

the tease of now, not the presence, and only the ephemeral appearance of the moment,' because the settler colonial worldview prescribes a normative structure of unified time.<sup>257</sup> Par for the course with monotheism, a normalised model of chronological division, progression, and momentum impedes any attempts to break out from it, regarding alternative understandings perhaps as theoretically interesting, but practically invalid. So, this dimension of monotheistic repression is next on the itinerary.

The normative "now" is littered with obstacles to the emergence of Indigenous sovereignties and their other constitutive nows. An exploration of this phenomenon, though, allows one to approach the issue as *Savage Love* finally does. That is, not headlong but rather with a kind of lambent resolve: 'the now was underwater, in the natural waves and ancient stone, and the stories of a native presence were in the stones of trickster stories. The stones wait to burst apart in campsite fires.'<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 52.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter II

### Almanacs, Altemporalities, and the Carceral Settler Chronologue:

#### Leslie Marmon Silko's Creases in Time

'Indigenous resistance draws from a long history, projecting itself backward and forward through time... [T]o change the colonial present and to imagine a decolonial future... those suppressed practices must make a crack in history'<sup>1</sup>

Nick Estes

'Who dies badly in order for others to live much too well?'<sup>2</sup>

Kim TallBear (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate)

#### What Happens Now?: Entangled Sovereignities in Tangled Times

Atop Everest, time passes faster than at the bottom of the Marianas Trench. On Mercury, a day lasts two years. The time of apocalypse for Indigenous America 'isn't

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (London; New York: Verso, 2019), 20, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>2</sup> Kim TallBear, "A Sharpening of the Already Present: Settler Apocalypse 2020," Department of Political Science, University of Alberta, October 9, 2020, YouTube Video, 27:45, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eO14od9mlTA&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR1lk3L6RgL1c1aqMorr-fkYjQvt7z1Kt1H5F4sw9eUWHOlV7XW\\_ePn5sQU8&ab\\_channel=DavidJKahane](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eO14od9mlTA&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR1lk3L6RgL1c1aqMorr-fkYjQvt7z1Kt1H5F4sw9eUWHOlV7XW_ePn5sQU8&ab_channel=DavidJKahane).

a singular event' to come; the post-apocalypse is already 'an ongoing and relentless process' centuries-old.<sup>3</sup> At the close of Silko's postapocalyptic storywork *Almanac of the Dead*, the most revolutionary members of the novel's vibrant cast gather in Room 1212 of the Tucson Resort during the International Holistic Healers Convention. They discuss 'a network of tribal coalitions dedicated to the retaking of ancestral lands by indigenous people.'<sup>4</sup> This central concurrence has limits, though. The negotiations are riddled with ethical and methodological conflicts that stymie clear pathways forward, allowing them to embed a coalitional ethos of dynamic reciprocity negotiated in ideological creases.<sup>5</sup> The wrinkles and rankles illustrate Indigenous understandings of time that deviate from what settler capitalist society installs as normative. They are mutually supportive and co-constitutive, yet not collapsible.

Angelita, the Maya revolutionary who indigenises Marx's storytelling in *Das Kapital*, enjoins the attendees to 'go about their daily routines. Because the great shift of human populations on the continents was already under way,' an intractable migration that promises to dislodge settler centrality in physical terms and in terms of its temporal imaginary.<sup>6</sup> The Barefoot Hopi, who 'had no permanent location but kept moving,' refuses to subscribe to any revolutionary schedule predicated on settler temporal patterns.<sup>7</sup> Though radical, he espouses 'peaceful and gradual changes' because 'no one says it will happen right away tomorrow. No one says anything like that. Native American people have been on these continents thirty

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2017), 168.

<sup>4</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead: A Novel* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 737.

<sup>5</sup> Joni Adamson, *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place* (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 152.

<sup>6</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 735.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 617; 616.

thousand years, and the Europeans have been here for five hundred.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Lakota 'poet lawyer' Wilson Weasel Tail interlaces place, time, and more-than-human life rhythms.<sup>9</sup> His poetry is shadow survivance at play as he deploys and reappropriates settler legal doctrine via a dead language to enliven Indigenous resistance. 'You think colonialism lasts forever? / *Res ipsa loquitur*' he declares, '*Res judicata* / We are at war.'<sup>10</sup> *Res ipsa loquitur*—meaning "the thing speaks for itself"—is the principle that mere occurrence of an accident suffices to imply negligence. Alongside the suggestion that colonialism is not everlasting, this phrase at once calls Indigenous peoples to be vigilant against the machinations of colonialism and also advises settler society that the brutal dispossession and violence storied in *Almanac* are not the unfortunate contretemps of natural societal forces.<sup>11</sup> Both the horrors of colonialism and the perduring Indigenous peoples rallying against it speak for themselves. Negligence and misadventure are ravelled. *Res judicata*, meanwhile, indicates that a matter has been concluded—or settled—by a competent court.<sup>12</sup> Coupled with the homonymic resonance of "res" in an Indigenous context, this statement is a sovereign declaration of authority and self-determination. Weasel Tail

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 739.

<sup>9</sup> Silko also dropped out of law school to instead become a poet.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 714-715.

<sup>11</sup> "Res Ipsa Loquitur," Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School, [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/res\\_ipsa\\_loquitur](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/res_ipsa_loquitur). This complication of responsibility, whereby Silko refrains from laying blame squarely with settler coloniality in a binary frame coheres with Vizenor's avoidance of victimry. In *Ceremony*, an oft-quoted passage warns '[Destroyers] want us to believe all evil resides with white people... to separate us from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction' but 'it was Indian witchery that made white people in the first place (139). This attitude emphasises Indigenous agency over its deconstruction and reconstruction. Weasel Tail follows in this mode.

thus utilises the terminology of the settler state to subvert and re-envision entangled sovereignties in new relations.

Indigenous peoples in the Americas have been dispossessed, repeatedly, wherever the 'unusual qualities of European temporalities have been naturalized.'<sup>13</sup> The quotidian, legislative, governmental, and epochal temporal rhythms that the settler capitalist milieu enforces upon Indigenous communities and lands is materially palpable, though conceptually slippery. Silko's *Almanac*, the long-awaited successor to her critically acclaimed debut novel *Ceremony* (1977), offers alternative formulations of time that need to be triangulated—not described—as 'expressions of temporal sovereignty' that are rooted in Indigenous storytelling.<sup>14</sup> With critical insight from Rebecca Tillett's *Otherwise, Revolution!*, Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Rifkin's *Beyond Settler Time*, and Justice's *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, I extend contemporary discussions on the political, temporal, and practical force of Silko's *Almanac*, arguing that the alternative temporal ontologies and epistemologies she explores are textured creases politics of sovereignties and incommensurable worldviews. Significantly, her latticework of what I call incommensurable *atemporalities* offers listener-readers opportunities to engage with such epistemological distance in an ethic of dynamic reciprocity—where Indigenous understandings reposition, re-historicise, and reimagine monotheorism.

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<sup>13</sup> Kevin K. Birth, *Time Blind: Problems in Perceiving Other Temporalities* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), x.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), x, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Many interlocutors (including Silko herself) have used the term atemporality to describe *Almanac's* narrative whorls. This indicates, however, a damaging *absence* of time and perpetuates a reductive myth of Indigenous peoples' time/lessness.<sup>15</sup> Atemporality as characteristic of Indigenous peoples and their storywork suggests deviance from a singular temporal reality and, by extension, that these worldviews exist without relation to real-time. Chronology is not intrinsically accurate, though. Busting free of a rigid chrononormative framework does not mean exclusion to an extratemporal space of cosmological vacuity, because chrononormativity is just 'a mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts' with enough recitation.<sup>16</sup> Vizenor asserts that 'absence is an *event*,' with 'no native diachrony in the absence of a dialogic interaction' and no sense of transmotional continuation.<sup>17</sup> Conversely, *Almanac* is a messy cluster of processual presence, sheaves of alternative temporalities—or altemporalities—which are deeply transmotional dimensions of sovereignties that rely upon constant attention, movement, and complication to maintain their coalitional anti-colonial vitality.

Silko's anarchic narrative weave is a fractious re-envisioning of the histories, futures, and presents of the continental Americas. It follows transmotional patterns of storywork: web-like, its progressions do not stretch ever-forward and the 'now' is not sharpened to a point from broader foundations. Dean Rader notes that in order to 'tell a Pueblo story right, you can't move in a linear fashion; that would be out of

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<sup>15</sup> See Laura Coltelli's interview with Silko: "*Almanac*: Reading Its Story Maps after Twenty Years."

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 3, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>17</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 25, (italics in original).

order, since no correlative to such compositionality exists in Pueblo modes of knowing.<sup>18</sup> Transmotional pathways of storywork are manifold, coiled, and converge in ideological creases. Likewise, *Almanac*'s attemporalities emerge in a multiscalar fashion—not only in unsettling received norms, but also in re-contextualising a 'version of time [that] is so insidious' as a lynchpin of Indigenous dispossession in the name of capital that 'it has managed to persuade us that it is coextensive with the very fabric of existence itself.'<sup>19</sup> So, I read *Almanac* as a manifesto for anti-colonial activism that is just as constitutive for Indigenous sovereignties in general as *Treaty Shirts* is for White Earth sovereignty in particular. Silko's narratives and contra-narratives that crumple and crease on one another evince 'the texture of Indigenous temporalities' with storywork as methodology.<sup>20</sup> This textual texturing complements and galvanises the work of more recognisable decolonial arenas where language resurgence, economic opportunities, and return of land occupy the critical foreground.

Everybody knows that time is relative courtesy of one feted cloud-haired physicist with a handlebar moustache. Yet despite temporal relativity being theorised as robustly as gravity by Western science in material fact (and indeed finally proven in 2020), Newtonian notions remain lodged in the engine room of the monotheistic scientific imaginary of the settler state and its relationships to other cosmologies *in material fact*. Nonetheless, as Catherine Rainwater suggests, we still 'know the

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<sup>18</sup> Dean Rader, *Engaged Resistance: American Indian Art, Literature, and Film from Alcatraz to the NMAI* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 181.

<sup>19</sup> West-Pavlov, *Temporalities*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, viii-ix.

present in terms of prefabricated interpretations' that cannot be dislodged without something more than equations.<sup>21</sup> Vizenor's constitutional writings demonstrated that Indigenous sovereignties are formally supple, tensive, and entangled—with one another and with settler colonial polities through time. Time, however, is not as regular a force as it may appear. So, it is important to consider what part(s) temporal cosmologies play in sovereign dynamics; asking *when* Indigenous sovereignties are as extant is, in some key ways, more elucidative than asking *what* they are as contingent.

### **If Not Now, When?**

Indigenous literatures teem with imagined futures of the kind that extend from Vizenor's *Treaty Shirts* because they connect and extrapolate 'experiences already related by an archipelago of stories' into present and prospective contexts.<sup>22</sup> Justice characterises Indigenous literatures' capacity to interpellate cosmological worldviews with 'imaginative and humanizing interventions against the dehumanizing projections of those in power.' In these imaginations, 'the fantastic is an extension of the possible.'<sup>23</sup> Indeed, through sovereign dimensions of epistemological and ontological density, revolutionary storyworks like *Almanac* quicken the transition between possibility and actuality as they trouble the distance

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<sup>21</sup> Catherine Rainwater, "'Maybe Einstein was Part Yaqui': Deposing Thought in Works by Endrezze and Silko," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 5, <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/539872>.

<sup>22</sup> Dian Million, "There is a River in Me: Theory from Life," in *Theorizing Native Studies*, eds. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 31-42; 31, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>23</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 141; 149. "Fantastic" is not synonymous with "enjoyable." *Almanac* is far from enjoyable, but it satisfies the specular potency of the fantastic; its grotesque abundance and abundance of grotesqueness does not inhibit its contranarratives' positioning of 'hope as the primary outcome' (Tillett, 124.)

between the same.<sup>24</sup> No wonder these narratives are so powerful, then; they embed and are embedded within different configurations of temporality that overlap at junctures that are variably expected *and* strange. With a listener-reader engaged in an ethic of dynamic reciprocity, they demonstrate 'that other worlds exist; other realities abide alongside and within our own.'<sup>25</sup> Manifold realities overlay, interlock, and agitate in the creases.

Conversely, the settler chronologue's (hi)story dictates what *is* history—what is already done. It holds that speculative futures are bound to market forces and forward (des)motion, and that the *actual* future requires trajectorial consensus to come about in an ideologically hemmed type of reality. Silko resists easy depictions of consensus throughout *Almanac* and places her characters and their stories in ideological creases of transmotional friction by exploring clusters of revolutionary forms. Silko explains that 'ancient Pueblo people sought a communal truth, not an absolute truth,' and although *Almanac*'s cast of Indigenous and other marginalised revolutionaries share common legacies of dispossession, they develop no clear-cut unanimity nor uncover an intrinsic shared identity.<sup>26</sup> Rather, to echo Christie, their diverse indigenous [and non-Indigenous] experiences of sovereignty...converge downstream' with a common vantage 'along a shared sovereign horizon.'<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Andersen, "Critical Indigenous Studies," 81-82; 91-94.

<sup>25</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 153.

<sup>26</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 32.

<sup>27</sup> Stuart Christie, *Plural Sovereignties and Contemporary Indigenous Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2.

*Almanac*'s radical explosion of histories both inhabits and exceeds the settler grand legend wherein '[n]on-European society waits, immobile and timeless, to be drawn into the slipstream of a European trajectory of progress' and the moral rightness it claims.<sup>28</sup> The bewildering narrative pace and paths of *Almanac* are conveyed in a panoply of achronological cadences that contest inert portrayals of tradition similar to Vizenor. By 'destroy[ing] this idea of 1492' as a crucible of temporal unification in the American imaginary, new futures emerge from new pasts via new presents of Indigenous presence.<sup>29</sup> Silko exposes the oppression of the settler colonial timeline and thus demonstrates the globally remedial potential of Indigenous alternatives, working to make them more readily comprehensible. For this chapter, I outline and employ two ideologically creased concepts: diverse Indigenous attemporalities and what I term the settler colonial *chronologue*. These concepts course through *Almanac* and broader discussions of Indigenous sovereignties, and travelling with them is an opportunity to re-envision the power dynamics sustained by settled temporal dogma.

This chapter proposes an attemporal reading of Indigenous sovereignties in *Almanac*. That is, one that recognises the abundance of temporal cosmologies understood by Indigenous communities that do not map directly onto the normalised timeline-story of the settler chronologue. If attemporalities foster shifting ideological creases, then the chronologue carves a hermetically sealed engraving. In

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<sup>28</sup> Russell West-Pavlov, *Temporalities* (London: Routledge, 2012), 164.

<sup>29</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko and Ray Gonzalez, "The Past is Right Here and Now: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko," in *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko*, ed. Ellen L. Arnold (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 103.

keeping with *e pluribus unum*, the chronologue imposes a single story and discourages reading it as a story. The settler chronologue of North America is not identical to Rifkin's notion of settler time as a dominant temporal construct, but describes settler time's internal mechanical manifestation to the broader settler society; it is the great High-Story of the American People. Altemporalities manifest most clearly in storywork, and the settler colonial chronologue is no more or less than a story too, no matter how thick the veneer of normativity ascribed it—an immensely popular, institutionally naturalised story currently in its umpteenth reprint-run, sure, but a story nonetheless. *Almanac* situates this ideological crease as an environment in which to engage dynamic reciprocity amidst Indigenous altemporalities and the settler chronologue. These temporal storyworks are related, they are mutually constructive, and they are incommensurable. They discomfit non-Indigenous listener-readers in important ways that prime them to approach Indigenous altemporal sovereignties in faithful, attentive relationships.

Altemporalities are more than alterior perceptions of time and its interpreted fluctuations in historical perspectives. They are also prefigurative in ways that project—but do not determine—Indigenous futures. This formulation is intended to counter tendencies to decoct Indigenous altemporalities into a singular counter-colonial chronology, one that remains dependently counterweighted in a binary layout. As another co-constitutive dimension of manifold Indigenous sovereignties, altemporalities evince something otherwise. Keely Byars-Nichols repudiates accusations that Silko generalises a Pan-Indian experience in *Almanac*. Instead she contends that Silko imagines inter- and intra-Indigenous 'multiculturalism not as a

melting pot, but as a community that relies on both a unity of ideals and heterogeneity of experience and history' to resurge against settler colonial subjugation.<sup>30</sup> I agree that Silko's 'transverse coalitions' of multivalent Indigenous sovereignties are not homogenising presentations of indigeneity.<sup>31</sup> *Almanac* is storywork rooted in Pueblo practices, and in dynamic reciprocity with other Indigenous worldviews; '[i]t doesn't pretend to give a complete view of the worlds, but... you pick it up, you listen, and you follow the stories, and you start to see things' that etch informative ideological creases.<sup>32</sup> If the 'Pueblo people do not view any single location or natural springs as the one and only true Emergence Place,' then *Almanac* is itself a position of acknowledgement and reciprocation that includes Indigenous pluralities.<sup>33</sup> In this vein, the attemporalities deployed within *Almanac* situate time into ideologically creased but not necessarily coeval formations. Silko considers the novel as being an effort of compilation and assembly, of different stories, historical echoes, peoples, all drawing together attemporal perspectives from 'so many sources... in order to yield the future.'<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Keely Byars-Nichols, "The Black Indian with One Foot: Reading Somatic Difference and Disability in *Almanac*," in *Howling for Justice: New Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead*, ed. Rebecca Tillett (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 54. Critics like Cook-Lynn decry the blending of distinct Indigenous communities into artificial "Indianness." Although I have misgivings about the latter's apologetics for pantribalism, see Channette Romero's 2002 "Envisioning a 'Network of Tribal Coalitions'" and Ami M. Regier's chapter "Material Meeting Points of Self and Other" for explorations of this broad debate and Silko's coalitional tactics.

<sup>31</sup> Jessica Maucione, "Competing Mythologies of Inevitability and Silko's *Almanac*," in *Howling for Justice: New Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead*, ed. Rebecca Tillett (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 156.

<sup>32</sup> Laura Coltelli, "*Almanac*: Reading Its Story Maps after Twenty Years: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko," in *Howling for Justice: New Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead*, ed. Rebecca Tillett (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 210-211.

<sup>33</sup> Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 36.

<sup>34</sup> Coltelli, "*Almanac*: Reading Its Story Maps after Twenty Years," 209.

Altemporalities in *Almanac* disrupt the overbearing singular sovereignty of settler monotheism's neoliberal chronologue by tracing other timelines, or, other patterns of time, that do away with straight lines altogether. Duthu indicts Western intolerance of pluralism in worldviews; settler society can 'tolerate fairly shallow manifestations of pluralism to the extent that new or different expressions do not impinge upon or threaten the core, fundamental superstructure of the society.'<sup>35</sup> Duthu levies this charge explicitly against legal constructs, but it pertains to temporal sovereignties just as much. In fact, the refusal to stray from what Elizabeth Freeman calls '*chrononormativity*, or the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity' in ways that conglomerates those bodies, anonymises them, and controls their time in multiple ways.<sup>36</sup> Whether confined within it, withheld from it, or marginalised by it, the singular story of the chronologue positions Indigenous peoples in relation to settler society and enables the state to pressure Indigenous sovereignties from a false position of superiority that seemingly transcends political theory as an intrinsic immutable of space and time. In *Almanac*, Silko relieves this pressure, allowing alternative temporal sovereignties to breathe, live, and move about more freely.

Contemporary America has long held primacy as the yardstick for modernity. The United States' imagined centrality to globalised nowness is stabilised between the miserable behind-ness experienced by the global majority and the carnivalesque futurity of technologically advanced societies like urban Japan and Dubai. *Almanac*

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<sup>35</sup> N. Bruce Duthu, *Shadow Nations: Tribal Sovereignty and the Limits of Legal Pluralism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 29, Oxford Scholarship Online.

<sup>36</sup> Freeman, *Time Binds*, 3, (*italics in original*).

is a labyrinth, an exposé of the seldom-questioned formation of settler temporality that is imposed as a monotheistic worldview upon Indigenous peoples. More importantly, it is a storywork expression of what Indigenous alternatives can do to upend that power dynamic, to decentre and desanctify whiteness. I argue that Silko's altemporalities prime new approaches to political engagement in one of the most formative creases of sovereignties: when a polity opts to determine itself. *Almanac*'s meanders, its irregular swells and slows in pace, and its temporally upsetting causalities contribute to disabusing listener-readers of their temporal constructs' binary factuality. Silko thus etches manifold Indigenous cosmological creases into the otherwise undisturbed surface of what Rifkin terms 'settler time.' And she does so to such a dizzying degree that one struggles to distinguish the settler chronologue from any of the other stories imbricated about it so as to propagate 'potentially divergent processes of becoming' and being in the world than those settler colonialism permits.<sup>37</sup>

Russell West-Pavlov writes that 'time is the very dynamic of existence, the pulsating drive of the unceasing transformation of being itself.'<sup>38</sup> Although a number of vital ideological creases could be ironed out with this unifying articulation, the point nonetheless conveys the immanence of Time as a shared factor across incommensurable worldviews. Temporalities do not merely flow at different paces for different peoples, they move in different directions, with different parabolae, in different numbers. To reinvoké Andersen, the temporal dimensions of sovereignties

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<sup>37</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 2.

<sup>38</sup> West-Pavlov, *Temporalities*, 3.

require non-Indigenous actors to engage in dynamic reciprocity to perceive the worldviews of 'Indigenous communities as epistemologically *dense*' rather than just different.<sup>39</sup> Kimmerer advocates immersion in other ways of knowing, since '[t]ransformation is not accomplished by tentative wading at the edge,' to foster an ethic of dynamic reciprocity in non-Indigenous engagements with Indigenous cosmologies.<sup>40</sup> As such, I situate the Indigenous altemporalities that Silko foregrounds amongst the dominant settler temporal narrative as part of an immersive practice. This chapter is less a study into the specific anatomy of these incommensurable altemporalities and more a 'means of indexing the multiplicity of ways' that they challenge the chronologue as 'a vector of settler colonialism' by 'express[ing] Indigenous self-determination' on their own schedules.<sup>41</sup> I treat *Almanac* as a (de)ciphering key of sorts to read the ways in which these schedules do not shake out with that of the settler state.

### **Altemporalities Squeezing the Chronologue, or, 'A time of dissolution'<sup>42</sup>**

Borrows explains, 'when you are on the land, it is more difficult to isolate legal phenomena from their broader context,' and back in Room 1212 Weasel Tail pursues a concomitant 'legal approach [whereby] the environment becomes the legal archive

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<sup>39</sup> Chris Andersen, "Critical Indigenous Studies: From Difference to Density," *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 97, <https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v15i2.2039>, (italics in original).

<sup>40</sup> Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 89.

<sup>41</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 185.

<sup>42</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 576.

that practitioners read and use to regulate their communities.<sup>43</sup> For him, the geophysical and geopolitical permutations of North America evince other pulses of temporal understandings. These understandings are given substance in his speech to the Holistic Healers Convention by '[t]he buffalo... returning. They roam off federal land in Montana and Wyoming. Fences can't hold them... Year by year the range of the buffalo grows a mile or two larger.'<sup>44</sup> Here, Weasel Tail critiques settler enclosures and deploys a worldview that refuses to abstract time from vitality and motion in the world. The buffalo are a measure of time and place for whom the chronologue is peripheral, not paramount. All three of these Indigenous activists ensconce their worldviews in planar relation to one another, with clear connections in some places and clear daylight in others: Angelita trusts in missile launchers; Weasel Tail has faith in words; The Barefoot Hopi is assured of settler societal suicide. These methodologies run on different temporal scales but are no more or less urgent as a consequence. Alternative temporal worldviews mark these ideological creases where sovereign interactions of dynamic reciprocity between worldviews can (though definitely will not always) meaningfully take place. This relationship of coalitional sovereignties is akin to many load-bearing filaments that support the 'spider's web' structure of Pueblo expression 'with many little threads radiating from the center' and no simple linearity in sight.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> John Borrows, "Outsider Education: Indigenous Law and Land-Based Learning," *Windsor Yearbook of Access to Justice* 33, no. 1 (2016): 4; 13, <https://doi.org/10.22329/wyaj.v33i1.4807>.

<sup>44</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 725.

<sup>45</sup> Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 48.

The last chapter sketched the dangers of hegemonic monotheism, showing how the normativity of nominal and static notions of power in settler worldviews perpetuate violence—physical, social, and noetic—against Indigenous peoples’ sovereignties. Vizenor’s storywork reconstitutes constitutional sovereignty effectively via the transmotional shadow survivance he deploys. Similar to settler sovereign supremacy, its monotheistic, untroubled storyline operates through a fundamentally political narrativisation of time that is presented as neutral and ‘easily mobilized to support inequality, bigotry, and self-interest.’<sup>46</sup> Silko’s storywork brings other possibilities to bear. *Almanac* is a sharp ‘polemic against a history that, using its legitimizing power as a scientific discipline,’ subjugates and subordinates alternative histories.<sup>47</sup> So, it’s apposite that one of the novel’s prime subversive targets is “the beginning” itself.

El Feo (The Ugly) is a comrade of Angelita and one of the Mayan twins leading a convoy of the Indigenous peoples of Central America northward as *Almanac* reaches its peroration.<sup>48</sup> El Feo propounds circular time in keeping with the Chol Maya speakers of Chiapas, the epicentral region of Silko’s peoples’ movement.<sup>49</sup> He declares the ‘days, months, and years were’ not inert units of measurement, but rather ‘living beings who roamed the starry universe until they came around again...

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<sup>46</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 37.

<sup>47</sup> Joanna Ziarkowska, *Retold Stories, Untold Histories: Maxine Hong Kingston and Leslie Marmon Silko on the Politics of Imagining the Past* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 2, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>48</sup> Earlier drafts had El Feo named ‘Bel Aire’ as a younger man—guilt-stricken survivor of the missionary school that killed his brother Pinto through malnourishment. In this earlier residue, Silko notes that Bel Aire’s nominal transition to El Feo marks his new stance as an ‘idealist’ as his politics become increasingly intertribal. She accordingly portrays created ideologies as ugly, as messy if pursued with conviction (Leslie Marmon Silko Papers, Box 26 “Raw Drafts” circa 1985).

<sup>49</sup> Lydia Rodríguez, “‘Time is *not* a line.’ Temporal Gestures in Chol Mayan,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 151 (October 2019): <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.07.003>.

The white man didn't seem to understand he had no place here because he had no past, no spirit of ancestors here.<sup>50</sup> In the frame of the United States as nation, whiteness and the white settlers have a lengthy history that is distended as years pass. 500 years of Euro-American presence on the continent comprise a quarter of the ecclesiastical epoch which organises Western temporality and so renders it 'coeval with the national-imperial project' of Indigenous dispossession.<sup>51</sup>

Rifkin invokes the notion of settler time to conceptualise the temporal scaffolding that has been installed to build over Indigenous altemporalities. By contrast, the chronologue is the untouchable narrative of those same suppressive tendencies that normalise such behaviours within settler society. The legal cases and the monotheistic political history highlighted in Chapter One construct the chronologue as a narrative Roman Road, straight and true to extend the empire. Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle writes, 'time is linear to the Western world and attached to it are assumptions of time as a progressive transformer,' and this temporal ontology then unfurls as a rigid procession of milestones.<sup>52</sup> These are the markers upon which settler societies in North America orientate their worldview which is materially dispossessive in what is consigned to be left behind. Indeed, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century '[p]rogressive notions were underway as hundreds of natives starved [and] thousands of women and children were undernourished.'<sup>53</sup> Chronologue as a neologism is meant to capture the conceptual sinew connecting monologue and

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<sup>50</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 313.

<sup>51</sup> West-Pavlov, *Temporalities*, 64.

<sup>52</sup> Lee Maracle, *Memory Serves: Oratories*, ed. Smaro Kamboureli (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2015) 85, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>53</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Native Provenance: The Betrayal of Cultural Creativity* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 58, ProQuest Ebook Central.

chrononormativity in settler sovereignty. The chronologue describes more than chronologic because the way settler time dogmatizes is a matter of rhetoric, not logic—a covert suppressive imposition of a monotheistic worldview that bears ‘an approximation of a concept of time divorced from existence.’<sup>54</sup> This settler colonial chronologue concretizes the erroneous claim of settler society to its own form of expediated indigeneity by ‘placing *time* as the narrative of central importance.’<sup>55</sup> And focussing on the narrativity of the settler chronologue is crucial to any effective disruption of it; masquerade of scientific verity aside, the arrow-straight settler timeline is a teleologically engineered story that ‘translate[s] Indianness as a form of non-development’ and, thus, as a form of anachronism supported by anachronistic forms of temporal sovereignty.<sup>56</sup> Manifest Destiny is a lengthy chapter in the chronologue, and its eventual denouement has settler society shedding its exogeneity to claim its own indigeneity. Thus, extant ‘Indigenous communities become the asterisk peoples’ in the chronologue.<sup>57</sup>

Veracini notes, since settler colonialism ‘covers its tracks and operates towards its self-supersession,’ occlusive strategies are used to disavow the continual present violence of the settler project. Most salient, it ‘justifies its operation on the basis of the expectation of its inexorable future demise’ and the end to its means.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Birth, *Time Blind*, 30.

<sup>55</sup> Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 60, (italics in original).

<sup>56</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 103.

<sup>57</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 22, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630>.

<sup>58</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, “Introducing: Settler Colonial Studies,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (2013): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2011.10648799>.

As both a historical chronicle and projective arc, the chronologue offers a post-dated cheque, promising that the means and ends of settler colonialism are just and justified. This guarantee of either eventual downfall or ascension sustains the temporally carceral dimension of Indigenous subjugation and erasure. It implies the existence of an in-built statute of limitations upon settler colonial and colonial injustices beyond which bygones *must* be bygones. Silko's *Almanac* is a storywork that minces no words; it calls bullshit on this ideology by conceptualising 'indigeneity,' in part, 'as a dynamic and expansive matrix of transtemporal connections' where the past and future are inseparable materially *and* inflectively.<sup>59</sup> She amplifies polyphonic voices, making unequivocally clear that 'the passage of time does not diminish indigenous people's [sic] call for justice through the return of their homelands,' if one denies settler metrics of whether time has, in fact, "passed."<sup>60</sup> These asynchronous voices are atemporal interruptions of the settler colonial chronologue that give texture to the multifarity of entangled sovereignties that Vizenor and Silko galvanise more broadly. *Almanac*'s narratives contest, they harry and heckle. So, replete with transgressions against the settler state of affairs, Silko's novel confuses the timeline of events and refuses to condone Indigenous worldviews being limited by settler omni-presence. Indeed, *Almanac* is an exercise in what Leanne Betasamosake Simpson theorises as 'coded disruption and affirmative refusal through the use of Indigenous aesthetic practices' to unsettle the

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<sup>59</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 134. Although this quote comes from a discussion of Silko's subsequent novel *Gardens in the Dunes*, the same ideological patterns are clear in *Almanac* as well.

<sup>60</sup> Yvonne Reineke, "Overturning the (New World) Order: Of Space, Time, Writing, and Prophecy in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 10, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 71, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20739463>.

uniform tattoo of the chronologue.<sup>61</sup> Disruptive agents enter, from all sides at different times. One ancient Yaqui woman, though, seems to enter from all sides at once, ‘a rapidly moving figure’ with ‘blazing dark eyes’ carrying the storywork sovereignties of Indigenous America in a tattered collection of notebooks.<sup>62</sup>

### **The People Keep the Stories, The People Keep the Times**

Old Yoeme (“The People” in her native tongue) is grandmother to Zeta and Lecha, the twin sisters, smugglers, and saboteurs upon whom the novel opens. Yoeme is erstwhile keeper of the textual almanac or ‘inner book’ as Silko refers to it in her archival residue.<sup>63</sup> A mercurial presence in the sisters’ upbringing, ‘Yoeme [and, thus, The People] had appeared suddenly’ at their home in Northern Mexico and ‘could not be stopped’ as a resurgent entity of Indigenous presence in the girls’ lives.<sup>64</sup> Until her unheralded appearance, Zeta and Lecha’s family speak of Yoeme (again, as grandmother and The People) with contempt, mistrust, and an undercurrent of fear—all qualities that the settler chronologue ascribes to Indigenous peoples and worldviews. At first Zeta and Lecha, brought up in a settler home without any inkling as to their own Indigenous roots, ‘waited for the strange figure to pass’ much as settler society has historically vied to “outlast” the Indigenous communities of the

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<sup>61</sup> Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 199, <https://www-jstor-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt77c>.

<sup>62</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 114.

<sup>63</sup> See Appendix F.

<sup>64</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 115.

Americas by manipulating time toward 'the settler colonial project of replacement.'<sup>65</sup> Yoeme brings the almanac, which *is* the past(s) and the future(s), and as such she issues a powerful refusal and embodies the communality of storywork that Silko advocates throughout her oeuvre.

Unperturbed by the hostility she encounters, Yoeme stays and offers Lecha and Zeta incessant snippets of instruction on the keeping of the notebooks that she will eventually bequeath to them both.<sup>66</sup> Just as Tonawanda Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman identifies 'writing' as 'essential to a continued production of landscapes of power' in 'the geographies of the West and the rest,' Yoeme locates rewriting, editing, and compiling as central to transnational shadow survivance *in* and *through* such landscapes for Indigenous peoples.<sup>67</sup> The curatorial instructions Yoeme gives her grandchildren are alternately gnostic and mundane; 'how one talked to snakes' or the finer points of 'translating sudden bursts and trails of light' matter no more or less than using waterproof materials when carrying forward the "'Mouths" and "tongues"' of the notebooks, as 'old Yoeme had called them.'<sup>68</sup> One constant piece of advice she holds to is that writing replacement sections for the inner book is crucial whenever segments are lost or their meaning becomes inscrutable for current contexts. Discussing old stories is vital as it allows the stewards

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 114; Eve Tuck and Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández, "Curriculum, Replacement, and Settler Futurity," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 29, no. 1 (2013): 80, <https://journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/view/411>.

<sup>66</sup> Lecha is the main inheritor of the notebooks that form the textual almanac. But Zeta is given one by Yoeme unbeknownst to her twin too, and this curatorial diffusion feeds the ongoing polyvocality of the inner book as torsional guiding stories.

<sup>67</sup> Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 193; 163, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>68</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 131; 178; 142.

of the almanac's atemporal histories to 'carry the past forward' so that 'what was important came true.'<sup>69</sup> And yet Silko takes pains to impress that re-telling the stories is not enough in isolation.

Having hashed out the "guidelines" of almanac-keeping down by the seashore, Yoeme leads a subtle test-run of sorts. She relays a slow, snaking story about a 'brilliant and resourceful man,' mistaken for Geronimo by the U.S. military, 'who was able to perform certain feats' that confounded the military's attempts to subdue the Apache and Yaqui.<sup>70</sup> He first appeared to her in a photo and later in person when she was a new mother. He helps the people as he can before going down to the beach and disappearing, perhaps becoming 'a gull riding a wave, floating and stretching its wings,' arcing toward the sunset.<sup>71</sup> On the slog home, Lecha and Zeta become 'too winded to talk' as they pass Yoeme's wheelchair handles back and forth. Afterward, for a long time, they 'never discussed the story Yoeme had told them on the beach, but Lecha had been careful to write it down in the notebook with the blank pages.' Down the line it transpires to be the first English entry into the almanac, much to the trio's surprise. Lecha fears Yoeme's wrath on the discovery that the inner book has been tainted by English. Protean as ever, though, the elder 'rocked herself from side to side, sighing with pleasure.'<sup>72</sup> It is a transmotional pivot; even when Indigenous peoples are physically restricted from orality, other ways remain to express sovereignties, to 'write to make something

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<sup>69</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 156; Silko, *Almanac*, 115.

<sup>70</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 129.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

that's even more than you know.'<sup>73</sup> Thus, new entries in new languages are not capitulations or compromises. Lecha's English entries do not connote a relationship of dependence as much as one of refusal to subscribe to a binarised choice of assimilation or exclusion. The storywork can travel back and forth through time and relevance. Silko emplaces this transmotional sense of alteration within multiple almanacs: the textual, the intertextual, and the metatextual. I read these marks and marginalia as palimpsestic, with meanings laid over one another to create the 'hum of magic within the arid passacaglia' of *Almanac's* composition.<sup>74</sup>

Like-for-like transcription is insufficient in Yoeme's interpretation of atemporal storywork. Interpellating and interpreting new nuances through something more like transcreation vitalises the atemporal histories, futures, and contested presence/presents the inner book relays. Lecha's labour predominantly involves interpretations drawn from source materials with wildly varying degrees of clarity and content. And interpretation is important because it leaves marks on the stories as they travel. Her move to interpreting the old stories in English is a key crease, as both she and Yoeme agree the language to be the new code required to work with the stories going forward—to toe the perforated line between usefulness and deviance in the context of settler colonialism. This fresh codification keeps the traditions close and those who threaten to calcify the traditions at bay. Significantly, it demonstrates a recalibration of culturally anchored ideas so that those ideas retain dynamism and resist stasis in favour of 'an instability of familiar references or tropes

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<sup>73</sup> Coltelli, "Almanac: Reading Its Story Maps After Twenty Years," 216.

<sup>74</sup> Paul West, "When a Myth Is as Good as a Mile: Almanac of the Dead," *Los Angeles Times*, 02 February, 1992, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-02-02-bk-1774-story.html>.

that may have given the reader meaning before' but now require the listener-reader to make new meanings.<sup>75</sup>

Tillett notes that this stained, messy compendium of imbricated communal histories 'provides a living record of living time' that is packed with edited accounts, stories, and useful instructions.<sup>76</sup> It also echoes the materiality through time that Vizenor captured with his exiles' pungent, grease-spattered Treaty Shirts—shirts that, like the inner book's fragments, are imperfect articles of practiced transmotional tradition immured from stasis. The textual almanac is bound by community, not necessarily familial lines, and this speaks to Silko's ethos of ideological creases within Indigenous coalitions. Although Yoeme passes it to her grandchildren, this reflects their anti-colonial activist praxes not their bloodline. According to Rifkin, unsettling the present 'up-ends the kind of generational transmission associated with lineage in favor of more idiosyncratic affective connections with ideas, practices, identifications that seem residual, failed, and/or backward from the vantage point of dominant discourses.'<sup>77</sup> In keeping with this, the previous keepers are not referred to in terms of familial descent or even specific tribes. They are a coalition of altemporal agents, entangled by their contradistinctive politics and the destabilisation of the settler chronologue their stories work toward. This altemporal alliance follows an ethos resembling '[t]he Ojibwe Seventh Generation philosophy,'

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<sup>75</sup> Hartwig Isernhagen, *Momaday, Vizenor, Armstrong: Conversations on American Indian Writing* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 108.

<sup>76</sup> Rebecca Tillett, *Otherwise, Revolution!: Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 121.

<sup>77</sup> Mark Rifkin, "Queering Indigenous Pasts, or Temporalities of Tradition and Settlement," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature*, eds. James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 138.

unpacked by Lake Superior Ojibwe scholar Patty Loew as ‘a principle embraced by many other Native peoples’ which ‘cautions decision makers to consider how their actions will affect seven generations into the future—some 240 years.’<sup>78</sup> It is these kinds of ideological Indigenous altemporalities that the almanac carries forward as its keepers carry it forward and keep it changing in order to protect it from being consumed by settler society. It propagates networks of responsibility, respect, and reciprocity that the settler chronologue cannot accommodate in meaningful ways because it insists on a dicey narrative of unified progress. One entry demonstrates this coalitional sense of dynamic reciprocity as the keepers describe the days of the ‘very last of their tribe’ and the efforts made to carry their storywork forward to support other Indigenous communities somewhere in the future.

Four children of this unnamed tribe spirit the almanac away from the forces of ‘the Butcher’ who is subjugating the South. They bear ‘the pages... sewn into their ragged garments,’ and many leaves are lost in the escape, just as their tribe is lost.<sup>79</sup> They even boil down some of the ‘brittle horse-gut pages’ into a watery broth, to provide sustenance for the children’s physical survival.<sup>80</sup> It is not a sacrifice, though; they only consume the pages after their contents have been committed to memory by the children, to be reimagined at another time. ‘Tradition, then, appears as a kind of critical memory’ in this process of commitment, and ‘the persistence of forms of trans-tribal consciousness despite the multi-pronged attack on native formations by

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<sup>78</sup> Patty Loew, *Seventh Generation Earth Ethics: Native Voices of Wisconsin* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2014), xv.

<sup>79</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 246.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

the United States' and other structurally analogous settler colonial powers.<sup>81</sup> Memorised, however, is not the same as replicated. These are four emaciated kids fleeing genocide. So, when they come to re-membering the lost fragments, they do so frictionally, in dialogues inflected by the swirl of context in which the memorisation took place. The story they recall is also the story of the circumstances of the commitment and, now, cannot exist outside of those creases, reflective of their community's assurance that '[t]hese days and years were all alive, and all these days would return again.'<sup>82</sup> Imperilled atemporality, story, and materiality are bundled into this one multi-dimensional artefact of sovereign expression before being deployed as a powerful, perduring emblem of resistance.

Yoeme nevertheless warns that the atemporal adjustments required of the keeper(s) 'not be just any sort of words' chosen for convenience, because '[n]othing must be added that was not already there. Only repairs are allowed' and repairs require a broader context.<sup>83</sup> *Almanac* and the almanac, then, operate as co-constitutional texts that encode and decode one another in equal measure; reading either in isolation saps the transmotivational potency of both. As such, the claim that the inner book somehow contains all that it needs to already sounds like, but is not, a monotheistic strain of determinism. Yoeme does not insist on paraphrasing by forbidding the addition of ideas that were not already in there. Rather, she demands that listener-readers interrogate the chronologue's linearity—she redefines what

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<sup>81</sup> Mark Rifkin, *Manifesting America: The Imperial Construction of U.S. National Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 107.

<sup>82</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 247.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

counts as “already.” In essence, Yoeme dissuades her granddaughters from imposing perspectives that are unmoored from histories, places, and times, because the ‘returns, renewals, and resurgences’ of Indigenous sovereignties are ‘not only about the return of land, but equally and importantly about the return of time’ from settler ownership and a settled past.<sup>84</sup>

To give a Vizenorean twist, fresh insertions must be discursively positioned with the incommensurable sovereign histories already shifting about in the inner book and so become *re-visions* that recognise the role of exploring a ‘violent history to understand its continuing effects.’<sup>85</sup> To be clear, I mean revisions both in the typical sense and creative re-envisionings of history that extend into ‘[t]he future’ which ‘is encoded in arcane symbols and old narratives.’<sup>86</sup> As *Almanac* develops, encoding rises as the verb of choice to describe Yoeme’s almanac-tending. She abhors the possibility that the “wrong” (read: Eurocentric) eyes might gain access to the notebooks and the atemporal possibilities it contains in order to quash them. As such, Yoeme insists that the top priority for her successors is ‘find[ing] a suitable code’ to convey the inner book’s messages to folks who approach with an ethic of reciprocity.<sup>87</sup> The various ciphers—linguistic, poetic, glyphic and so forth—that co-create the atemporal almanac attest to the valency of alternative perspectives. The ideological creases they gesture towards amplify frictional voices which ‘might enrich the production of literary meaning’ both within the textual almanac and the novel

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<sup>84</sup> Amber Hickey, “Rupturing Settler Time: Visual Culture and Geographies of Indigenous Futurity,” *World Art* 9, no. 2 (2019): 177, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21500894.2019.1621926>.

<sup>85</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 12.

<sup>86</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, frontispiece.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

itself to combat the sanctification of any clear History.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the mishmash of 'old notebooks are all in broken Spanish or corrupt Latin that no one can understand without months of research in old grammars.'<sup>89</sup> As with the altemporal routes through *Treaty Shirts*' recursive narrative, Silko's textual almanac (and *Almanac* more broadly) demands its 'listener-readers' interact in 'conversive structures and strategies' to retain its potency.<sup>90</sup> The codifications at work in *Almanac* are similarly enigmatic, often mundane. *Almanac* itself is, in important ways, a new cipher through which the inner book is reconfigured and represented. Silko's novel and the two dozen boxes of residual materials left behind in the Beinecke archive are as much a process and product of this ethos of interpretation as Yoeme and the inner books are. The residue Silko left behind is a trove of research conducted over 10 years or more: semi-legible scrawls on dry-cleaning tickets, newspaper clippings about CIA involvement in the Nicaraguan civil war, sketches, letters, raw drafts, storywork pentimentos, and even occult snakeskin, bottle-cap, and painted-frog-carcass fetishes in plastic baggies.<sup>91</sup> The *Almanac* that we listener-readers engage, then, is already an interpretation of altemporalities, not an invention of something atemporal. The residue clings to the novel, and that's a very good thing.

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<sup>88</sup> Chadwick Allen *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 107.

<sup>89</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 174.

<sup>90</sup> Susan Berry Brill de Ramírez, *Contemporary American Indian Literatures and the Oral Tradition* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999), 6.

<sup>91</sup> See Appendix G.

## The Codes and Modes of the E-ner Book

Many years after Yoeme's death, Lecha begins the daunting task of transcribing the almanac, now locked away in the metaphorical scream of a 'wooden ammunition box' nestled under a pile of pillows.<sup>92</sup> She recruits Seese, a young settler mother whose baby, Monte, has been abducted—later revealed to be horrifically murdered—to digitise the contents. Lecha's surname is Cazador, or Hunter in English. It tracks, then, that the ailing keeper of the notebooks is a renowned television psychic specialising in hunting down lost (usually dead) persons. Seese hopes to enlist Lecha to track down her son and the father she suspects snatched him. Digitising the inner book and committing it to a new kind of memory is itself an act of storywork, of alteration and amendment on a formal register. Following Yoeme's guidance, Lecha envisions a new manner of encoding the stories that takes on a new kind of literality as electronic data. In this formal (but not quantitatively like-for-like) recreation, the inner book thus 'occupies' not only 'a transitive ground between past and future,' but a transitive ground amongst past and future—that is to say atemporal, not chronologically interstitial.<sup>93</sup> Approaching an epoch of instant access and information, Silko's placement of the almanac on the cutting edge is incisive; she primes these Indigenous attemporalities for being released into a complex web of 'dialogic immediacy' with other worldviews.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 245.

<sup>93</sup> Caren Irr, "The Timeliness of *Almanac of the Dead*, Or A Postmodern Rewriting of Radical Fiction," in *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. Louise K. Barnett and James L. Thorson (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 226.

<sup>94</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 24.

Encoding the notebooks in this way engenders a kind of transnational friction between past and future that troubles the chronologue by invoking a palpable sense of the 'temporal and epistemological complexity of our [Indigenous] relationships with whitestream society.'<sup>95</sup> The chronologue relies on a binary formation of yes/no calculations as to what constitutes sovereign legitimacy. It is a wonderfully ironic turn, then, that the almanac finds new modes of expression in binary code so as to unsettle these binary codes of Indigenous/non-Indigenous encounter. It is challenging for monotheistic notions of cosmology to reconcile the immaterial and material dimensions of digital spaces; various lines of permanence and tangibility are blurred or, perhaps more appropriately, pixelated in terms of hitherto "simple" bounds of reality. So, this digital space is a productive site for 'Native societies' ability to both enable and protect complex patterns of social expression' in the overbearing context of settler hegemony.<sup>96</sup> The storywork accomplished by Lecha's simultaneous code-breaking and code-making echoes Silko's own decade-long efforts to decode and encode the violence and resistance of the neoliberal settler Southwest. Both are acts of shadow survivance that imprint Indigenous presence in enduring temporal and spatial ideological creases amidst other oppressive imprints because 'sovereignty means nothing except in relation to other sovereign entities.'<sup>97</sup> Lecha holds little affection for Seese in particular. Though she is one of *Almanac's* more redeemable characters and her story is significant,

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<sup>95</sup> Andersen, "Critical Indigenous Studies," 82.

<sup>96</sup> Sean Kicummah Teuton, *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 201, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>97</sup> Kimberly G. Wieser, *Back to the Blanket: Recovered Rhetorics and Literacies in American Indian Studies* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 94, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Seese remains a settler figure, and thus why exactly Lecha feels comfortable allowing her more or less unfettered access to the almanac in its entirety is unclear. Why take the risk? What if Seese's blue eyes are those "wrong" ones that Yoeme was afraid of? The answer is, well, it's about time.

Yoeme's passing halfway through the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a long time ago, longer in some ways than the forty-odd years as described by the settler chronologue. A group of Laguna Pueblo elders in the novel give little time to the chronologue and promise that '[w]hatever [revolution] was coming would not necessarily appear right away; it might not arrive for twenty or even a hundred years.'<sup>98</sup> But it is important to distinguish between atemporal understandings as incommensurable temporal formations and simply relative ones vis-à-vis the chronologue where 'the sedimentation of history into a barrier that is solid and tangible in the present' impinges upon Indigenous sovereignties' capacity for change through time.<sup>99</sup> The easy read here from a Western vantage point is one that renders Indigenous time slow, steady, and patient—a sense of romantic momentum that assures a just future without upheaval just now. Often this is the case, of course, but reducing Indigenous attemporalities to that one mode of relativity still centres the chronologue in problematic ways—monothorism remains the fulcrum and again Indigenous sovereignties are arrayed around settler sovereignty. Lecha's choice of assistant complicates this deterministic narrative by bringing Seese on to the job. Microcosmically, the settler is resituated amongst the ideological creases of

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<sup>98</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 35.

<sup>99</sup> Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 175, ProQuest Ebook Central.

incommensurable indigeneity and thus the settler chronologue is reoriented by the almanac's altemporalities, not vice versa. In the transcription, Seese's settler chronologue is buffeted by storywork and its 'power to impose cultural rhythmic' that spring from a 'hegemonic temporality [which] is socially and historically built' by whiteness leeches away.<sup>100</sup> Whereas Indigenous altemporalities are invoked so frequently in *Almanac* and broader critical discourses as matters of past and future up until Room 1212, Lecha breaks the received schedule by insisting that the almanac's altemporalities are immanent and imminent.

The meaningful conveyance of meanings between the almanac in the ragged form of the solitary boxful of stitched-together notebooks to the potential infinite incorporeality of the digital form is transmotional shadow survivance, akin to Waseese's laser sky-shows above the *Baron of Patronia*. Both digital and physical forms suffer from unlike vulnerabilities to their existence in type and scale. An unfortunate ember or an errant solar flare could destroy either. However, this digital encoding is itself a process of the actualisation of altemporality; Silko introduces the inner book into a new effective, ideological space, and 'ways of ordering space... affect the contours and texture of temporal experience' just as much as the inverse.<sup>101</sup> The web is infinite and timeless, apparently: a clear contrast to the imperilled state of one bundle of loose pages made of blanched paper, dried sinews, and cured skin. Silko's insertion of the almanac into this new spatio-temporal arena thus deploys an

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<sup>100</sup> Gonzalo Iparraguirre, "Time, Temporality, and Cultural Rhythmic: An Anthropological Case Study," *Time & Society* 25, no. 3 (2016): 630, <https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1177%2F0961463X15579802>.

<sup>101</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 96.

atemporal and sovereign Indigenous presence into a chronologic framework designed to make 'whiteness and white subjectivity both superior and normal.'<sup>102</sup> As such, this article of indigeneity moves outside the designated parameters of the chronologue to escape being confined to "then".

### **'Sacred Time is Always in the Present': Altemporal Nows Twinned in the Southwest Sand<sup>103</sup>**

In *Otherwise, Revolution!* Rebecca Tillett traces the necropolitical industry of *Almanac*'s most brazen vampire capitalist, Trigg and his not-at-all ominous 'Bio-Materials company.'<sup>104</sup> Left 'in a wheelchair since his freshman year in college' after a car accident, Trigg is 'adamant about the eventual miracle of medical science and high technology for spinal-cord injuries and nerve tissue implants. It was only a matter of time' until medical science could remedy his paralysis.<sup>105</sup> His dauntless faith in Western medical technology is fanatical. Trigg's business partner and reluctant lover Leah thinks likewise. In her brash aspiration to develop a canal city in the canyons of Arizona she boasts, '[t]ell me they are using up all the water and I say: Don't worry. Because science will solve the problem of the West. New technology. They'll have to.'<sup>106</sup> This quasi-religious confidence in Western science as nourished by money alone is an institutional get-out-clause that pulses thematically through

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<sup>102</sup> Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández, "Curriculum, Replacement, and Settler Futurity," 74.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>104</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 388.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 380. See Joanna Ziarkowska's "Disease, Disability, and Human Debris: The Politics of Medical Discourse in Silko's *Almanac*" for a rigorous exploration that deals with Silko's critique of the commercialised industry of Western medicine as 'a mirror and product of capitalist ideology' (57).

<sup>106</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 374.

most of *Almanac's* desmotional characters. For his part, Trigg lures the homeless and forgotten of Tucson into his van, murders them, and markets their organs. Trigg's grotesque black market reaps have become a frighteningly solvent business model in the thirty years since *Almanac*, particularly with the advent of the dark web's anonymity. This biopolitical trade is characterised by an aporial blend of invisibility and hypervisibility at once, a trenchant forecast of the neo-colonial world of 'capitalist monstrosity' and its 'apparent integration into the banal and mundane rhythms of quotidian existence' that are irretrievable from present iteration of the chronologue itself.<sup>107</sup>

*Almanac* is a constellation of macabre storywork in this vein, and through it Silko guides listener-readers through difficult times entwining to reveal pathways to something better. She refrains from viewing her prophetics on a linear timeline, arguing that even though bio-commerce was considered the stuff of sci-fi horror in the public eye at the time of writing, 'it was already there; I was just actually recounting what already was' real and visible in other temporal worldviews.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> David McNally, *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires, and Global Capitalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 2. See Jamie Bartlett's *The Dark Net: Inside the Digital Underworld* (2014). As a case in point: when six-year-old Guo Bin was found in 2013 drugged nearby his home with his eyes gouged out in an alleged case of illegal organ trafficking, the reality of the practice was both sensationalised and normalised, diminishing the regularity of the burgeoning trade for 'whole blood, human corneas, and human kidneys' where '[v]olume [is] the name of the game (*Almanac*, 387; 389). Elsewhere, North African migrants crossing into mainland Europe have been coerced into trading kidneys for tickets, a prime example of desmotional forces at play where movement towards "freedom" is actually in service of capitalist accumulation (Columb). In 1996, Iran passed its "Rewarded Gifting" Act, a saccharine moniker for a piece of legislation which effectively legalised kidney sales. The initiative reduced the national demand for donors but, unsurprisingly, the benefits are restricted to the wealthy at the direct expense of the vulnerable (Alesi and Muzi).

<sup>108</sup> Coltelli, "*Almanac*: Reading Its Story Maps After Twenty Years," 198. These projections continue to solidify as recently as 2017, when Ambrosia Medical opened for business in the U.S. The company offers plasma transfusions from "donors" between the ages of 16 and 25 for \$8,000 dollars per litre. Ambrosia require no green light for their specific operations since blood transfusions in general are already FDA-approved.

Whether prophetic, perceptive, or a little of both, this atemporal storywork is consistently thrown into contemporary relief.

Ensnared in deviancies of time, *Almanac* came out of ten years of researching, writing, listening, and interpreting. 'The message of Silko's long meandering novel is to be learned in the time it takes to tell,' writes Caren Irr, yet one should consider *what* amounts to the time(s) it takes to tell. Are we talking about the length of the reading? The length of the 500-year timeframe it covers? The decade it took Silko herself to tell? Confounding though it may be, the best answer may be all of the above. In short, Silko's atemporal storywork 'rupture[s] settler-colonial national narratives and dominant understandings of the trajectory of history,' thereby interpellating the contexts for diverse Indigenous sovereignties to flourish.<sup>109</sup> Funded by the MacArthur Fellowship Silko received in 1981, this creative time can be viewed—as Silko herself does—through a lens of rebellion against chrononormativity by dint of the financial breathing space that enabled its production.<sup>110</sup> Freeman describes chrononormative time's binding effect for and between different social groups, focussing primarily on the inequities that erupt from and congeal around this source. She highlights the standardisation of wage labour as a fabricated setting wherein one can observe '[m]anipulations of time' that 'convert historically specific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary body tempos and routines, which in turn organize the value and meaning of time.'<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Hickey, "Rupturing Settler Time," 164.

<sup>110</sup> Robin Cohen, "Of Apricots, Orchids, and Wovoka: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko," in *Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony: A Casebook*, ed. Allan Chavkin (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2002), 259-260.

<sup>111</sup> Freeman, *Time Binds*, 3.

'Sacred time,' the inner book of *Almanac* professes, 'is always in the Present,' but that's not to say that it is a shared present.<sup>112</sup>

Silko's forecasts are uncanny. They are that sense of the mirrored reflections in the incommensurable. *Almanac* weaves a prologue-world of turbulence where listener-readers 'are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary' but is now and very real.<sup>113</sup> The nature of atemporal histories and prospective futures are invariably uncanny when approached from the orthodox perspective of monotheistic history enshrined by the chronologue, which requires 'centering the progressive narrative of time upon which colonization depends.'<sup>114</sup> This uncanny vibe is sustained by the patent inscrutability of Silko's prescience when considered solely within the restrictive inner logics of the settler chronologue. But if we consider those foreseen events in an atemporal sense as *already happening* insofar as they emerge directly from contemporary social matrices, the picture refocuses. The scenes that show apocalypse on the wing might, from a different perspective, contain hope.

Nez Perce scholar Beth Piatote highlights the prevalence of twins throughout *Almanac*, biological and ideological. She reminds readers that sameness and identity are subtly contrasting notions. The mimetic quality of twins like Lecha and Zeta takes on a rhythmic temporal resonance in the novel, most notably when twinned characters, places, or groups operate as uncanny mirrors for one another's

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<sup>112</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 136.

<sup>113</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 150.

<sup>114</sup> Beth H. Piatote, "Seeing Double: Twins and Time in Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," in *Leslie Marmon Silko: Ceremony, Almanac of the Dead, Gardens in the Dunes*, ed. David L. Moore (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 156.

practices and values. This twinning transgresses textual boundaries to operate on a series of registers whereby texts and discourses exist in a mirrored relation to one another. Thus, *Almanac* is to the inner book, as the inner book is to various other diaries and journals throughout.<sup>115</sup> The ideologically creased histories Silko compiles are uniquely cracked mirrors reflecting the monotheistic chronologue of the settler imaginary. These assorted "mirrors" are not just flipped facsimiles; they *reflect* heuristically so as to perceive the new meanings that come into view. The settler colonial chronologue is just one of these mirrors, not the subject of the reflection. It is placed in relief against a sprawling variety of altemporalities and incommensurably sovereign stories that reveal it to be no more and no less than another cracked mirror. As Piatote concludes, in *Almanac* 'one must discern fine differences, one must distinguish between twins.'<sup>116</sup> One altemporal exemplar of this ethos of dynamic reciprocity in appreciating the novel's storywork is not a character or an event at all. It is a map, and 'a map is just a map. But when it is framed into a question it becomes loaded with story,' loaded with anti-colonial power.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Like Trigg's sinister confessional diaries, the business ledgers maintained by orchestrator of assassinations Max Blue, or Black-Indigenous veteran "Clinton's Slavery Broadcast" radio scripts (427).

<sup>116</sup> Piatote, "Seeing Double," 154.

<sup>117</sup> Maracle, *Memory Serves*, 59.

'Aah! Bag all this into bullshit... Just a map'<sup>118</sup>



Fig. 1: Almanac of the Dead's *Atemporal Five Hundred Year Map*

*Almanac's* frontispiece "Five Hundred Year Map" is a visionary exercise in subverting entrenched settler standards—cartographic, temporal, historical—and many critics have treated it as such.<sup>119</sup> Labouring to compose a preface for *Almanac*, Silko realised that a traditional micronarrative form could not convey 'the traces, the spaces, the inscriptions of a lengthy ideological and physical war that has been waged against Indigenous peoples in the Americas.'<sup>120</sup> So, instead, Silko maps out her revolutionary narrative on novel terrain in the frontispiece, detailing characters, their places, and the directions they may travel in the world of *Almanac*. In each rich sense of the word,

<sup>118</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>119</sup> Ann Brigham's article "Productions of Geographic Scale and Capitalist-Colonialist Enterprise in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*" is amongst the most incisive of these essays.

<sup>120</sup> Tillet, *Otherwise, Revolution!*, 179.

Silko *plots*. Most critical attention to date has centred on the map's list of characters, lack of typical state distinctions, and stylistic simplicity. Less explored is the fact that the 'MEXICO' border (Silko elects not to share it with the U.S.) which bisects the page mimics a typical linear timeline. On this Five Hundred Year map, the national border between settler sovereignties resembles the model where notable events are plotted linearly along the line with a predetermined point of temporal origin and the present as the endpoint. This monotheistic view of time as progression—but with an abrupt limit on plotting the future—empowers Eurocentric post-Enlightenment definitions of progress and abases altemporal formations as the apocrypha of 'Native people[s]' who 'do not so much exist within the flow of time as erupt from it as an anomaly' before ultimately breaking free from the gravity of the chronologue or being reconciled with it, disappearing either way.<sup>121</sup>

As Tsing frames it, settler neo-colonial '[p]rogress is a forward march, drawing other kinds of time into its rhythms. Without that driving beat, we might notice other temporal patterns.'<sup>122</sup> While Tsing hits on an important point, she might be using the wrong kind of tool. This progressive beat simply is not extricable from Indigenous contexts entirely. The ponderous pistons of monotheistic time are impossible to muffle entirely; to do so would be irresponsible as well, ignoring the material consequences of the chronologue and the legacies it will leave behind, even when its momentum stalls. Instead, it's incumbent upon scholars striving for dynamic reciprocity to engage with altemporalities in relation to—and in spite of—

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<sup>121</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, vii.

<sup>122</sup> Anna L. Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 4; 21.

chronologic time. The ideological creases that continue to deepen and digress between Indigenous altemporalities and the chronologue are too complex to just stretch out. As Tayo opined in *Ceremony*, '[y]ears and months had become weak, and people could push against them and wander back and forth in time. Perhaps it had always been this way.'<sup>123</sup> The familiarity of form visible in the frontispiece's layout is rendered uncanny by the host of differences within the sameness—The incommensurabilities in familiar contexts. The frontispiece map is shadow survivance at work, a transmotional force deepening ideological creases of alterity.

Shadow survivance is a subversive mimesis of sorts, working from within the representational fiats of the dominant discourse, yet troubling those very fiats at the same time. In this case, Silko's shadow survivance sustains interwoven pluralities of time and history by mirroring a chrononormative timeline in a cartographical setting to illustrate that 'memory and reality must be one space.'<sup>124</sup> This strategy troubles fundamental binary separations of time and space that persist in the dominant settler worldview wherein property is predicated on a specific and politically territorial configuration of both. The Five Hundred Year Map generates new spaces for existing Indigenous sovereignties by remapping a global profile that is allegedly bereft of uncharted space. Thus, when Silko claims that 'borders haven't worked and they won't work' since their imposition in the Western hemisphere by a brutal one-two-punch of exploitation and extirpation, she is talking about temporal borders as well

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<sup>123</sup> Silko, *Ceremony*, 17.

<sup>124</sup> See Appendix J.

as spatial ones.<sup>125</sup> She is talking about ways of time and space as running creased, not parallel.

The monotheistic chronologue is itself a clear-cut border, a device of division, plotting out normativity and deviance along racialised epistemic lines. The perfectly straight borderline of *Almanac's* frontispiece runs almost across the double-page spread, deliberately unconnected to the focal cluster of events and people that is the city of Tucson, which is plotted an inch above. It is an emblem of orthodoxy, its trajectory unaffected by external (or internal) factors. This schism reveals that the 'dynamics of disavowal' which dictate the position of Indigenous narratives and histories as removed from chrononormative linearity, abstract and unrooted.<sup>126</sup> I return to the conceptual touchstones that are Simpson's lambent 'constellations of coresistance' which are 'constantly in motion... coded mappings' of coalitional Indigenous resurgence that enkindle in 'the context of relationships.'<sup>127</sup> None of the vibrant constellation of characters, places, and events in the map converge precisely on the settler timeline-border save for the assertion that 'The Twin brothers will walk north with hundreds of thousands of people.'<sup>128</sup> This direct challenge to settler colonial barriers is necessary. But it would also be ineffectual in isolation because lone direct challenges to colonial power structures are more easily deflected and defused than multifaceted disruptions from multiple sources.

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<sup>125</sup> Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 122.

<sup>126</sup> Deborah L. Madsen, "Silko, Freud, and the Voicing of Disavowed Histories in *Almanac of the Dead*," in *Leslie Marmon Silko: Ceremony, Almanac of the Dead, Gardens in the Dunes*, ed. David L. Moore (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 147.

<sup>127</sup> Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 212; 214.

<sup>128</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, frontispiece. The twins foreshadowed here are Tacho (which in Spanish can mean "I strike out") and El Feo (The Ugly).

'Maps,' according to Rader, are 'supposed to be neutral, value-free, and so they carry a putative authority,' especially when aligned with a settler national chronologue and the institutional credence thus afforded. Conversely, *Almanac* becomes this multi-partisan constellation of storyworks, riven with ideological creases that trace alternative pictures and meanings. The Five Hundred Year Map thus activates a putative *sui generis* authority as 'both a measure and a means of sovereignty.' More important, perhaps, is the work that Silko undertakes to interact with and dismantle that temporal formation in the spirit of dynamic reciprocity by using a map as an illustration of pluripotent temporal 'semiotics of sovereignty.'<sup>129</sup> She withholds the bookends which usually demarcate a timeline's beginning and end, instead splitting the line at both extremes as the border is transmuted into the natural coastline of the North American continent, flowing north and south at the east and the west to evince Kimmerer's call that '[t]ime is not a river running inexorably to the sea, but the sea itself.'<sup>130</sup> At the Five Hundred Year Map's coasts, the imagined border of the colonial state curves in divergent directions, creating a related temporal diffusion. Though the image is focussed, and we are only privy to a portion of Mexico and the United States, we know that these diverging lines, which are representative of alternative pluralities of history and futures, eventually cycle around to re-join the anatomy of the continental landmass of the Americas, leaving 'the linear timeline... tangled and confused as it deserves to be.'<sup>131</sup> Thus, this settler chronologue is in fact sur-rounded in a cyclic construction where 'an experience

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<sup>129</sup> Rader, *Engaged Resistance*, 66; 53.

<sup>130</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 206-207.

<sup>131</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, *The Turquoise Ledge: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 223.

termed *past* may actually return if the influences have the same balance as before,' because in atemporal time formations such as the circular, prophecy and history, future and past, Indigenous presence and Indigenous presents, are all twinned—the same but not identical.<sup>132</sup>

Later, in the inner book, a poetic fragment ascribes a peculiar spatial dimension to time, professing that 'the sun is in the North corner of Time / and no longer moves. This is a dream of another day / or this day. / He cannot remember if they have come / or if they are still approaching.'<sup>133</sup> It is an unfathomable splinter if analysed in a monotheistic epistemological frame. Thus, the passage multivalently challenges assumptions of the settler imaginary: how does the sun occupy an anchored, static position in time? What's to be made of the spatially jarring concept of a northern corner? Drawing from Silko's memoir *The Turquoise Ledge*, the north corner of time seems to refer to the summer solstice, a hinge between astrological trajectories, and so the sun's position there associates it with change, with the moment of an epochal shift.<sup>134</sup> Cardinal directions are enmeshed with the structure of a quadrilateral, paper map for which the physical "corners" always pertain to intercardinal directions. Traditionally, the global corners are identified by their separation from one another and from Euro-centrality which is itself located atop its African roots. For Silko to relay a northern corner is intuitively vexing. Even in the context of the Five Hundred Year Map, tracking north takes listener-readers to an edge, not a corner. But this dissonance persists only for as long as one persists with

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<sup>132</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 575, (italics in original).

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 594.

<sup>134</sup> Silko, *The Turquoise Ledge*, 235.

a perspective of colonial cartographies. Brooks explains how maps can be socio-historical snares, superimposing contemporary territorial technologies on inappropriate temporal frames and insinuating the existence of monolithic settler colonial places where many contested senses of place are, in fact, overlaid.<sup>135</sup> So, the fact that Silko's map elides the segmentations of place one is accustomed to seeing in her plotting against settler cartography is significant; she doesn't give an easy answer to the questions "where am I?" or "where is X?" In so doing, she invites new questions, or at least gestures towards a vocabulary with which to ask them.

As such, just as Rader argues of Salish, Métis, and Shoshone artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's subversive 'State Names' series of map paintings, Silko's dislocating cartography 'abrogates the map's traditional utility as a kind of flowchart of conquest and transforms it into a document of contextual resistance.'<sup>136</sup> With Silko having knocked some dents into this monotheistic model of map-making, the received orientations of the political geographies of the United States lose their monotheistic sanctity. At the novel's outset, this provides *Almanac's* contextual mission statement, indicating that 'there [is] almost certainly no such thing as a zero date' for Indigenous altemporalities, much less one proscribed by the settler chronologue.<sup>137</sup> However, the map is a reference document as well as a precursor. It is inflected by the story just as it inflects the story, and if an attentive listener-reader returns to the Five Hundred Year Map having read the poetic fragment of the inner

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<sup>135</sup> L. Brooks and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui "Lisa Brooks on the Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast," in *Speaking of Indigenous Politics: Conversations with Activists, Scholars, and Tribal Leaders*, ed. J. Kēhaulani Kauanui (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 27.

<sup>136</sup> Rader, *Engaged Resistance*, 63-64.

<sup>137</sup> See Appendix O.

book mentioned above, they might find new meanings. The northern corner of the frontispiece points towards the place that the buffalo are returning, as Wilson Weasel Tail explained. It is also where one finds the lone non-cartographic illustration on the map, that of an 'ancient spirit messenger' in the form of the 'Giant stone snake.'<sup>138</sup>

### **Following the Five Hundred Year Map: 'A Sharpening of the Already Present'**

In this north corner of time we find Sterling, the displaced Laguna Pueblo gardener and aficionado of Dillinger-esque crime capers for whom 'Tucson had only been a bad dream,' making his way back home.<sup>139</sup> Sterling arrives in Tucson by chance and is present at the beginning and the peroration of *Almanac*, having lived and worked at Lecha and Zeta's fortified compound alongside Seese before travelling back to the Laguna Pueblo reservation. The altemporalities he experiences at either end of the novel are messy overlaps in the storied interstices of distinct Indigenous cosmologies. Sterling is submerged in a visceral contemporaneity of crime in Tucson after being scapegoated and banished by his community as the bearer of an aggregated charge of negligence that extends back into the past beyond even his own lifetime. *De jure*, Sterling is tried and sentenced for failing to prevent moviemakers who were placed under his (reticent) supervision from filming the stone snake 'at the foot of the grayish mine tailings.'<sup>140</sup> *De facto*, he also assumes culpability for the loss of 'small stone figures [that] had accompanied the people on their vast

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<sup>138</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, frontispiece.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 762.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

journey from the North,' each '[d]ark gray basalt the size and shape of an ear of corn.'<sup>141</sup> Although the stone figurines were stolen seventy years earlier, it was 'a mere heartbeat at Laguna... the old ones paid no attention to white man's time.'<sup>142</sup> Sterling's exile is a penalty he carries for these accretive indiscretions against Laguna Pueblo.

Eventually returning at the close (or is it something closer to the re-opening?) of the novel, Sterling goes to the disused uranium mine to visit the inexplicable giant stone snake that had burst from the same basalt from which the idols were hewn. He reflects on fierce debates amongst 'Aunt Marie and the old folks [who] had argued over the significance of the return of the snake.'<sup>143</sup> Between spirits, geology, and explosives, the source(s) of the serpent remains uncertain. Yet Sterling—who initially 'had not believed the mine employees who swore there had never been anything at the foot of the tailings before'—realises that the snake 'didn't care if people were believers or not;' it 'was looking south, the direction from which the twin brothers and the people would come,' to the corner of time where the trajectory of settler hegemony might pivot.<sup>144</sup>

Granted, this closing line is oft-quoted, but I do so with a fresh take. Earlier in *Almanac*, Sterling is nearly denied re-entry to the United States at the Mexican border crossing as he returns from an international grave-plundering raid spearheaded by Lecha. 'They didn't want to believe my driver's license or voter's

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 762.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 761-763.

registration because they'd expired' he protests to Seese on the drive back to the Cazador Compound. 'But I told them to look at the picture – look, that's me, see. It's still my name and face even if the license has expired.'<sup>145</sup> Sterling's experience epitomises the manipulability of '[i]maginary minutes and hours' and years to serve political concerns at the '[i]maginary lines' of the border.<sup>146</sup> Virginia Bell argues that territorial nationalism is a 'Eurocentric practice if it reinforces the hegemony of this epistemological system that aids in the maintenance of inequitable distributions of political and material power globally.'<sup>147</sup> And where territorial nationalism is inescapably bound up with criteria of citizenship (and by extension legitimacy), time can be a weapon; time represents a physical force when atemporal formations are proscribed or jettisoned completely to material consequences. The fact that Sterling's travel documents are predicated on a slew of subsidiary economic and societal conditions—a voter's registration requires a home, a current driver's license requires the money to acquire one—is just one pernicious barrier to Indigenous movement on political, material, and cosmological registers. Through this enforced immobilisation, a clear pattern of temporal suppression emerges, translating the monotheistic settler chronologue into physical Indigenous dispossession. Furthermore, the very fact that these papers are ingrained with an expiration date

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 591

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>147</sup> Virginia E. Bell, "Counter-Chronicling and Alternative Mapping in *Memoria del Fuego* and *Almanac of the Dead*," *MELUS* 25, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2000): 8, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/468235>.

places a settler colonially determined statute of limitations on Sterling's Indigenous presence and places shackles on altemporal presents.<sup>148</sup>

Thirty years later, the scrutiny on and at the Mexican border has intensified. The current geopolitical countenance of the Americas controverts Indigenous transmotion, which 'is survivance, a reciprocal use of nature, not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty' of the kind established by settler states.<sup>149</sup> Silko assaults the Mexican border with characteristic prescience and the same vigour with which Vizenor disrupted the crease of the Canadian border in *Treaty Shirts*. TallBear's claim that in 2020 we are 'trying to figure what it means to live at the end of U.S. empire' is compelling.<sup>150</sup> As part of that working social environment, it is not hard in that temporal frame to imagine Silko's portrayal of 'desert-camouflaged U.S. tanks deployed along the entire U.S. border' as radical groups 'help smuggle refugees from Mexico and Guatemala to the United States' realised.<sup>151</sup>

Indeed, In late 2018, a Central American caravan consisting of over 7,000 migrants approached the U.S./Mexico border. Travelling through Chiapas—birthplace of the Zapatista movement—the caravan disregarded warnings from President Trump to turn back. Then White House Chief of Staff John Kelly signed a Cabinet Order on November 21<sup>st</sup> 2018 granting military personnel stationed at the border permission to employ lethal force against incursions (despite technically

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<sup>148</sup> Although these expiration dates apply universally, the consequences are far more erosive for Indigenous peoples: the duration of their citizenship within the settler state—which is geographically configured as a territorial blockade around Indigenous communities—means tacit societal incarceration or expulsion when/if the documents lapse.

<sup>149</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 15.

<sup>150</sup> TallBear, "A Sharpening of the Already Present," 02:15.

<sup>151</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 513; 600.

holding no legal power authorise such). Even if the scale does not yet register on the apocalyptic magnitude of Silko's prophecies, the people are indeed coming from the south, and the revolutions continue to roll with the 'surging momentum of those who are misaligned' with the U.S. imperial project and hold 'hope in the implosion' of settler colonial dispossession.<sup>152</sup> Representing these realised forecasts as something more like mystical augury on Silko's part, though, recycles 'stories of Indian [intellectual] deficiency, which, while grossly stereotypical and often overtly racist, nevertheless remain the supposed reality of Indigenous experience for most of settler society.'<sup>153</sup>

I do not dismiss Silko's averral that she was guided by spirits imparting 'some other kind of information coming into my subconscious' because 'really [she didn't] think one human being alone on her own could have had that sort of accuracy.'<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, these spirits are loyal accomplices to her diligent research that traces the creases between patently diffuse processes like South American political tensions, the influence of neoliberal insurance conglomerates, and the theft of stone figurines. To deny the incommensurable atemporal facets of *Almanac*'s creation is to refuse to engage other worldviews in dynamic reciprocity. Rubber-stamping those same aspects without attempting to explore their commonalities and differences is arguably just as bad. Failure to participate is ultimately no better than the demand for cosmological absorption into the monotheistic canon. As Kirwan writes, there is 'a world of difference between methodologies which allow for alteration and

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<sup>152</sup> TallBear, "A Sharpening of the Already Present," 09:40; 10:50.

<sup>153</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 142.

<sup>154</sup> Coltelli, "*Almanac*: Reading Its Story Maps After Twenty Years," 208.

conversation and those which lean towards incursion and dictation,' but monotheorism appears just as lurid by omission as by imposition.<sup>155</sup> This balance is reflective of the tension inherent to any dynamically reciprocal treatment of Indigenous storywork by non-Indigenous critics. As Justice puts it:

How we learn to live together depends entirely on our willingness to be fierce in our truth telling, our empathy, and our courage, as much as on the strategies we put into place for realizing those possibilities of living and being otherwise.<sup>156</sup>

Whilst the chronologue is a beaded string of moments, attemporalities flow in terms of indivisible multidirectional momenta that accelerate, decelerate, bend, and double back. Lecha, Weasel Tail, Yoeme and other such attemporal avatars are aware that '[t]he old-time people had not gotten old season by season... The old ones did not believe the passage of years caused old age. They had not believed the passage of time at all. It wasn't the years that aged a person but the miles and miles that had been traveled in this world.'<sup>157</sup> The passage of time is immeasurable, even non-existent without momentum; that is, if nothing changes in effect. With all the attemporal dimensions of sovereignties that *Almanac* opens up, it recontextualises the settler chronologue as one narrative of history and future amongst many others. This is powerful work. However, it is not the most valent aspect of Silko's storywork. Past and future are vital, but what about *now*? Remember Savage Love's laments in *Treaty Shirts*, decrying 'the pure reason of presence, and the absence of now' or 'the

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<sup>155</sup> Padraig Kirwan, *Sovereign Stories: Aesthetics, Autonomy, and Contemporary Native American Writing* (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 273.

<sup>156</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 173.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

fusions of now' in a universal, shared present temporality.<sup>158</sup> Presence is not enough. *Almanac* is not just a heterogenous record of storied pasts and a map to possible futures—it is an expression of sovereign presents.

### 'Clock time is dominance' over presence and presents<sup>159</sup>

Unravelling the monotheistic politics of chronologic time is important, illustrating not only where, but when Indigenous sovereignties are expressed in incommensurable terms of relationality. What follows, then, is a complication of Indigenous presence, not a conceptual devaluation. *Almanac* is an exercise in 'display[ing] spatial confusion as the effect of conflicting versions of temporality' wherein 'we find a variety of other space-time formations serving as placeholders for an emergent, potentially revolutionary pre- and postmodern near future' rendered unequivocally present.<sup>160</sup> Despite its polysemous significance in critical Indigenous studies, the fundamental notion of "presence" is no sovereign silver bullet. Too much attention on the current presence of Indigenous sovereignties can lead us to miss the currents of presents that Indigenous sovereignties move through. If past and future are not rigid designators, and if the 'post' in postcolonial is a matter of orientation, why should it be that the now—the present—is a simpatico temporality?

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<sup>158</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts: October 2034—A Familiar Treatise on The White Earth Nation* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2016), 57; 53.

<sup>159</sup> Vizenor, "The Ruins of Representation," 14.

<sup>160</sup> Irr, "The Timeliness of *Almanac of the Dead*," 224.

Indigenous presence as I've discussed it so far is a field of relations that works more *through* time than it does *in* time to transgress settler compartmentalisation. This formulation has been important in its eschewal of the diametric relationship between presence and absence where absence is a state rather than a process and 'Natives are the *curvature of presence*' in spatio-temporal relation to other incommensurable worldviews.<sup>161</sup> Rifkin critiques presence, arguing that 'the idea of a shared present is not a neutral designation,' determined instead 'by settler institutions, intents, and imperatives' to create a choke-point which mediates history and future through a unified contemporary filter of broad ideological and ethical parity.<sup>162</sup> Unlike the hourglass aperture of the CWEN, this constrictive present on the chronologue's trajectory is not Indigenously determined, nor is it engineered to promote dynamic reciprocity with Indigenous sovereignties. Silko combats this settler colonial gambit, dually meant to inter Indigenous peoples to a closed-off "long ago" and sequester settler violence against those peoples in the same temporal nowhere. This trend works to disconnect settler history from settled present, and compressing like this hides the fact that settler violence 'is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of the occupation.'<sup>163</sup> Per Rifkin, the slippage of present and presence in Indigenous critical studies is too seldom analysed as a colonially constructed membrane separating/joining a past/future binary with one "correct" sense of simultaneity. As Silko wryly comments, though, '[t]he oral tradition' is 'full of wonderful lies' that

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<sup>161</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 28, (emphasis mine).

<sup>162</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, viii.

<sup>163</sup> Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," 6.

happen concurrently but not at the same time, and 'no one tells the truth.'<sup>164</sup> Of course, no *one* does tell *the* truth in the oral tradition, or in Silko's storytelling, because Indigenous histories require active participants to tell multiple truths and identify errors communally. Silko's postindian 'warriors are flawed,' but in the dynamic reciprocity of storywork, they aggregately encounter and deepen ideological creases of truth.<sup>165</sup> As Angelita confides, whenever 'their stories were told, the spirits of the ancestors were present and their power was alive.'<sup>166</sup> And these stories are always being told with and against one another in *Almanac*.

The ideological tension between shifting narratives even against contrary shades of themselves is transmotional friction in storywork. Triangulating tension is rife in the truths and wonderful lies shared by *Almanac's* many voices, echoing Kimmerer's claim that Indigenous ways of creating and sustaining knowledge are like braiding: the 'sweetest way is to have someone else hold the end so you pull gently against each other... linked by sweetgrass, there is reciprocity between you.'<sup>167</sup> *Treaty Shirts* foregrounded the difficulty of navigating fascistic and desmotional attitudes when engaging tradition in Indigenous literatures and politics. Silko's storywork grapples with similar themes, even if presented differently; traditional practices and the dimensions of sovereignties they express can be bastardised precisely when they are stuck within the chronologue as context. Yet understood (as) without that carceral structure, tradition 'offers a flexible way of envisioning

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<sup>164</sup> See Appendix K.

<sup>165</sup> Goeman, *Mark my Words*, 167.

<sup>166</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 520.

<sup>167</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, ix.

continuity not inherently dependent on categories of settler law and policy, making it more open to forms of narration and practice' that unsettle the monotheistic sovereignty of the United States.<sup>168</sup> Transmotional approaches to atemporal sovereignties allow traditions to burgeon as practices less like linear 'lineage than a field of possibility for (re)imagining the meaning and potential of indigeneity in the present,' *changing the present*.<sup>169</sup> Thus, the purpose of this discussion is not to extricate Indigenous peoples and communities from the chronologue, nor to insinuate a mystical time that is exclusive to "Indians." Eurocentric, monotheist philosophy on time has been transfixed by the mercurial (yet firm) "moment" of tick-tock clock time—the singular present, or, in Heidrun Friese's melancholic words: 'that which moves, that which irrefutably vanishes.'<sup>170</sup> The universal present of the chronologue is flipped in *Almanac*, besieged by vivid demonstrations of Indigenous otherwise. The question that remains: will it break or bend?

### Universal Insurance Limited, After All

This terminal fascination with the universal "moment" is encapsulated in the life and death of *Almanac*'s corporate magnate Menardo.<sup>171</sup> Menardo is mortified by his own Indigenous ancestry and uses any and all tactics at his disposal to sever his past and claim '*sangre limpia*.' Menardo's most stubborn tie to indigeneity is an aging

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<sup>168</sup> Rifkin, "Queering Indigenous Pasts," 137.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>170</sup> Heidrun Friese, "Introduction," in *The Moment: Time and Rupture in Modern Thought*, ed. Heidrun Friese (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>171</sup> Originally 'Menard' in Silko's drafts, he was masculinised to emphasise the patriarchal violence of neo-colonialism.

grandfather who insists 'no single epoch or time of a world was vast enough or deep enough to call itself God alone.'<sup>172</sup> An adolescent Menardo rails against anything his grandfather says, despite having loved the old man's stories in childhood until the 'teaching Brothers' at his school gave him 'a long lecture about pagan people and pagan stories.'<sup>173</sup> The old man typically talks about pluralities and difference, so Menardo's response is to strive for singular certainty across a host of registers in as reductive a cosmological fashion as he can manage.

Scholars have discussed Menardo's faith in technology, specifically the protection of his bulletproof vest which he obsesses over. He craves being 'alone with [it] to read all of the technical information in the new owner's manual' before he lays it tenderly back into the box' in a quasi-religious echo of idol and holy text. Menardo inevitably submits to the siren-song temptation to test the vest, 'to feel it, to experience it and to know the thrill, to see the moment of death and not have to pay.'<sup>174</sup> Naturally, his fixation on this interstitial moment of death-defiance is ill-fated; the vest fails, infinitesimal odds mocking his 'overwhelming sense of trust in man-made technology.'<sup>175</sup> Unlike most critiques offered to date, I argue that this event says more about Menardo's absolute trust in monotheism and temporal singularity. His compulsive mania regarding the vest, which he wears while he eats, sleeps, and fucks speaks to Rifkin's settler time and my own notion of the progressive chronologue. Come what may, Menardo believes the vest will work every time, that

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<sup>172</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 259; 257-258.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 324-325; 338.

<sup>175</sup> Graeme Finnie, "Rooted in the Americas: *Almanac* and Silko's Environmental Ethic," in *Howling for Justice: New Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead*, ed. Rebecca Tillett (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 117.

is, *in* every time because it is a manifestation of the foreclosure of alternatives. The capitalist settler chronologue to which he subscribes at the expense of his Indigenous cosmopolitical heritage is, of course, as much a man-made technology as the vest, a 'specific chronology of imperial expansion's growing purchase on the colonized world.'<sup>176</sup> Lying blood-soaked on a golf-course amongst a leering group of "business partners," Menardo's renunciation of Indigenous temporalities in favour of temporal control is fatal. The bullet is fired by Menardo's Indigenous chauffeur Tacho, one of the two twins leading the people north. And Lecha's atemporal histories are all kept in an ammunition box, after all.

In the run-up to his demise, Menardo pledges himself to this progressive chronologue and the neo-colonial state it chugs toward. He makes his way into the venal ranks of the Mexican pecuniary elite on the strength of his ironic business venture Universal Insurance. It is a hubristic enterprise through which Menardo purports to shield his clients 'against all the unknowns stalking the human race out there' with elite (and patently untenable) '[s]pecial policies that insured against all losses, no matter the cause, including acts of God, mutinies, wars, and revolution' for astonishing sums of money.<sup>177</sup> Listener-readers' introduction to Menardo and his entrepreneurial gambit immediately follows Part One, which closes with Yoeme cautioning Lecha and Zeta that the epoch of 'Death-Eye-Dog'—the temporal span linking the present to the beginning of the colonial project in the Americas—'was male and therefore tended to be somewhat weak and very cruel.'<sup>178</sup> The subsequent

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<sup>176</sup> West-Pavlov, *Temporalities*, 163.

<sup>177</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 260-261.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

book is named 'Reign of Death-Eye Dog,' laying down a clear marker for these traits to dominate the narrative. A "reign" is intimately entwined with a literal signification of monarchic control over time, place, and people as well as carrying a synonymic sovereign charge. This shift also performs a telling act of duplication; although Yoeme's notebook which gives the era its name is supposedly unique, across the border in Mexico City, Menardo's grandfather talks about Death-Eye Dog too, 'although it seemed those invisible ones knew the time by other names, and the old man would quickly correct himself' to make way for these alternative temporal understandings.<sup>179</sup>

Importantly, this reign does not bring us chronologically "up-to-date." The singularity of the chronologue is dislodged by the next book, the 'Reign of Fire-Eye Macaw.' This section tracks the revolutionary altemporalities that course through *Almanac*, alluding to the other Indigenous twins El Feo and Tacho—Angelita's co-militant and Menardo's manservant-cum-shooter respectively. Tacho speaks about 'macaw spirit beings' that follow him and dub him 'Wacah': 'big blue-and-yellow birds [that] had cruel beaks and claws' and 'read off lists of orders, things that Tacho-Wacah must do' in order to bring about non-hegemonic altemporalities that eschew reigns and redress settler colonial injustices.<sup>180</sup> The macaws agitate the settler state of things which champions 'worship of an abstraction' and upholds the 'bourgeois ideologue lurking in the guise of the disinterested scientist.'<sup>181</sup> Their calls subvert the hierarchy of settler sovereignty, 'shrieking... certain wild forces controlled all the

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>181</sup> McNally, *Monsters of the Market*, 128; 19.

Americas and the saints and spirits and the gods of the Europeans were powerless on American soil.<sup>182</sup>

Silko centres soil, centres the land as the axis of fundamental importance in negotiating Indigenous sovereignties. Yet she knows that land is not simply comprised of tracts and territories that exist independent of time. As such, she navigates incommensurable temporal rhythms as concurrent but not simultaneous dimensions of these sovereign encounters. West-Pavlov contests that compartmentalised historical ages binarise and 'paper over historical continuities and allow successive generations to forget that epochal difference is a mere performative gesture, albeit one with powerful and enduring effects.'<sup>183</sup> In *Almanac* these ideologically creased epochs do not handover relay-style; they are imbricated in messy, planar presents of atemporal sovereignties. Thus, Fire-Eye Macaw's revolutionary time underscores the resurgence of Indigenous sovereignties present in the creases that form the wake of Death-Eye Dog's chronological timeline.

Amanda Walker Johnson highlights the intimacy of "progressivity" and oppression, commenting that Menardo's Universal Insurance 'represents the reaches of centuries-old insurance technologies into the military-industrial complex.'<sup>184</sup> Yet the significance of the conglomerate runs deeper still. Menardo's confident coverage of disasters that are disclaimed wholesale by most insurance companies is symptomatic of 'the desperate privilege of science' in the settler capitalist

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<sup>182</sup> Silko *Almanac*, 511.

<sup>183</sup> West-Pavlov, *Temporalities*, 147.

<sup>184</sup> Amanda Walker Johnson, "Silko's *Almanac*: Engaging Marx and the Critique of Capitalism," in *Howling for Justice: New Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead*, ed. Rebecca Tillett (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 102.

imaginary.<sup>185</sup> The patent power dynamics in offering safety from acts of God deifies the capitalist model of settler temporal progression, evoking Tillett's criticism that 'while capitalism ostensibly provides limitless possibilities, those possibilities are nonetheless expressly limited within the capitalist system itself.'<sup>186</sup> Universal Insurance's pitch stresses blanket protection against mutiny, war, and revolution. Calling revolution remunerable ideologically enshrines the timelessness of reigning power structures and forecloses revolution in motional and recursive senses. The timeless aspect of immutable Platonic universals is a further calcifying agent working in the chronologue. Menardo's Universal Insurance is intended as insurance against change on an indiscriminate scale. It underwrites a universal array of perils *and* ensures the concept of the universal itself. Metaphysical universals, typified by stillness, are antithetical to transmotion and the sovereign pluralities quickened by the movement. Menardo's safeguarding against movement and change in economic and societal constructs is coated with another layer of irony given his paradoxical efforts to move across social classes. This interior tension indicates the unsustainability of Universal Insurance as both ideology and enterprise.

Menardo's halcyon moment comes when he "successfully" averts the danger of a tsunami on the Pacific coast, 'offering phenomenal wages' to workers willing to place property above people in a crystallisation of neoliberal necropower.<sup>187</sup> He 'feel[s] the power swell inside himself' as 'crates of refrigerators and stoves' are

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<sup>185</sup> Will Wright, *Wild Knowledge: Science, Language, and Social Life in a Fragile Environment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 23.

<sup>186</sup> Tillett, *Otherwise, Revolution!*, 35.

<sup>187</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 262.

'loaded and moved to high ground' *before* his employees evacuate a hospital.<sup>188</sup> This "full" indemnity only actually protects commodities, and calls to mind abstract capitalism's interwoven 'capacity to exploit crisis as a springboard for still more development, to feed itself on its own self-destruction.'<sup>189</sup> Anything that falls outside of this calculus is expendable per this worldview—in fact it barely exists at all. Silko's exploration of this 'conjurer's realm of wild money' foreruns the sort of ontologically vacuous economic cataclysm that unfolded with Enron a decade later.<sup>190</sup> Soon, Menardo's ambition meets a hard limit; Universal Insurance turns out to be answerable to natural chance and susceptible to revolution. Uprisings ignite in Mexico City, and Menardo catches the news on late-night television. Sipping brandy in his revered bulletproof vest in an off-key devotional echo of communion and cassock, Menardo 'watched himself age ten years in one week as the rioting began to spread to involve other sectors of Mexico City. If the riots had not been stopped, Menardo's losses might have run to billions of pesos, and Universal Insurance would have been ruined.'<sup>191</sup> In spite of the mogul's attempts to bridle time, chance, and indigeneity, these forces 'gain materiality in the body' and he suffers a corporeal backlash.<sup>192</sup> Nevertheless, Menardo presses on unbowed. Eventually, Universal Insurance can do nothing to protect him or either of his wives from catastrophe.

Menardo's compressive reasoning arises from his inability to envision transmotivational momentum. If the monotheoristically understood 'moment is the

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>189</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), 121.

<sup>190</sup> McNally, *Monsters of the Market*, 156.

<sup>191</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 481.

<sup>192</sup> Piatote, "Seeing Double," 54.

decisive caesura, which bids its farewell to the irrevocable past and opens up towards that which is to come, to the not-yet of the future,' then as a pivot from past to future it becomes the aperture of the hourglass, to renew a previous analogy.<sup>193</sup> The "moment" shares plenty with "momentum," but it is truncated, an experiential airlock. This moment lacks the transmotional dynamism in storywork, spurred by 'the generative character of the oral tradition' as it reinforces matrices of Indigenous altemporalities.<sup>194</sup> The chronologue parses related moments, acting as a sluice gate designed to regulate and manipulate the flow of time. In contrast, creased pathways of Indigenous altemporalities resemble systems of waterfalls—regular and unpredictable at once. Importantly, transmotional altemporalities vivify; they quicken new types of political engagement that move amidst and beyond the strictures of the chronologue which links 'legitimate territorial sovereignty to state governments' while 'discredit[ing] Indigenous forms of governance' as temporally ill-fitting.<sup>195</sup> Silko's storywork is a dynamic interpretation of altemporal momentum which allows listener-readers to look past this monotheistic chronologue and the singular cosmological sovereignty it buttresses. Menardo's obsession with disconnected moments ultimately disconnects him from the Indigenous altemporalities he is buffeted by, whether he likes it or not. Reading his dreams in the lead-up to the shooting, Tacho chuckles at how 'Menardo's dreams had been full of numbers, but all of them had added up to less than zero.' Just like every aspect of Menardo's

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<sup>193</sup> Friese, "Introduction," 2.

<sup>194</sup> Kimberly M. Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 17.

<sup>195</sup> Dennison, "Entangled Sovereignties," 685.

universally ensured worldview, 'his days were numbered' and ultimately have scant value past that.<sup>196</sup>

Torsionally tied to American Exceptionalism, the narrative of uniform American modernity is a centrifugal story locating the settler United States as temporally axiomatic, the Archimedean point of the "real now" from which other polities stray. Rifkin's comment on the spatial aspect of this temporal phenomenon in the Indigenous Americas is astute:

If the coherence of the settler state and its presumptive absorption of Native peoples serve as the implicit structuring frame through which to approach and understand temporality on lands claimed by the United States, both the sharedness and the direction of unfolding events will be experienced as consonant with that geopolitical imaginary.<sup>197</sup>

This presumptive absorption functions as a versatile multi-tool of assimilation and expulsion, much like reservation spaces, insofar as it isolates 'the topographic and deeply carceral remainders of what is left.'<sup>198</sup> The chronologue is a political technology that perpetuates the primacy of settler sovereignty and the settler imaginary as omnipresent and normal. Enclosing Indigenous peoples, histories, and presence in momentary spaces that render them vestigial to the transnational political anatomy of the settler state, the chronologue also has the effect of surrounding Indigenous sovereignties within bounds of what I term *carceral time*. 'Calabazas's sharp eyes' lend listener-readers a particularly crisp view of this

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<sup>196</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 472.

<sup>197</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 12.

<sup>198</sup> Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 181, ProQuest Ebook Central.

confinement both of and by settler violence in 'what he called "the war that had never ended," the war for the land.'<sup>199</sup>

### **'This is the Long Count': Carceral Time and Calabazas<sup>200</sup>**

One of the scant crew of arguably redeemable characters in *Almanac*, Calabazas translates to "Pumpkins" in English. It is a nickname that nods to the agency of the more-than-human world and immerses Calabazas' worldview in multiple epistemologies and 'temporalities' that 'inhabit but also exceed the human scale.'<sup>201</sup> Like Vizenor's constitutional exiles, Calabazas earns his sobriquet through his anti-colonial border transgressions; in northern Mexico, he and his colleagues hollow out the vegetables and stuff them with marijuana before sealing the lids back with fine candle wax. 'So,' he recounts, 'the first time I drove into the yard back in Tucson, the back of my old truck was piled high with pumpkins, big and orange-red like full moons... And from that time on, that's what they called me.'<sup>202</sup>

The Yaqui smuggler works alongside Zeta, trafficking arms between Mexico and the U.S. to fuel the coalition of rebellions flickering into life there. Together, Calabazas and his Yaqui cousins live and make their livelihoods in transmotion, transgressing the imaginary lines of the national border. Moreover, they do not seem to subscribe to a single cosmology, or, if they do, it does not sit superior to other alternatives. Calabazas lives forever in the creases of many frictional moments and

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<sup>199</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 82; 178.

<sup>200</sup> See Appendix L.

<sup>201</sup> West-Pavlov, *Temporalities*, 3.

<sup>202</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 217-218.

altemporal rhythms. His worldview is one of dynamic reciprocity—a consistent reorientation to the world because ‘he had no proof about the speed of the earth or about time. He did not think time was absolute or universal; rather each location, each place, was a living organism with time running inside it like blood’ or, in other words, Calabazas’ time is only constant in its intractable relationality with other altemporalities.<sup>203</sup> Calabazas thereby evinces a form of temporal sovereignty and engages in dynamic reciprocity with other temporal sovereignties on a microcosmic scale. His ideologically creased framework of non-hierarchical Indigenous sovereignties outlines ways to resist the ‘dark undertow of politics’ ensconced in the ‘settler colonial present,’ underpinned by the social pyramid of sovereign power exerted from the top down.<sup>204</sup> As such, I agree in with Theresa Delgadillo, who claims that the characters in *Almanac* who approach redemption do so through their capacity to ‘understand the relationship between their stories and other stories’ as independently insufficient but collectively vital accounts that gather in coalitional storywork.<sup>205</sup> Calabazas, in this context, is deeply entangled in ‘strategically *transgressive networks* that resist oppression, exploitation, and destruction along multiple axes’ that intersect class, race, environment, and time.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 629.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 491; Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 92, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>205</sup> Theresa Delgadillo, “Contending Worldviews in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*,” *Mujeres Talk*, August 12, 2014, <https://library.osu.edu/blogs/mujerestalk/2014/08/12/contending-worldviews-in-leslie-marmon-silkos-almanac-of-the-dead/>.

<sup>206</sup> Bridget O’Meara, “The Ecological Politics of Leslie Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 15, no. 2 (Autumn 2000): 67, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1409463.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A8a268bb5a114b36f6dd4e9d92d09ab3d>, (italics in original).

The imaginary lines that Calabazas transgresses include not only the literal borderline of the United States, but also the membranes between incommensurable sovereignties and the globalised Gregorian timeline. Calabazas in particular (and *Almanac* more holistically) demonstrates the ways in which time can be legitimately read and parsed cyclically, in terms of atemporal recurrence and resurgence. Thus, transmotional characters like Calabazas 'enact justice outside of the system' of monotheistic ontological and epistemic categories; 'to the[se] Western metanarratives, Silko constructs counternarratives' in her storywork that embody and enrich diverse forms of Indigenous sovereignties.<sup>207</sup> Time and its passage are understood in the grammar of the settler chronologue as abstracted units that imply linear causality between events, but not more complicated types of inter-affectivity. This "missing link" of dynamic reciprocity between one unit and its successor reflects the mind-body duality of Cartesian philosophy that still saturates settler culture. The aphorism that those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it is ironic, because learning chronological history and thus time in a manner that excludes alterity dooms one to know that specific history perfectly well, yet watch it repeat in fresh configurations.

In his youth, Calabazas expresses irritation at his elders' forlorn obsession with histories. To him, it spoke to a harmful malaise that restricted his family to times 'that had been "before," and Calabazas had, even as a child, grown to hate the word, the sound of that word in the mouths of the old ones, and he hated its sound in Spanish

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<sup>207</sup> Rader, *Engaged Resistance*, 177.

and finally in English too.<sup>208</sup> Settler polities and societies are predicated upon land theft, regardless of whether their legal systems later come to absolve this theft. Old Yoeme was thus staunch in her conviction that '[t]here was not, and there never had been, a legal government by Europeans anywhere in the Americas. Not by any definition, not by the Europeans own definitions and laws.' The solution ultimately pursued by her granddaughter (and Calabazas' sometimes lover) Zeta is messy but direct: '[a]ll the laws of the illicit governments had to be blasted away. Every waking hour Zeta spent scheming and planning to break as many of their laws as she could' to highlight that the legitimacy of Indigenous self-governance still hinges on the metes and bounds of federal legality.<sup>209</sup>

The legalistic rubrics of settler colonial societies seem to levy presumptive sentences and statutes of limitations on crimes against Indigenous peoples (and other peoples more generally). Settler society is purported to have served its time by dint of the generations temporally separated from the overt violence of land-theft and, occasionally, financial reparations paid.<sup>210</sup> These periods are frequently

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<sup>208</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 222.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>210</sup> This is by not unique to settler colonial states. The same manifests in jingoistic British manipulations of carceral time vis-à-vis its core involvement in slavery, vaunting the "early British abolition of slavery," and neglecting to admit that the debt accrued compensating slaveholders only cleared in 2015. In the United States, for example, The Sand Creek Massacre of 1864 in which 160 non-combatants were slaughtered, only became a judicial concern in 2013 when descendants of victims filed an unsuccessful civil suit for reparations. The Tenth Circuit court of appeals cited the U.S.' "sovereign immunity" in their decision to find in favour of the state in *Flute v. United States*. Even in ostensibly positive instances where settler culpability is acknowledged and addressed, the results are typically toothless. The 2020 Supreme Court ruling of *McGirt v. Oklahoma*, for example, was a landmark case in which the court upheld that much of eastern Oklahoma remains, by treaty, Muscogee (Creek) land. In practice, however, the status of private land within that tract is intentionally murky. Moreover, as legal scholar Matthew L. M. Fletcher (Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians) points out, 'once the dust settles, we will see that the Supreme Court simply applied the law – only Congress can terminate or modify reservation boundaries and Congress did not terminate or modify the Creek Reservation boundaries. Oklahoma does not have that power'

construed in analogous terms of successive generations (and it is telling that one of the few factors that moves settler institutions and individuals to historicise their society is so that physical/social/economic/institutional violence can be morally quarantined as a “product of the time”). Even so, there is an intuitive gap that makes mapping *individual* accountability to *collective* responsibility through time problematic. The measure and manipulation of temporal discourse thus becomes the adaptable metric that exonerates settler societies from their histories; the sins of the father don’t travel far. Silko’s storywork abjures this kind of litanic history because it is a monologue the U.S. ‘tells about themselves is that they are new; they are beneficent; they have successfully “settled” all issues prior to their beginning.’<sup>211</sup> This manipulation both produces and divvies up carceral time as discrete portions of the chronologue with politically preclusive precision: pre-contact, the colonial event, its penance, and the settled present. That is the story and we/they are sticking to it. After their sentence is served, the settler society perceives itself to have overcome its exogenous status and begins the process of its own stretch towards indigenisation.

“Conviction” means both being found guilty of an offense and of being fully intellectually (and emotionally) persuaded. It is an idiosyncratic quirk of English; the former definition is common amongst Romantic European languages, from the shared Latinate root *convictionem*, signifying proof, overcoming, and—tracking back

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(“Commentary on the Oklahoma-Tribal ‘Agreement-In-Principle’, n.p.). In essence, the time for practical action is passing by steadily, so overtures without actual redress threaten to be the sum of what emerges from the state’s legal architecture unless tangible outcomes follow soon.

<sup>211</sup> Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 177.

to *vincere*—to conquer. The homonymic sense of conviction is uncommon across these other tongues, though. This latter meaning of moral certainty comes from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, furnishing burgeoning colonial efforts with concurrent moral and religious imperatives of ‘discovery, dominance, racialism, noble and demonic savagism.’<sup>212</sup> Indeed, Manifest Destiny can be read as being stimulated and sustained by conviction, in both senses of the word, within the structure of what Chicana scholar Dolores Calderon calls ‘settler grammars’ that propagate the dichotomous metronome of Indigenous presence and absence.<sup>213</sup> This grammar is about not only the system and syntax of language, but also the cultural structures and syntaxes undergirded by the language(s) used. In most societies, being convicted signals a socially contracted bargain that offsets lawbreaking indiscretions against a proportional measure of time. Or, of course, the penalty can often be capital, an unequal makeweight no less transactional than Menardo’s insurance policies.

The life of a nation—of an empire—cannot be averaged so easily. Nor can appropriate periods of penance for historical crimes committed between sovereign peoples be simply decided. Sterling’s banishment for atemporal grievances and the execution of the Cuban Bartolomeo by Angelita for ‘Crimes against history’ gesture towards this messy transtemporal liability.<sup>214</sup> Sterling collects true-crime chronicles that arbitrarily disqualify crimes committed during war or revolution from the norms

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<sup>212</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 28.

<sup>213</sup> Dolores Calderon, “Uncovering Settler Grammars in Curriculum,” *Educational Studies* 50, no. 4 (July 2014): 316, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2014.926904>.

<sup>214</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 313.

of responsibility, revealing yet another set of socially-manipulated temporal consequences that uphold oppression. War is a slippery idea. Japan and Russia have nominally been at war since World War II. Meanwhile, the last official battle between the U.S. and an Indigenous nation was in 1918 when Yaqui men clashed with the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. So, it is especially telling that Silko's frontispiece proclaims an atemporal frame in which 'The Indian Wars have never ended in the Americas.'<sup>215</sup> For his part, Sterling eventually cancels his subscription to the magazine, marking a broader unsubscribing to the settler chronologue and its carceral parameters.

If '[f]raming indigenous people in the past allows the state to maintain its own legitimacy by disallowing the fact of indigenous peoples' nationhood to intrude upon its own mythology,' then the state frames itself in an analogous manner.<sup>216</sup> In the context of carceral time, however, there is no real talk of returning stolen anything to Indigenous peoples who 'remain flies in amber, beautiful, pristine and ultimately cold, dead and sterile.'<sup>217</sup> That responsibility has passed. Carceral time is a structure sustained by those I call *ethnographic taxonomists*. By crystallising Indigenous presence into a moment of tragic stoicism, ethnographic taxonomy denies Indigenous peoples' sovereignties that live in deeper senses of past, tangible ideas of presence, and promises of autonomous futures.

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<sup>215</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, frontispiece.

<sup>216</sup> Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, "Sovereignty," in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, ed. Joanne Barker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 44.

<sup>217</sup> Jace Weaver, "Splitting the Earth: First Utterances and Pluralist Separatism," in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, eds. Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 4.

Tuck and Yang rail against the metaphorisation of “decolonisation” into any meaning other than the return of Indigenous lands and material restitution for colonial violence. Decolonisation as a chic critical concept risks supporting settler moves to innocence, ‘those strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege.’<sup>218</sup> Engaging with the ethos of dynamic reciprocity Silko embodies in Calabazas is crucial to advance decolonial praxes that do not metastasise into ‘a premature attempt at reconciliation.’<sup>219</sup> Carceral time is not really a reaction to apportioning responsibility in an individual sense. One hopes that most people do not individually support the oppression of Indigenous peoples but, as Patrick Wolfe put it, ‘personal attitude has got nothing to do with’ one’s complicity in settler hegemonics when one remains ‘a beneficiary and a legatee’ of that dispossessive project.<sup>220</sup> Where such slippages occur between individual and collective accountability, carceral time is underway and ‘decolonization is already [disingenuously] completed by the indigenized consciousness of the settler’ society.<sup>221</sup> This faux equilibrium engineered by tautening the chronologue and Indigenous temporalities into a shared seam of carceral time is resisted by the sovereignties expressed in altemporal Indigenous storywork, though. By dislocating settler time, possibilities for dynamic reciprocity between Indigenous and non-

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<sup>218</sup> Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 9-10.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Patrick Wolfe and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui “Patrick Wolfe on Settler Colonialism,” in *Speaking of Indigenous Politics: Conversations with Activists, Scholars, and Tribal Leaders* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 345.

<sup>221</sup> Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 17.

Indigenous worldviews may emerge to embrace samenesses and differences without reconciliation, without innocence, and without fear.

Indeed, enshrinement of the chronologue and carceral time is a product of an ingrained fear of justice in the settler imaginary. Not in an abstract sense, but in specific relation to Indigenous sovereignties and the forces they might exert over settler lives. The mono-directional causality of the chronologue and its refusal to permit attemporalities derive in part from a fear of what those attemporalities might signify for the flourishing of Indigenous sovereignties and the revolutions potentially required to actualise them. In short, this worldview is suffused in dread, of 'the end of a mythological narrative of forward movement and progress' that outruns responsibilities to the Indigenous polities it tries to leave in its dust.<sup>222</sup> Calabazas describes the institutional fear of the incommensurable in the U.S., meditating on the predisposition of '[w]hite men [to be] terrified of the desert's stark, chalk plains that seemed to glitter with the ashes of planets and worlds yet to come.'<sup>223</sup> This terror gripped Menardo as Mexico City rioted, and Calabazas' musing captures the *Almanac's* circuitousness, and the way Silko offers listener-readers a host of attemporal alternatives to the Story of the Chronologue. The celestial ashes that sparkle on the desert floor are not only the detritus of what has been; they are also the precursors of entire worlds that are yet to emerge as 'an ancient sense of the future returns.'<sup>224</sup> The recursive character of the desert expanse that Silko evokes

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<sup>222</sup> TallBear, "A Sharpening of the Already Present," 06:20.

<sup>223</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 222.

<sup>224</sup> Irr, "The Timeliness of *Almanac*," 242.

demonstrates that '[t]he remains were merely resting at a midpoint in their journey,' whether the chronologue recognises this bulge of time and life or not.<sup>225</sup>

Writing in second person, amongst a sprawl of handwritten notes, Silko asks of her reader—possibly herself as much as anybody else—'[y]ou did not think it would be simple did you? The stories are metaphorical but with an interior language. You feel, you realise a code. Then gradually that code reveals itself to you... the code uses the ordinary and common. Trash. Detritus. Remains.'<sup>226</sup> This is challenge and warning. It is an invitation that any attentive listener-reader of *Almanac* must reckon with. Revolution connotes insurrection, sure, but also evokes natural motion, momentum, and return. The resurgence of Indigenous sovereignties 'draws critically on the past with an eye to radically transform the colonial power relations that have come to dominate [and define] our present.'<sup>227</sup> The possibility that the chronologue might exist *alongside or amidst* retracing histories, or that past injustices might literally catch up with its present beneficiaries is unsurprisingly a potent source of fear for those 'powers who controlled the United States' and 'didn't want the people to know their history. If the people knew their history, they would realize they must rise up' and exceed the strictures of carceral time.<sup>228</sup> Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* is thus both a source of hope for Indigenous sovereignties and a harbinger of justice for settler profiteers; their dogma of dominance dies along with Death-Eye Dog.

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<sup>225</sup> Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 26.

<sup>226</sup> See Appendix M.

<sup>227</sup> Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 157.

<sup>228</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 431.

The popularity of Menardo's policies that '[invariably settler] Chief executives of the *future* could buy... to indemnify themselves against violent uprising or revolution' reveals the calcification of neo-colonial rhythms;<sup>229</sup> their future prosperity is always predicated upon Indigenous sovereign oppression and temporal suppression. So, huge investments go toward securing that future as fire fights fire. Fear, then, shapes an integral aspect of settler governance over Indigenous peoples and lands. Not just the fear wielded by the former as an oppressive weapon over the latter, but also the fear that grips the former as a by-product of its own violent machinery. *Almanac's* 'gothic network of evil, mystery, intrigue, and crime that perpetually threatens to ensnare any and all' presents this kind of fear realised but not legitimised, and its atemporal currents prime the unshackling of Indigenous histories and futures.<sup>230</sup>

### **These Rocks are Not the Same**

Driving to a drug drop-off across a cactus-strewn moonless desert landscape with two of his employees, Mosca and Root, Calabazas bristles at a throwaway comment Root makes about the dark rocks that litter the ground all looking identical. 'I get mad when I hear the word *identical*' Calabazas lectures; 'There is no such thing. Nowhere. At no time. All you have to do is stop and think. Stop and take a look.'<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 292, (emphasis mine).

<sup>230</sup> Susan Berry Brill de Ramírez, "The Hemispheric Webs of the Sacred and Demonic in Silko's Gothic *Almanac*," in *Howling for Justice: New Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead*, ed. Rebecca Tillett (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 135.

<sup>231</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 201, (italics in original).

Again, the idea of twinning—the crease between identity and sameness—is the subject of scrutiny. Calabazas frogmarches his associates through the arroyo, highlighting the fine distinctions between several dozen same-but-not-identical rocks. While Calabazas lectures, ‘Root had rubbed his hands over the edges of the fracture lines’ on twin rocks ‘and although both rocks were the same dull gray basalt, he had been able to feel the differences along the fractures.’<sup>232</sup> Root’s orientation shifts perceptibly during this encounter, reciprocating Calabazas’ ideological relativity. These geological creases represent the frictional syncopation of perspectives which constitute an ethos of transnational dynamic reciprocity. The rocks would be indistinguishable were it not for Root’s tactile engagement of both, feeling the fracture lines and not simply observing. Indeed, ‘survival depended on differences’ but the survival of Indigenous sovereignties through dynamic reciprocity *thrives* on incommensurable differences.<sup>233</sup> Indigenous atemporalities are fundamental vehicles of such difference because they overlay, enfold, and de-sanctify the regnant chronologue. Accordingly, Silko’s storywork doesn’t ‘flatten out or dismiss differences; rather, she calls for an alternative way to assess those differences.’<sup>234</sup> Real estate vulture Leah Blue takes legal action to divert water from Indigenous lands to support her vision of a ‘New Venice’ in the Arizonan desert. She ‘saw Mediterranean villas and canals where only cactus and scraggly greasewood

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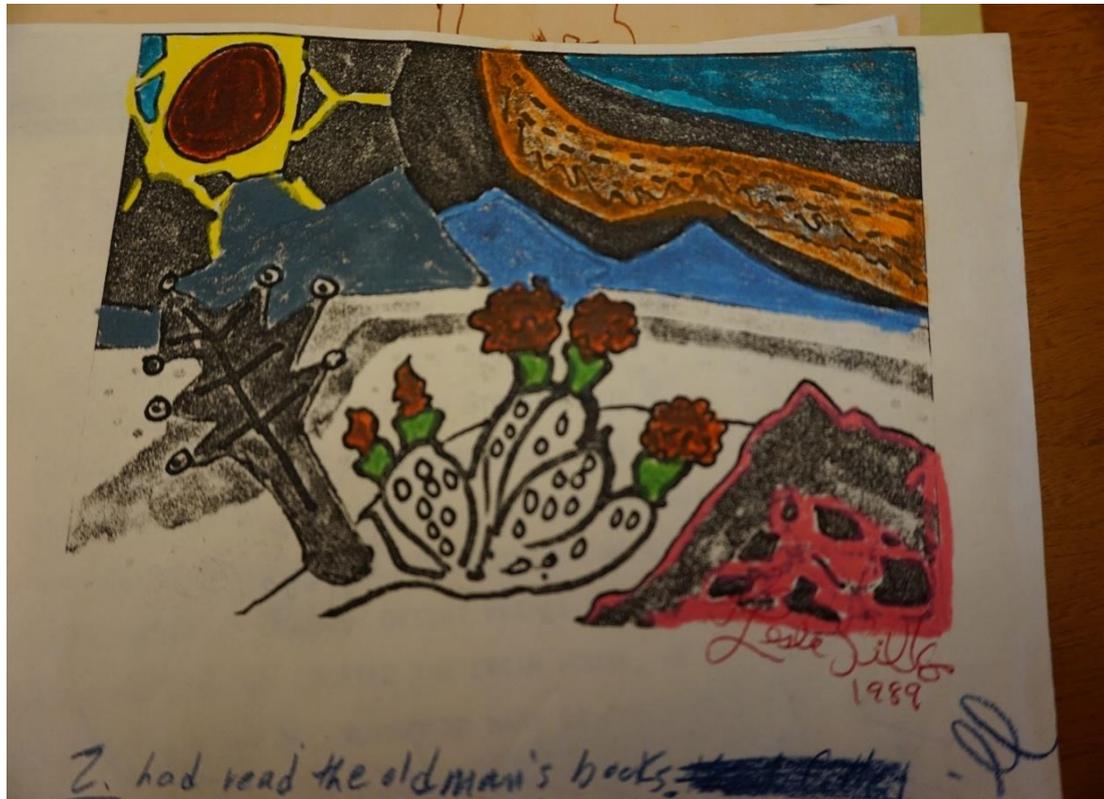
<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Brigham “Productions of Geographic Scale,” 319.

grew from gray volcanic rock.<sup>235</sup> Calabazas' view of the desert land is vivid, vibrant, and vital:

*Fig. 2: Untitled Sketch of the Desert, (Found with Drafts of Scenes involving*



*Calabazas, Zeta, Root, and Mosca, 1989)*

Expanding the impromptu lesson, Calabazas assures Root and Mosca that monotheistic tendencies are terminal because folks 'who can't learn to appreciate the world's differences won't make it. They'll die.'<sup>236</sup> Like decolonisation, this is not a metaphor. The notion operates across a gamut of unfolding local and global scenarios and, as Catherine Rainwater notes, 'Calabazas's warning applies to Silko's

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<sup>235</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 378.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

audience' as much as any other active character in the relationship of storywork she fosters.<sup>237</sup>

Calabazas reflects in his older years on his position as 'part of the new generation that the old-time people scolded for its peculiar interest in "now" and tomorrow,' at the supposed expense of the community's past and its contemporary relevance.<sup>238</sup> As Justice argues, 'writing about the *now* is a powerful refusal to disappear,' yet Calabazas seems frustrated with separating the notion of before from now in a way that stifles atemporal complexities.<sup>239</sup> Indeed, Silko's self-admonishing editorial notes on an early iteration of Calabazas' character reveal this tense dimension of tenses. In early drafts, she struggles to keep from 'going into the past so much when dealing with Calabazas in the present.'<sup>240</sup> Since quarantining past and presents reinforces the chronologue, reconceptualising 'time as an ocean always moving' presents one model of atemporal coalition with which the chronologue and the sovereignty it upholds can be unsettled and drawn into sovereign tides of dynamic reciprocity.<sup>241</sup> Indeed, if transmotion quickens Indigenous sovereignties, then the motion that sustains creased attemporalities informs how 'purpose and intent animate time itself.'<sup>242</sup> Those eddies and slipstreams that travel past the current of the chronologue reveal one mode of alterity—and point to many more—

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<sup>237</sup> Rainwater, "'Maybe Einstein was Part Yaqui,'" 12.

<sup>238</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 222.

<sup>239</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 56, (italics in original).

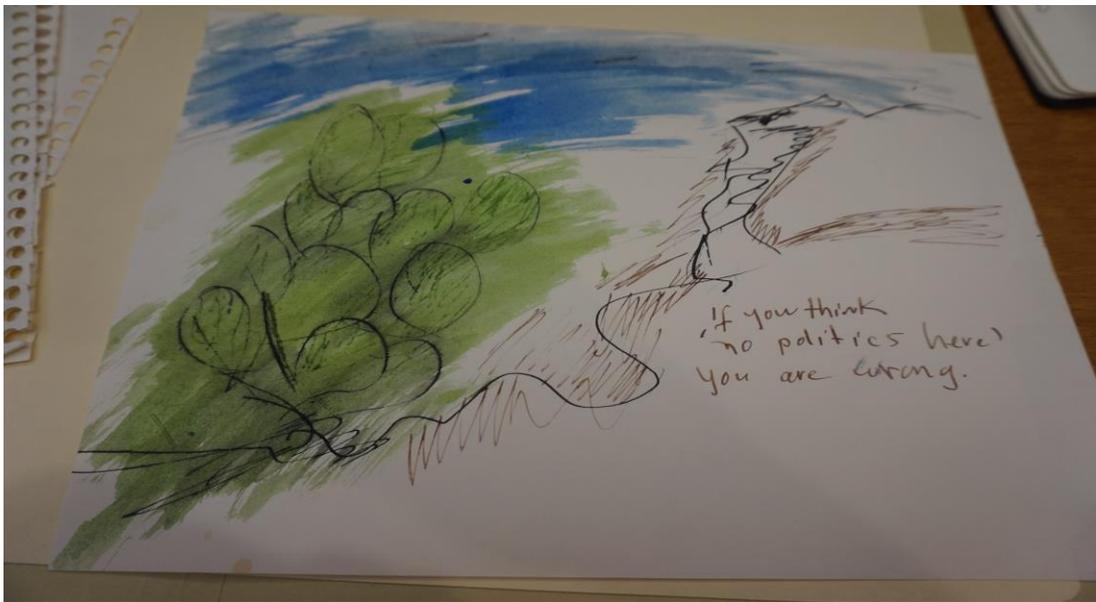
<sup>240</sup> See Appendix N.

<sup>241</sup> Thomas Irmer and Leslie Marmon Silko, "An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko," *Alt-X Online Network*, 1995, <http://www.altx.com/interviews/silko.html>.

<sup>242</sup> David Mogen, "Tribal Images of the 'New World': Apocalyptic Transformation in *Almanac of the Dead* and Gerald Vizenor's Fiction," in *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*, ed. A. Robert Lee (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2000), 196.

that represents an ideological crease teeming with potential for viable political revolution. In *Almanac*, Silko endeavours to 'give history a character,' to give atemporal times an army of character advocates, and I suggest she succeeds.<sup>243</sup>

**'What Indigenous texts do is make visible what's so often unseen': Putting Atemporal Sovereignties in Place.<sup>244</sup>**



*Fig. 3: If you think 'no politics here' you are wrong.*

So reads the caption of a watercolour-lashed landscape sketch hidden amongst the *Almanac* artefacts in the Silko's archival residue. The place captured by the brushstrokes is a mystery. The sentiment, however, is core to the assemblage of activists' narratives that paint the synergistically damning and hopeful vision of the

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<sup>243</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko and Linda Niemann, "Narratives of Survival: Linda Niemann / 1992," in *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko*, ed. Ellen L. Arnold (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 108.

<sup>244</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 48.

story of the Americas in *Almanac*. Silko's storywork *is* apocalyptic. But the creased friction between catastrophe and resurgence makes her vision one of Indigenous 'vitality [which] is woven deeply into the texture of each narrative; that is, each structural system of polarities is triangulated by other narratives in ways that open them to further directions of possibility.'<sup>245</sup> Resignation to disaster and reliance on bottomless hope are both independently incapable of producing atemporal presents or futures. Only when these countervailing visions of optimism and doubt are palimpsestically overlaid, placed beneath atemporal narrative lenses, and engaged in dynamic reciprocity do the ideological creases between them scaffold 'a new world on the other side of apocalypse—one way or another.'<sup>246</sup>

Calabazas' ideas compel. Calabazas, though, is jaded, worn down by the lack of meaningful change as the bad gets worse seemingly without retribution or redress. He has heard his whole life that '[f]ierce, hot winds would drive away the rain clouds; irrigation wells would go dry; all the plants and animals would disappear' as Death-Eye Dog's epoch intensifies and consolidates, and only 'a few humans would survive.'<sup>247</sup> Calabazas' perspective is as important as any other, yet his worldview alone cannot provide any viable path forward without support. No one's can. Calabazas has heard the stories since birth, but they have not changed. In his context they have been recited without being reimagined, so by the time Calabazas finds himself old and drinking alone under the stars he realises that 'he knew the story by

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<sup>245</sup> David L. Moore, "The Ground of Ethics: Arrowboy's Ecologic in *Almanac*," in *Howling for Justice: New Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead*, ed. Rebecca Tillett (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 2014), 179.

<sup>246</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 173.

<sup>247</sup> Silko, *Almanac*, 632.

heart, but he was not sure if he believed it anymore.<sup>248</sup> This impels and informs a crucial point: colonial *and* pan-Indigenous ideologies alike rely on a lone voice of reason or, at best, a choral sense of harmony. Silko was lambasted for *Almanac*'s clamour of primary voices, yet it is precisely that swirling disorientation that demands listener-readers reader emplace themselves amongst frictional voices and the ideological creases they etch together. Some of them are despicable, some of them have lessons to teach, stories to tell, and all of them have change to work.

Desmotion rides high in *Almanac*'s disturbed but not unsettled end-times, and Miriam Schacht's argument that 'mobility that lacks any connection to the land is dangerous because the connection of the people with the land is primary and sacred' resonates.<sup>249</sup> Land, constitution, and atemporal histories are all ravelled by transmotional praxes of reciprocal engagement, and exploring the flexibility of temporal parameters that 'seem natural to those whom they privilege' introduces a workable sense of alterity to these coalitional categories of Indigenous sovereignties.<sup>250</sup> In my reading, *Almanac*'s famous prescience is rooted in alternative and atemporal historiography and extends, like *Treaty Shirts*, into a 'vision [that] is depicted as our own potential future.'<sup>251</sup> Whereas Vizenor's speculations regarding the CWEN have yet to be fully measured within the bound of the linear chronologue, the indictment of neo-settler colonialism offered up by Silko's novel is writ large

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 632.

<sup>249</sup> Miriam Schacht, "'Movement Must Be Emulated by the People': Rootedness, Migration, and Indigenous Internationalism in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 21, no. 4 (December 2009): 57, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/studamerindilite.21.4.53>.

<sup>250</sup> Freeman, *Time Binds*, 3.

<sup>251</sup> Tillett, *Otherwise, Revolution!*, 2.

across our present moment, inasmuch as it can be “ours”. The productive alternatives to refusing that monotheistic imperative, however, are also writ large amongst the other present moments that *Almanac* foresees.

In his fantasy ‘wonderwork’ *The Way of Thorn and Thunder*, Justice avows that ‘only the stories weave our past into our future.’<sup>252</sup> Engaging as active listener-readers with *Almanac*’s ensemble and their stories, ‘blood-deep in the events’ of the novel as David Moore says, one encounters the variety and volume of atemporal pasts, presents, and futures that constitute and sustain Indigenous sovereignties without ‘descend[ing] into a relativistic abyss’ of unitary structuralism.<sup>253</sup> Silko’s *Almanac* ‘disturbs the most basic Western concepts of power,’ and the chronologue is a singularly versatile technology in settler colonialisms simultaneous hypervisibility and invisibility.<sup>254</sup> Estes tells us that ‘Indigenous revolutionaries are the ancestors from the before and before and the already forthcoming.’<sup>255</sup> Sovereign governances, temporal and legal, must perdure in atemporal transmotion, which is to say that Indigenous sovereignties inhabit incommensurable presents as compared to the settler monolith. But if the return of Indigenous lands is in fact, as Tuck and Yang observe, the most fundamental form of justice that must be actualised in any meaningful efforts toward decolonisation, then it’s important to think about what

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<sup>252</sup>Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 152; Daniel Heath Justice, *The Way of Thorn and Thunder: The Kynship Chronicles* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), loc. 184, Kindle.

<sup>253</sup> David L. Moore, “Silko’s Blood Sacrifice: The Circulating Witness in *Almanac of the Dead*,” in *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. Louise K. Barnett and James L. Thorson (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 163; Craig S. Womack, “Theorizing American Indian Experience,” in *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*, eds. Craig S. Womack, Daniel Heath Justice, and Christopher B. Teuton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 408.

<sup>254</sup> Elizabeth Ammons, *Brave New Words: How Literature Will Save the Planet* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 166.

<sup>255</sup> Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 256.

atemporal understandings enable in land-based conflicts. With a few exceptions, Indigenous activists do not expect 320 million settlers to up and leave, and while settler sovereignty can certainly be decentralised, the likelihood of jettisoning that society completely at (the chronologue's) present is slim. So, how might atemporal sovereignties work to reimagine the settler occupancy of Indigenous places and change what it means to live on Indigenous lands? By highlighting 'the effort that must be exerted by the state to create an illusion of control' over stolen Indigenous lands using chronologue-buttressed territorialisations of place, the edifice of settler hegemony begins to show far more cracks than one might expect.<sup>256</sup>

Shiri Pasternak observes in her interrogation of the interstices of jurisdiction and settler colonialism that 'full (or perfected) territorial control has never been realized as straight chronological progress towards absolute sovereignty,' and throughout this chapter I have highlighted that settler colonialism is a process of consolidation for its claims to monotheistic sovereignty over Indigenous lands via the imposition of a chronologue which imposes a linear uniformity of time and political narrative.<sup>257</sup> Indeed, 'the contemporary is itself unsettled terrain' within the spatio-temporal politics of Indigenous sovereignties in the Americas.<sup>258</sup>

The ideological creases that have troubled the settled surface of sovereign discourse through Silko and Vizenor's storywork transgress borders. Whether national, social, economic, temporal, or constitutional, these Indigenous

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<sup>256</sup> Goeman, *Mark My Words*, 160.

<sup>257</sup> Shiri Pasternak, "Jurisdiction and Settler Colonialism: Where do Laws Meet?," *Canadian Journal of Law & Society* 29, no. 2 (August 2014): 148, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cls.2014.5>.

<sup>258</sup> Eugenia Kisin, "Unsettling the Contemporary: Critical Indigeneity and Resources in Art," *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 2 (2013): 147, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2013.781927>.

sovereignties share a common thread of resistance against settler modes of territorialisation—an exclusive binary of ownership over the same swathe of sovereign aspects. This epistemological territorialisation is physically rooted in not only the land-theft of the Americas, but also the ethical dispositions that catalysed the colonial project. So, having discussed how and when Indigenous sovereignties are in relation to settler monotheorism, I want to bring these critical concepts to bear as tools for addressing the most contentious question in the string: where are Indigenous sovereignties in North America, and how do these places (refuse to) map to settler territories?

## Chapter III

# Emplacing Sovereignties: Remembering the Natural Reason of Indigenous Storywork in *Ocean Story* and *Interior Landscapes*

'The image of a memory exists in the present moment'<sup>1</sup>

Leslie Marmon Silko

'For indigenous peoples, place, land, sovereignty and memory matter. In a world growing increasingly enamored with faster, flatter, smooth, where positionality doesn't matter so much as how it is that we travel there, indigeneity matters'<sup>2</sup>

Jodi A. Byrd (Chickasaw)

### Three Parts, Two Questions, and One Brief Overview

So, to where next. *Treaty Shirts* and *Almanac* explored two different yet co-generative deployments of Indigenous sovereignties that inhabit the ideological creases between storywork and political nonfiction. We have seen how incommensurable Indigenous sovereignties are constituted and the array of unlike

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<sup>1</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead: A Novel* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 575.

<sup>2</sup> Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xiii.

temporal rhythms they move in. Nevertheless, altemporalities and alternative constitutions as revolutionary lodestones are of limited import unless they are *emplaced* in terms that recognise 'land itself is a form of narrative.'<sup>3</sup> There is no "main issue" that threatens the flourishing of Indigenous sovereignties; monotheism is, ironically enough, tentacularly versatile in its modes of oppression. The epistemological, constitutive, and temporal dimensions of Indigenous sovereignties are all inseparable from the lands that they are emplaced on, by, and with. Settler theft of that land, which includes that society's imposition of cosmological definitions of what sovereignty over the land means, then, trammels Indigenous sovereignties in all of the forms discussed so far.

*Almanac* demands the return of the land to Indigenous peoples from the settler state. This ultimatum has been issued incessantly through the years before and since *Almanac*'s publication, in theory and in practice. 'Land is what is most valuable, contested, required,' according to Tuck and Yang. This holds contradistinctively in both settler and Indigenous contexts, since 'the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital.'<sup>4</sup> Sovereignties and altemporalities overlay and interact in ideological creases which emerge into the world through contested, storied memories of and in place that describe 'the natural reason of sovereignty.'<sup>5</sup> But such sovereign relationships cannot co-exist plurally

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<sup>3</sup> Rebecca Tillett, *Otherwise, Revolution!: Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 150.

<sup>4</sup> Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 5, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630>.

<sup>5</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 185.

under the hegemonic logics espoused by the territories of settler nations. As settler sovereignty is understood in a binary mode—as a possessed noun—so too is settler territory codified by a dichotomy of property ownership and criminal trespass. Vizenor’s concept of natural reason is a vital(ising) force for reimagining relationalities with places in the context of Indigenous-settler encounters; it helps to indicate ways past settler territorialism that are not bound to redrawing the boundaries. That is, how do the lines of settler territories ligate Indigenous sovereignties in theory, and how does Indigenous storywork expressed through a creative kind of altemporal memory subvert these borderlines in practice? To unpack these questions, this chapter comes in three strands that ravel together to speak collectively to *where* Indigenous sovereignties *are* in altemporal constellations of constitution. Each represents spaces which I argue Silko and Vizenor’s storywork complicate, emplace, and enrich: the theoretical field of memory, place, and sovereignties; the intractable ocean; and a remembered city.

## Part I: The Field

### Conflicts Over Territory

There is groundwork to be done concerning the interstices of some pertinent fields of critical theory. In this first part, then, I engage critical theory of space, place, territory, and memory in Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts to highlight the ways in which approaching Indigenous atemporal histories and the chronologue as memories conveyed through storywork allows for more complex readings of contested territories. If the settler colonial chronologue is a procession of discrete and sequential events, then the geopolitical imaginary it fuels is defined by the points at which these events have taken place. Monotheistic concepts of place and space in North America are inflected by a racialised social hierarchy that assigns Indigenous peoples' disconnected places within a settled space. By complicating place and space within a broader consideration of Indigenous sovereignties, one can move from thinking about the passive fixity of being placed—as settler society places Indigenous peoples within geopolitical, temporal, and cultural frameworks of diminished sovereignty—to the activity of emplacing generative Indigenous sovereignties. As Darren Lone Fight (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation) describes, Indigenous futurisms assume 'a fundamental stance of meta-orientation – an orientation toward constant revision of orientation,' and it is worth bearing in mind that all Indigenous storywork is concerned with futurity.<sup>6</sup> Places are not static or

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<sup>6</sup> Darren Edward Lone Fight, "The Indigenous Imposition: Settling Expectation, Unsettling Revision, and the Politics of Playing with Familiarity," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 31, no. 3/4 (Autumn/Winter 2019): 33, <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/749191>.

immutable; emplacing is another active process that requires co-creativity between people(s) and land(s) that create, sustain, and allow to lapse ranges of connections because 'there simply isn't an unconnected place.'<sup>7</sup> Places shift and sift through time, atemporal and chrononormative alike.

An overemphasis on place as an undergirding concept in Indigenous literatures has been criticised for the reductivism that it can engender. 'Land is not a conceptual floatation device' to keep Indigenous cosmologies easily identifiable/compartmentalisable, as Tuck and McKenzie aver.<sup>8</sup> The 'exoticized notions of homecoming' that prevail in one-dimensional readings of Indigenous literatures cultivate shallow equations of indigeneity with immobility and curtail 'the hermeneutic possibilities of tribal writing.'<sup>9</sup> Talking about indigeneity and place *can* be reductive, but tracking emplacement as a self-determinative exertion of agency that resists being "put in place" opens up possibilities. Significantly, the sovereignties that emerge from this kind of emplacement—which affects settler structures just as much as Indigenous ones—disrupt the central settler project of putting Others in their place.

In this tripartite chapter, I consider the creative relationships between atemporal histories and Indigenous lands, between memories and places in Silko and Vizenor's storywork. These are mutually constitutive concepts that buttress

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<sup>7</sup> Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2013), 163.

<sup>8</sup> Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie, *Place in Research: Theory, Methodology, and Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 148, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>9</sup> Pádraig Kirwan, "Remapping Place and Narrative in Native American Literature: David Treuer's *The Hiawatha*," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 31, no. 2 (2007): 2.

Indigenous sovereignties in specific and coalitional senses, and engaging atemporal senses of place precipitates any meaningful ethos of dynamic reciprocity between incommensurable worldviews. Settler polities and their mono-vocal histories typically prioritise territory over place, driven by an abstractive geopolitical approach to expansion that muffles non-proprietary narratives. Per Dennison, colonial '[s]ettlement requires territory and thus necessitates the elimination of others' claims to the land.' To this end, the United States 'depoliticize[s] American Indian nations and reimagine[s] them as racial or cultural groupings' who can only exert territorial sovereign claims from positions of weakness that are hemmed into settler rules of engagement.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, environmental racism against marginalised peoples continues to flourish as a territorial settler technology that enervates ideologically creased Indigenous sovereignties. Place is to territory as memory is to history, because both place and memory must be the subjects of ongoing active recollection and do not exist as hierarchical assertions of supposedly irrefutable facts.

This is not a call to jettison territorial talk. Territory is a vital legal and political rubric through which Indigenous peoples must engage settler colonial polities to safeguard their lands. That substantial portion of Eastern Oklahoma that was declared Muscogee (Creek) territory in *McGirt v. Oklahoma*, for example, is owed to Indigenous people defending their treaty-secured territory. The Sipekne'katik First Nation's rights to fish in unceded Mik'maw waters at Taqmetek without the arson or sabotage they face in October 2020 is a matter of the settler state 'deliberate[ly]

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<sup>10</sup> Jean Dennison, "The Logic of Recognition: Debating Osage Nation Citizenship in the Twenty-First Century," *American Indian Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 1-3, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/amerindiquar.38.1.0001?seq=1>.

forgetting' treaty and territory, to be fought as such.<sup>11</sup> Saying the concept of territory is a limited epistemological framework to describe the density of Indigenous relationships with land is not supposed to undermine Indigenous territorial sovereignties. The political technology of territory itself isn't the issue so much as the monotheorisation of territory by settler means for settler ends. I look to renarrativise territory and address its lack of specificity in the chronologue. Just as sovereignty is a genealogically fraught concept, so too is territory when the settler state retains exclusive intellectual property over the legal machinery of territory to which Indigenous notions of territory often (though not always) do not cohere.

Scholars such as Kirwan have read how Indigenous literatures can be imbued with a potent sense of text as a kind of territorial expression, and I agree with this thrust holistically.<sup>12</sup> However, mainstream discourse around territory remains substantially unspecific in ways that support oppression. Territorial sovereignty is important to Indigenous polities, but this importance should not be confused with priority over other understandings of land while settler territorialism, as a weapon, flattens places. 'The limitation of sovereignty,' as Vizenor declares, 'is not sovereignty,' and the force of settler sovereignty hinges upon territorial dominance.<sup>13</sup> This militant territorialism excludes, includes, and occludes Indigenous sovereignties that move beyond settler constructs. As Kirwan affirms, one should take care to 'distinguish between narratives that focus on acts of legal or political reclamation in

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<sup>11</sup> Mercedes Peters, "Settler Forgetting in Saulnierville: The Sipekne'katik Mi'kmaw Fishery as Reminder," *NICHE*, October 9, 2020, <https://niche-canada.org/2020/10/19/settler-forgetting-in-saulnierville-the-sipeknekatik-mikmaw-fishery-as-reminder/?s=03>.

<sup>12</sup> Pdraig Kirwan, *Sovereign Stories: Aesthetics, Autonomy, and Contemporary Native American Writing* (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 10-13; 37-38.

<sup>13</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 186.

the face of colonial disruption, and those that concentrate on tribal continuance and pre-colonial sovereignties.<sup>14</sup> I keep this ideological wrinkle foregrounded throughout this chapter to navigate ideas of territories as spaces and/or places, which are contradistinctive concepts.

### **Settler Sovereignty Taking up Space**

According to Tuck and McKenzie, 'typically space is conflated with global, modern, and progressive'—all traits of the chronologue—'whereas place is conflated with local, traditional, and nostalgic' in a recursivity that troubles the chronologue.<sup>15</sup> Their definition focuses the risks that Kirwan outlines. That is, focus on place can be devitalising; nostalgia, (fascistic) tradition, and geo-political constraint can misappropriated to deepen 'the customary [homecoming] image of "the return of the Native," an image that is often read as a panacea to the trials of colonialism.'<sup>16</sup> These negative associations are pressing concerns that can be responded to (not dispelled) in the context of atemporalities and storywork constitution Silko and Vizenor's storyworks are riven with. "Place," as an exogenous, monotheoretically ordained concept is deleterious. Plural, imbricated, and contested places, however, exist in ideological creases of experience and memory; they are fizzing dimensions of sovereignties because of their densities, agencies, and specificities. The oceanic and urban places created by Vizenor and Silko explored throughout this chapter set

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<sup>14</sup> Kirwan, *Sovereign Stories*, 17.

<sup>15</sup> Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*, 20.

<sup>16</sup> Kirwan, "Remapping Place and Narrative," 1.

Indigenous sovereignties amongst settler territory, making space for more. This is a generative imposition, where 'the obtrusive presencing and resultant awareness of a counteroperational Indigenous revision and rearticulation' transgresses and repositions 'the tensions and contradictions within the dominant master narrative.'<sup>17</sup> Silko and Vizenor refuse to be put into place—societally, generically, physically, intellectually—by emplacing themselves. This leads 'not to a binary or hybridization but to similarity and difference,' the creases etched by the ethos of dynamic reciprocity drawn from Andersen's density and Tuck's incommensurability.<sup>18</sup> Altemporal constructions of place are stories of/and memories, and I propose that memory is storied and emplaced history. An ethos of frictional communal remembering rallies against 'the discourse of historicism' in the chronologue of territorial conquest 'where narrative is only the agency of the event,' rather than the very process by which places are constituted by people and constitute peoples.<sup>19</sup>

### **"I write to create a memory": Memory is Storywork is Altemporal History<sup>20</sup>**

Imagination is the connective tissue between remembering and placemaking, which are themselves methodologies of emplacing Indigenous sovereignties in geopolitical creases of shadow survivance. Maracle writes that remembering 'is at once historical, sociological, political, legal, and philosophical.' This heterogenous

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<sup>17</sup> Lone Fight, "The Indigenous Imposition," 21.

<sup>18</sup> Kirwan, "Remapping Place and Narrative," 5.

<sup>19</sup> Homi K. Bhabha "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 302.

<sup>20</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 5.

remit means '[m]emory serves. It is re-membered by our imagination' and enriches possible futures by revealing what Blaeser calls 'the lie of [H]istory and the truth of imagination.'<sup>21</sup> The texts I engage in this chapter are generically distinct: Vizenor's *Interior Landscapes* (1990) is an autobiography, and Silko's *Ocean Story* (2011) is a novella.<sup>22</sup> Both are atemporally inflected life-writings, storywork exercises of creative memory that evince their authors' personal positionings as 'connected by memory to space' and, in turn, to their overlapping communities and other polities.<sup>23</sup> This dendritic connection that begins with the local and spreads outwards gels with Vizenor's idea of natural reason—'a union of nature and language,' a facet of transmotion that creates 'a form of dialectical meaning.'<sup>24</sup> It connotes cosmological relationships with nature that exceed ideals of improvement. Natural reason feeds worldviews that involve an intractable sense of chance, where procedural predictions cannot be perfected. If nature, as systematised in monotheist reasoning, gives a top-down explication of the world, then an ethic of natural reason resembles a centrifugal struggle to describe the world with particularity and experience at the

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<sup>21</sup> Lee Maracle, *Memory Serves: Oratories* (Alberta: NeWest Press, 2015), 46; 17, ProQuest Ebook Central; Kimberly Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 89.

<sup>22</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1990); Leslie Marmon Silko *Ocean Story* (n.d.: Odyssey Editions, 2011), Kindle.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Noodin, "Megwa Baabaamiiayaayaang Dibaajomoyaang," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature*, eds. James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 175. By life writing I mean both writing *about* life and *writing* life into being. One cannot nestle Indigenous storywork forms within the brackets of Western literatures; one would struggle to assess the *Divine Comedy* as a Western Apache *nlt'éeego nagoldi'* story (analogous to a saga, per Basso). These challenges do not proscribe diverse readings in unexpected creases, though. Vizenor's longstanding twine of haiku and Anishinaabe dream songs evidences the vivacity of inter-generic readings. However, hierarchised studies of Indigenous stories within Western literary studies abound, therefore I approach in broader terms that resist reduction.

<sup>24</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 121; David J. Carlson, "Trickster Hermeneutics and the Postindian Reader: Gerald Vizenor's Constitutional Praxis," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 18, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/studamerindilite.23.4.issue-4>.

forefront—as the theory, not the proof. Natural reason crackles in Silko’s claim that a ‘bolt of lightning is itself, but at the same time it may mean much more... lightning may strike down an evildoer, or lightning may strike a person of good will.’<sup>25</sup> Natural reason is not chaotic, exactly. Nor is it devoid of intentionality, but it is not calculable either; it recognises incommensurable other-than-human agencies at work in the world and so entreats error in human agency. Memories are prone to such mistakes as they ‘slosh into one another,’ a fallibility that demands an ethic of dynamic reciprocity to constitute the world not as it is, but as it might well be.<sup>26</sup> As Teuton writes, ‘people of storytelling cultures tend to value error as fundamental’ to ‘our dialectical inquiries.’<sup>27</sup> Memory is an incommensurable membrane through which natural reason can be perceived and parsed, and memories course through the storywork I consider here.

Silko and Vizenor’s life-writings are not whole, personally nor culturally. As they emplace themselves through their storywork, they rely on listener-readers to catalyse that process, since ‘it’s in that strange alchemy of self and other that we find what matters most.’<sup>28</sup> Emplacement does not happen in a social vacuum and, the texts I engage here do not neatly represent their authors’ communities. Without encountering ideological tension, how could they? Both *Ocean Story* and *Interior Landscapes* begin with sections on ancestry, and relationality pulses throughout, but

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<sup>25</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 28.

<sup>26</sup> Ofelia Zepeda, *Ocean Power: Poems from the Desert* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 52.

<sup>27</sup> Sean Kicummah Teuton, *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 26; 32, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018), 204. One could think of worse ways to limn natural reason as an idea.

neither writer speaks for some atomic community. Nor do they act as ciphers; as Nathaniel Otjen observes, 'Silko presents her Laguna Pueblo self as always mutable and mutual' to avoid presenting a blunt identi(cali)ty.<sup>29</sup> Rather, their life writings are pedagogical and political in that they emplace relations between self and community—both their own and others'—through time and in lands. The "who I am" in Vizenor and Silko's storywork is constructed, complicated, and thickened by talk of "who I am to others," "what I do," and "where I am." Understanding of the self is thus heuristically triangulated and expressed via different lexica that articulate how 'the experiences of the narrator are intertwined with the experiences of others and her cultural environment.'<sup>30</sup>

Vizenor and Silko present their creative memories as both personal and ensconced within their experiences in the places they travel amongst. Thus, they do not make sweeping generalisations that essentialise their communities, but rather give accounts of their own lives that are inseparable from memories that are not always "their own." Accurate and inaccurate in these terms are not equated with harmony and discord. So, their imaginative memories become messy, peopled sets of tensions to be handled with care, with an ethic of dynamic reciprocity. Tensions and entanglements, as we have seen, however, are not the same as division; as Oglala Lakota poet Layli Long Soldier explains, 'tension chisels detail into memory'

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<sup>29</sup> Nathaniel Otjen, "Indigenous Radical Resurgence and Multispecies Landscapes: Leslie Marmon Silko's *The Turquoise Ledge*," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 31, no. 3/4 (2019): 153, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/749196>.

<sup>30</sup> Annette Angela Portillo, *Sovereign Stories and Blood Memories: Native American Women's Autobiography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017), 5, ProQuest Ebook Central.

and the details fortify the creases of Indigenous sovereignties that storywork emplaces.<sup>31</sup>

### Co-ordinating Emplacement Stories

To echo Maracle again: 'In a society governed first and foremost by spirit to spirit relationships to all beings, memory *serves* much differently than in a society in which property possession determines importance,' and that difference textures my distinction between the closure of placement and the vitality of emplacement.<sup>32</sup> 'Stories,' writes Goeman, 'are powerful; they are the cornerstones of political viability,' and this potency relies on memory as a vector.<sup>33</sup> Conflicting stories can co-constitute Indigenous sovereignties and unsettle an empire's grand narrative. As well as being a historical narrative and temporal blueprint, the chronologue is a product of memory, that is, what is remembered and what is forgotten, often deliberately. The global normalisation of the settler chronologue demonstrates that 'America has become the superpower of memory' which, most significantly, informs the Indigenous sovereignties that are forgotten by territorial engineering.<sup>34</sup> Indigenous stories set memories in anti-colonial transmotion; they sustain multiple incommensurable truths that co-exist and co-create in storywork memories of emplaced lands, as cornerstones of vibrant Indigenous sovereignties. The late Toni

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<sup>31</sup> Layli Long Soldier, *Whereas* (Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 2017), 69.

<sup>32</sup> Maracle, *Memory Serves*, 16, (emphasis mine).

<sup>33</sup> Goeman, *Mark My Words*, 200.

<sup>34</sup> Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl Ann Michael, "An Interview with Rob Nixon," *Contemporary Literature* 43, no. 3 (Autumn, 2002): 431, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1209107>.

Morrison reminds us 'the crucial distinction' to consider when dealing with memory as a valid form of counter-history 'is not the difference between fact and truth. Because facts can exist without human intelligence but truth cannot.'<sup>35</sup> Or, rather, Indigenous memories need not tessellate into a unitary chronologue of fact to articulate ideologically creased truths and to unsettle settler hegemony. The territorial anatomy of the chronologue gives it an ersatz aura of ironic neutrality—time-lapses of moving gridwork on a map. But if the chronologue is no more than one loud and oft-recited story of sovereignty amongst many other less amplified ones about the land, the settlers, and the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, then it is also a memory. Despite all the jingoism, official records, and textbooks, it's just a memory.

So, what else could Indigenous storywork provoke listener-readers to remember, even indirectly? If Tuck and Yang are right and '[d]ecolonization' is 'an elsewhere,' then *where* do these storyworks remember?<sup>36</sup> 'Native memories,' writes Vizenor, 'are intimate, the traces of wind over water, the rush of leaves, and the tease of seasons; bear in mind the accession of natural reason, and evermore that mythic sense of survivance in stories.'<sup>37</sup> Such memories are emplaced in contexts of natural reason, which is to say that they perform acts of place-weaving. In contrast, settler sovereignty has consistently expanded its territories through acts of displacing, of forgetting the Indigenous sovereignties that are indivisible from the lands the

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<sup>35</sup> Toni Morrison, "The Site of Memory," in *What Moves at the Margins: Selected Nonfiction*, ed. Carolyn C. Denard (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2008), 72. Silko claimed in an interview with Christina Castro from 2000 that a pre-Nobel Prize Morrison wrote Silko's preferred blurb for *Almanac of the Dead*. It was scrapped by publishers Simon & Schuster for fear of "pigeonholing."

<sup>36</sup> Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," 36.

<sup>37</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 69.

chronologue codifies and temporally flattens out. The environmental racism displayed in displacing Indigenous peoples from ancestral lands and then plundering the sites of their replacement for extractables exerts territorial authority both over and above. Veracini proposes that ““evidence” of a capacity to advance environmental transformation allows [settler polities] to think about their collective endeavour as being endowed with an inherent and unstoppable strength.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, Manifest Destiny always was predicated on settler territorialisation (read: Indigenous replacement) to vindicate itself. The exercise of transformational power towards “productivity” becomes the justification for ownership, and this ‘[s]ettler-colonial grammar’ of progress ‘assembles an absence of violence in ongoing Native-white relations’ that smacks of the ‘wilful amnesia’ of settler sovereignty.<sup>39</sup> This manipulation is hypervisible in the way that such environmental discrimination is propagated by abstracted notions of land, which are essential to the settler colonial free market and, by extension, the global frame.

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<sup>38</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 23, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>39</sup> Mishuana Goeman, “Disrupting a Settler-Colonial Grammar of Place: The Visual Memoir of Hulleah Tsinnahjinnie,” in *Theorizing Native Studies*, eds. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 260, ProQuest Ebook Central; Rebecca Tillett, “Anamnesiac Mappings: National Histories and Transnational Healing in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*,” in *Transatlantic Voices*, ed. Elvira Pulitano (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 150.

## 'Oversight with fangs': The Amnesiac Placelessness of Environmental Racism<sup>40</sup>

Environmental racism broadly refers to a meshwork of policies and practices that enable, enact, and normalise both the oppression of non-white communities by the manipulation of environments, and/or the racial encoding of the environment itself. Coined in the 1980s, environmental racism as a discursive structure precipitated the environmental justice movements that followed. As the responsive movement's focus on "justice" suggests, environmental racism is ordinarily embedded within state politics and internally contrary to those states' ethical overtures. In North America these frameworks are 'reinforced by government, legal, economic, and military institutions,' to systematically disavow the voices and agency of Black people, Indigenous peoples, and other people of colour.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to note that environmental racism is an ideology that germinated in medieval Europe and has intensified since. The clear genealogy of environmental racism shows it to be conterminous with the private-property territorialisation of the settler United States, not just a by-product. Carl Zimring describes this process as one of, if not *the*, prime independent variable of the American experiment since European settlement began.<sup>42</sup> However, discussions about environmental racism are often reduced to technically accurate, yet casuistically glib statements 'that

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<sup>40</sup> Audra Simpson, "Why White People Love Franz Boas; or, The Grammar of Indigenous Dispossession," in *Indigenous Visions: Rediscovering the World of Franz Boas*, eds. Ned Blackhawk and Isaiah Wilner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 177.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Bullard, "Strategies to Fight Environmental Injustice at Home and Abroad," in *Environmental Racism and Classism*, ed. Anne C. Cunningham (New York: Greenhaven Publishing LLC, 2017), 19.

<sup>42</sup> See: Carl Zimring, *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

nonwhites are disproportionately exposed to pollution,' without consideration of the compounding ideological contexts in play.<sup>43</sup>

Environmental racism in America is, in part, about forgetting indigeneity. It relates to Indigenous peoples' sovereignties, and is about overwhelming the cosmological, political, and interdependent relationships to lands that are remembered in Silko and Vizenor's accounts of Mexico and Minnesota. These forces swap emplaced sovereignties for displaced territories with primarily pecuniary value. Indigenous lives are stacked up in this calculus across international borders; in Canada, the Asabiinyashkosiwagong Nitam-Anishinaabeg (Grassy Narrows) First Nation have been afflicted by a spike in neurological diseases caused by mercury contamination of drinking water that stems from fifty years of negligent mining practices; in Australia the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations have been the most impacted by run-dry waterways in the Murray-Darling basin whilst water-intensive irrigation for commercial cotton farmers has siphoned water upstream; in the United States, as Winona LaDuke attests, 'over the last [65] years, there have been 1,000 atomic explosions on Western Shoshone land in Nevada, making the Western Shoshone the most bombed nation on earth.'<sup>44</sup>

These instances of environmental racism share a common motivator: capitalistic interests that draw direct profit from evacuating Indigenous places of Indigenous sovereignties, turning land into a one-size-fits-all rubric of property.

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<sup>43</sup> Laura Pulido, "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90, no. 12 (2000): 12, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1515377>.

<sup>44</sup> Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999), 3.

TallBear asserts that capitalism holds a peculiar cultural gravitas in North America because, 'for settlers, capitalism *is* their culture.'<sup>45</sup> As such, land means substantially and substantively different things between diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. There are ideological creases, to be sure, but as ever the materially dominant settler polity controls the metastructures within which these differences interact. The work of deploying Indigenous sovereignties, then, involves modes of atemporal placemaking as pluralising ripostes to monotheistic settler territorialisation. Such networks of significance are guided by communal senses of memory which erupt from Indigenous storywork as processes of reciprocal emplacement. Importantly, settler society and the sovereignty it trades under are not exempt from this process.

### **'Stories make you replace yourself': Natural Reasons and Responsibilities<sup>46</sup>**

Lands and places are important to Indigenous sovereignties on several levels, but I want to focus specifically on the momentum of these places, or the transnational presents and persistence of Indigenous cultures through time in relationships to land. To reiterate: presence is vital, yet it is not a self-standing attribute or characteristic of Indigenous communities. Indigenous presence is not part of a binary configuration that either is or is not in an isolated moment of carceral time in the chronologue.

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<sup>45</sup> Rick Harp, Kim TallBear, and Brock Pitawanakwat, "All White history is Revisionist History," *Media Indigena* 160, (06 May 2019), podcast, 16:05, <https://mediaindigena.libsyn.com/ep-160-all-white-history-is-revisionist-history>.

<sup>46</sup> Lewis Benson qtd. in Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 38.

Altemporal presence is contingent upon the transmotional momentum of sovereign Indigenous peoples across various confluent and conflicting Indigenous cosmologies that affect one another. As Donald Fixico (Shawnee, Sac and Fox, Muscogee [Creek] and Seminole) avers, 'all things change, even the story we remember being told, but as long as the fabrics of the truths of the story are retained, then we can accept it.'<sup>47</sup> Reading changes, reacting to changes, entreating changes—these are all important elements of dynamic reciprocities between peoples and places and the mutual practice of emplacement. Conversely, settler sovereignty and its tendency to engulf or replace are desmotional, transmoting textured, constitutive places into co-ordinal plots under the guise of development. Blaeser notes that '[t]hose who control the land have controlled the story (the his-story) of the land and its people' because stories—chronologue included—are transformative expressions of worldviews, values, and communal memories.<sup>48</sup>

Common to both Vizenor's storywork amendments to the Constitution of the White Earth Nation and Silko's altemporal outlines of Indigenous sovereignties in *Almanac* is the idea that '[i]nside of our stories are laws' which evince the shifting (or static) values of the communities that create, and are created by, those stories.<sup>49</sup> This is not at all to say that Indigenous storywork should be interred as legal doctrine, just as the inverse falters. Yet extant legal doctrines do not always present structures of governance that cleave to Indigenous lifeways. As I argued in Chapter One, the

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<sup>47</sup> Donald L. Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies & Traditional Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 44.

<sup>48</sup> Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*, 83.

<sup>49</sup> Maracle, *Memory Serves*, 62.

monotheistic legal architecture of the settler U.S. is a narrative, and it is consequently important to prevent 'the law from being treated as hermetically sealed or ideologically blank.'<sup>50</sup> And where the law of the land draws on Eurocentric norms of nine-tenths-possession, that story does some real heavy lifting. Stories can be imbued with cultural imperatives for reciprocal behaviour that can be understood as legally—read in this instance as ethically—charged.<sup>51</sup> Such narratives are not mere stories with morals, but stories that *are* morals in a context where '[t]heory is always practical first, rather than abstract.'<sup>52</sup>

Homi K. Bhabha theorises the 'nation as narration' in a fundamental sense of building a Eurocentric body politic.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, narratives can (but do not necessarily) nourish sovereignties as collective assemblages of remembered and emplaced cosmological knowledge. That is, as stories that are not simply forward- or backward-facing and deal 'not [with] generic landscapes but specific places with histories, voices, memories.' Such atemporal narratives 'carry the past forward' and emplace Indigenous sovereignties.<sup>54</sup> The various types of damage developed and dealt by politics of Indigenous dispossession in the Americas are manifestations of a lone domineering cosmology unchecked and unrecognised as a bombastic story—a memory—of expansion. The breadth of this classificatory phenomenon is

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<sup>50</sup> Jane Griffith, "Law, Literature, and Leslie Marmon Silko: Competing Narratives of Water," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 29, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 26, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/studamerindilite.29.2.0026>.

<sup>51</sup> See Keith Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places* (1996) for a book-length enquiry into the moral placemaking practices of the Western Apache where morally instructive '*ágodzaahi* stories are emplaced in and by important locations to 'cause [individuals] to modify their social conduct in quite specific ways' (57).

<sup>52</sup> Dian Million, "There is a River in Me: Theory from Life," in *Theorizing Native Studies*, eds. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 33, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>53</sup> Bhabha, "DissemiNation," 294.

<sup>54</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 156-157.

tremendous and cannot be simply overhauled, but one necessary field of contest and complication to subverting the settler colonial edifice requires an Indigenously guided recalibration of emplaced stories and memory that troubles the narrative of the monotheistic settler chronologue.

According to Geniusz, stories emplaced in specific lands are 'one of our most powerful methods of storing knowledge' and of deploying that knowledge.<sup>55</sup> In conveying her Anishinaabe worldview, Geniusz explains that knowledge without a story is suspect. The fact that narrative is crucial to the validity of Anishinaabe sciences sits in contrast to non-Indigenous sciences that typically class anecdotal evidence as dubious due to that same narrativity. The tacit precept for monotheism is that stories pollute; stories cloud the "facts," and introduce problematic variables that reduce one's ability to extrapolate with precision and the natural part of reason is to be discharged. Stories are held as scientifically untrustworthy because they are told, revised, and retold *amongst* people as opposed to being displayed *before* and imposed *upon* people. Of course, the settler chronologue and its attendant worldview are no less a story in fact but are set out as ideologically unblemished in principle. The fact that, for instance, the 'stories and reminiscences that enliven all Pueblo gatherings are densely encoded with expression and information' is dismissed as epistemological hearsay/heresy.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Mary Siisip Geniusz, *Plants Have So Much to Give Us, All We Have To Do Is Ask: Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings*, ed. Wendy Makoons Geniusz (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 3.

<sup>56</sup> Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 178.

In short, there is no room for overlap or palimpsest between stories about relationships with the land, because that sort of complication makes clean territorial divides impossible. Relatedly, this rubric also indicates to why atemporal memories issue such significant challenges to territorial settler sovereignty; the chronologue requires constant progression as an overwrite of previous land relationships. That is, the chronologue itself is a territorial technology, and it fails to operate as designed if plural worldviews are set down in planar arrays. Justice notes that this monotheistic bent extends to non-Indigenous ascriptions of “realism” to Indigenous literatures too. Akin to settler geopolitics it seems ‘first, that there’s a singular reality against which all others must be compared, and second, that any cultural expressions or understandings inconsistent with that interpretation are deficient at best, pathological at worst.’<sup>57</sup> Importantly, communality in the ways that these tense stories of emplacement and memory are created and sustained contravenes “rational” political processes. Will Wright suggests that the ‘central assumption of individualism’ as a political philosophy is that ‘individuals are “naturally” rational. Rational individuals can understand and shape their world with no need for faith or tradition.’ Yet ‘[o]nly white men were assumed to be rational’ in Eurocentric societies.<sup>58</sup> The vaunted history of Western ratiocination also consists of its own panoply of frictional stories, but the settler worldview’s inability or unwillingness to remember this core truth enshrines it above Indigenous cosmologies. Moreover, as Vizenor warns, ‘dominance is sure to raise false

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<sup>57</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 142.

<sup>58</sup> Will Wright, *The Wild West: The Mythical Cowboy and Social Theory* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 2; 158, EBSCO eBook Subscription Academic Collection.

memories’—memories that are not recognised for the dynamically balanced stories that they are.<sup>59</sup> But as expressions of Indigenous sovereignties and as decolonial actants ‘[p]lace and belonging are experiential, and demanding. They demand a reckoning’ that emplace story(net)works of ethical imperatives within the land, guided by natural reason.<sup>60</sup> A broad stroke, perhaps, but one that nevertheless outlines the conceptual genealogy between incommensurable worldviews at work. The stories in question constitute trustworthy pools of knowledge because they are lived and, in some senses, because they live.

Geniusz explains that some important moral stories are sentient in Anishinaabeg worldviews. They transgress the presumptive restrictions of settler anthropocentrism (where the “anthro” in question is white and male) to etch creases of agency that do not burst outward from individual human sources but rather reach out to ravel collective human ideologies. A story of this kind—an *Aadizookaanag*—is ‘considered a cognizant being... that knows when it is being told.’<sup>61</sup> Each telling changes the contents and connotations, yet remains rooted in and thickened by the place(s) where it is told and refers to. Such stories work to emplace those who engage with them *and with other stories*. This worldview also speaks directly to the responsibility upon storytellers and listener-readers to engage those stories as living entities, powerful and fragile at once. Indigenous stories, hosted by living lands, thus

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<sup>59</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 70.

<sup>60</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 170.

<sup>61</sup> Geniusz, *Plants Have So Much To Give Us*, 7. See, also: Eva Marie Garrouette and Kathleen Dolores Westcott, “The Story Is a Living Being: Companionship with Stories in Anishinaabeg Studies,” in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*, eds. Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiiik Stark (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 61-80, ProQuest Ebook Central.

act as vital agents of resistance against territorial abstraction by settler sovereignty; by carrying forward emplaced and storied memories as a fulcrum for caring social behaviours, these stories enact divergent worldviews and texture the places they co-create by tracing complex creases of confluence and diffluence in what those places mean and do.

Silko explains that from a Pueblo perspective one does not 'speak of present, past, and future images... The image and the reality are in one space.'<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, if 'a settler project constitutes a political body that wills itself into existence by imagining its movement to an *unspecified location*,' then storyworks that re-member highly specific places constitute counteractive Indigenous expressions of sovereignties.<sup>63</sup> This does not mean that Indigenous cosmologies and epistemologies only pertain to themselves and their locales—quite the obverse, actually. Indigenous voices coming to the fore of the global arena are perhaps more important now than ever before, yet it is vital to acknowledge 'Indigenous narratives as having been always already global' insofar as 'global conversations happen locally, in ways that are attuned to uneven experiences of colonial oppression' in national and international registers.<sup>64</sup> The ramifications of Indigenous emplacements send decolonial shockwaves through the territorial substructure of the settler state as the national imaginary's memory loses definitiveness but acquires an ideologically creased definition.

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<sup>62</sup> See Appendix J.

<sup>63</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler-Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 64, (emphasis mine).

<sup>64</sup> Eman Ghanayem and Rebecca Macklin, "Indigenous Narratives: Global Forces in Motion," *Transmotion* 5, no. 1 (2019): 4, <https://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/transmotion/article/view/789>.

## Prismatic Memory—Collective Choices and Chances

'Memory is tricky... a sense of motion and a choice of stories, or points of view, as memories turn in stories,' writes Vizenor.<sup>65</sup> The contradistinctive aspects of choice and chance as markers of agency in the act of recalling are hard to pin down and so also happen to be important in how memory operates. Choosing to remember and happening to remember, choosing to forget and happening to forget. These are related but distinct modes, and they inflect the complex roles that memory plays for stories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous sovereignties. Natural reason as an ethic is nourished by remembering and, according to Brooks, 'memory is a way for us to put ourselves back together.'<sup>66</sup> Intimately linked with orality in Indigenous contexts and counterposed against the chronologue's twin pillars of literacy and literality, storied memories are considered an order below documented records in settler society. Again, this derives in part from the slippage between chance and choice in the act of recalling. The peaks and troughs of importance that accompany waves of memory are not so easily quantifiable or controllable as are the number of entries in a land registry; they swell and recede based on one's positionality at any particular time; they are vacuous without contexts of place and time. But memory is also generally dismissed in the settler colonial context because of its significant capacity to overhaul, to function as 'counter-memory to the colonial order.'<sup>67</sup> Sometimes, memories result from an active attempt to recall. In these cases, 'our intent governs

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<sup>65</sup> Vizenor and Lee, *Postindian Conversations*, 19.

<sup>66</sup> Lisa Brooks and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, "Lisa Brooks on the Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast," in *Speaking of Indigenous Politics: Conversations with Activists, Scholars, and Tribal Leaders* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 34.

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 166.

[at least] our choice of words in recalling events.’<sup>68</sup> However, intentionality isn’t always part of remembering, thus ‘[m]emory often angles its way into our world as if by accident,’ as if by chance.<sup>69</sup> This kind of “unintentional” recall, be it traumatic, nostalgic, instructive, or otherwise, is usually triggered by emotion. Herein lies both the strength and deficiency of memory in sovereign discourse concerning land, depending on where one sits.

Emotional influence—the *feeling* of the thing—is used to deride non-Indigenous memories in the monotheistic settler chronologue. Maracle’s suggestion that memory acts as a kind of host to the multifaceted human intelligence that Morrison bundles with truth indicates as to memory’s integral role in the sustainment of emplaced worldviews as and by sites of sovereignties. Communicated and affected via storywork, communal memories are *prismatic* deployments of atemporal resurgence. They subsist and sustain in ideological creases of what Leanne Betasamosake Simpson refers to as ‘*multidimensionality*,’ dualistic but not dichotomous, both and neither, not either/or.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, Coulthard proposes a theory that is co-generative with Simpson’s formulation: he posits ‘grounded normativity’ which encapsulates ‘the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world.’<sup>71</sup> Coulthard emphasises that

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<sup>68</sup> Maracle, *Memory Serves*, 17.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>70</sup> Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 201, <https://www-jstor-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt77c>, (italics in original).

<sup>71</sup> Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 13.

grounded normativity is incompatible with settler colonial capitalistic society and, importantly, champions the potential of Indigenous peoples' expressions of emotions such as resentment in a decolonial context to 'indicate a sign of moral protest and political outrage that we ought to at least take seriously, if not embrace as a sign of our critical consciousness.'<sup>72</sup>

Similarly, Simpson takes grounded normativity as a framework of 'Indigenous thought systems, intelligence systems that are continually generated in relationship to place,' a concept that encompasses 'land and waters, plants and animals, and the spiritual world—a peopled cosmos of influencing powers.'<sup>73</sup> My approach resonates within this framework of grounded normativity in its dual attention to the experientiality and emotionality of memory, especially relative to land as an emplaced set of co-generative, flexional relationships that move and change, but retain connections. Relationships between memory and land burgeon in a spirit of natural reason which is in a 'dialogic circle' with 'histories, and sovereignt[ies].'<sup>74</sup> Natural reason encapsulates incommensurable logics and patterns that exist outside of and sometimes beyond monotheistic schemata, evincing the 'tricky flight of ravens, the rush of a kingfisher, moccasin flowers in a storm.'<sup>75</sup> Natural reason

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>73</sup> Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 16; 22.

<sup>74</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 22.

<sup>75</sup> See: Mark Bonta et al., "Intentional Fire-Spreading by 'Firehawk' Raptors in Northern Australia," *Journal of Ethnobiology* 37, no. 4 (2017): 700-718, <https://doi.org/10.2993/0278-0771-37.4.700>. The Alawa and MalakMalak peoples of Northern Australia have told stories for centuries about firehawks spreading conflagrations as they fly. Typically, these narratives have been dismissed as a misunderstanding of correlation; the firehawks hunt prey displaced by bushfires, so they seek blazes that provide easier hunting. They do not *start* the fires, they *follow* them. However, guided by Indigenous scientists, Bonta et al. observed firehawks taking burning sticks in their talons from one fire and dropping them onto dry scrub. This "discovery" is a long-known truth for the Indigenous peoples whose storywork memories were hitherto considered a folkloric misunderstanding of cause and effect; Vizenor, *Native Liberty*, 5.

expresses a set of patterns that are not predictable—at least not to monotheistic models of epistemology. Similarly, *Ocean Story* and *Interior Landscapes* disrupt normalised generic conventions of memory in life writing. As Crystal M. Kurzen notes with specific reference to Indigenous Women’s autobiographies, these generic interruptions ‘turn this genre into a space of witness and activism’ where the listener-reader is entreated to become a moving part of the revolutionary act of emplacement.<sup>76</sup>

One event may be recalled in a plenitude of emotional, geographical, and teleological contexts and thus manifest quite differently than it has done before because ‘the act of imagination is bound up with memory’ and vice versa.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, atemporal memories are themselves changed by these contextual interactions such that the relationships between what was, is, and could be is never settled. The memory is not simply distorted; what happened within that memory changes, sometimes subtly, sometimes drastically and it is in this sense that memory can be approached as transmotional, stressing ‘the transformational aspect of transmotion’ and ‘understanding the process as reciprocal’ in the co-generativity of memory and imagination.<sup>78</sup> In this way, memory becomes a revolutionary tactic that ‘offer[s] opportunities for voicing long suppressed truths’ and dampens ones that have been too sonorous.<sup>79</sup> The (poly)vocality of these reemergent, remembered

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<sup>76</sup> Crystal M. Kurzen, ‘Toward a Native American Women’s Autobiographical Tradition: Genre as Political Practice,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature*, eds. James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 212.

<sup>77</sup> Morrison, ‘The Site of Memory,’ 77.

<sup>78</sup> David Stirrup, *Picturing Worlds: Visuality and Visual Sovereignty in Contemporary Anishinaabe Literature* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2020), 106, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>79</sup> George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 212, ProQuest Ebook Central.

places—evident in the term re-call—supports the coalitional resistance of the prismatic stories that bear them.

Creative memory and emplacement within the environment, as with Silko's emplaced engagement with land, is affective. The environment, particularly in Western discourses of landscape, is racialised in a number of ways and, like the pathways that Silko and Vizenor traverse in their storywork, 'the past has a way of luring curious travelers off the beaten track.'<sup>80</sup> Time and memory *are* landscape(r)s enmeshed with the land by storywork. The frontispiece of *Almanac of the Dead* is an inseparable fusion of land and history, a prime example of 'coded disruption and affirmative refusal through the use of Indigenous aesthetic practices' that adumbrates the novel's thesis.<sup>81</sup> This argument extends into the natural reason evinced throughout *Ocean Story* where atemporal stories of memory deploy sovereign charges wherein '[c]osmology triumphs over chronology.'<sup>82</sup> In turn, the chronologue's territoriality gives up ground as Vizenor and Silko reconceptualise environmental racism by complicating the terms and tenets of its deployment amongst unceded Indigenous sovereignties.

### Mark(et)ing Territory as a Terminal Creed

In the abstracted lexicon of the neo-colonial capitalist paradigm, "territory" describes land as equated with commodity; this understanding is nucleic in the settler imaginary and its sovereign geopolitics. Once a commodity is paid for, few if

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<sup>80</sup> Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 199.

<sup>82</sup> Jace Weaver, *Notes From a Miner's Canary: Essays on the State of Native America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 41, EBSCO eBook Subscription Academic Collection.

any ethical obligations remain outstanding, save for the kind of maintenance or development that can increase the commodity's productivity, or its future price.<sup>83</sup> As Moreton-Robinson attests, the 'United States as a white nation-state cannot exist without land and clearly defined borders; it is the legally defined and asserted territorial sovereignty that provides the context for national identifications of whiteness.'<sup>84</sup> So implemented as a political tool, territories create and perpetuate histories of separation as natural processes. Having established land as cosmologically evacuated, transferrable, and abstract the settler chronologue then sets to work embedding an overriding narrative of ownership and property. Thus, territorial boundaries cleave across people and places to impose material and ideological violence against emplaced Indigenous sovereignties. Justice talks about the cartographic evidence of land parcelling as scars on the land and the sovereign bodies emplaced across the borderlines. And yet, crucially, these scars perdure as creases of resistance that 'tell their own beautiful and terrible truths of continuity.' They may grow more or less vivid as time passes but, either way, 'only living flesh forms scars.'<sup>85</sup>

Land and property refer to substantially different things, regardless of how interchangeably they may appear in everyday parlance, in part because they are subject to different territorial influences. "Territory" comes from the Latin *territorium*. *Terra* simply refers to the land, but the later suffixation "*-orium*" applies a

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<sup>83</sup> Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 26.

<sup>84</sup> Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 51.

<sup>85</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 203.

teleological emphasis, becoming a place where land is *used*. This semantic shift traces the development of the concept of territory as 'not merely a cognate of land' but also as a concentrated 'political technology' with distinctly teleological ends in mind.<sup>86</sup> It embeds a culture of land enclosure, and *territorium* etymologically denotes the fenced land around a settlement, othering whatever falls without.<sup>87</sup> Stuart Elden observes that 'the term territory has an association with fear and violence,' presenting another root for territory in *terrere*—to frighten away from a place.<sup>88</sup> The connotations towards militarised borders are clear; territory is for the taking and defending as a protected subject of private property where communality is reserved for de-peopled national parks. Peter Linebaugh demonstrates that '[c]ommoning is primary to human life.'<sup>89</sup> Yet to the ruling elite of Middle-Ages Europe, the proto-capitalist expropriation of common lands exemplified an (internally contradictory) liberation—not the freedom of equality but the freedom to try and join the winning side of embedded inequality. Couched in the nascent chronologue of segmented linear progressiveness, this slippage obtained ironic tenors in the American settler colonial context. There, the primitive/enlightened dichotomy authorised the same

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<sup>86</sup> Stuart Elden, "Secure the Volume: Vertical Geopolitics and the Depth of Power," *Political Geography* 34 (2013): 35-36, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2012.12.009>.

<sup>87</sup> Although land enclosure beginning in 16<sup>th</sup> century England is normally cast as primary agitator to the shift from communality to commodity, one should look further back. The 1235 Statute of Merton, approved by Henry III and the English barons (many of whom had participated in the rebellion against Henry's father John twenty years earlier that yielded the Magna Carta), provisioned for the aristocracy to enclose common land 'on the condition that sufficient pasture remained for their tenants' (Everard, 8). This legally coagulated land ownership in nascent English law and rearranged hegemonic power dynamics where gauging "sufficiency" fell to the titled landowners.

<sup>88</sup> Stuart Elden, "Land, Terrain, Territory," *Progress in Human Geography* 34, no. 6 (2010): 806-807, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132510362603>. Elden's overarching philosophy on territory—that it is something 'more' than land—is unconvincing. Regardless, his definitional work up to that point holds water.

<sup>89</sup> Peter Linebaugh, *Stop, Thief!: The Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance* (Oakland: PM Press, 2014), 14.

type of paternalistic dispossession that the tenant-farmer and religiously marginalised settlers quitting Western Europe “left behind.”

In Europe, land enclosure emerged as an iterative geopolitical transformation. In the Americas and other colonial theatres, though, it was an abrupt, violent superimposition of incommensurable social dynamics. Though seismic, the commons-to-commodity move in the hearts of empires traces a trajectory. The same cannot be said for colonised lands and peoples that were jammed into conformity with that developmental chronologue. The geopolitical imaginary of the U.S., then, is raised differently; America ‘represents a theory, the theory of [a] market society’ in which class has no *theoretical* bearing over who may own private land, because if ‘property is private, individuals are *free* of traditional feudal duties’ ingrained in class.<sup>90</sup> But the inconsistencies between total intellectual, social, and economic freedom and the tenets of a monotheistic faith system were stubborn contrasts for the burgeoning American colony to reconcile. A thorny dilemma: how to retain Christian faith—indispensable to the legitimacy of land-theft granted by ecclesiastical edicts—when the underlying values associated with colonial expansion were incompatible with the virtues of material modesty? A simple solution: recalibrate those values altogether, such that when ‘[t]he Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation had ended the association of sanctity with poverty’ and ‘acquiring wealth had become a Christian virtue,’ the settler project was ethically

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<sup>90</sup> Wright, *The Wild West*, 2; 5, (italics in original).

vindicated and enshrined a 'terminal creed' with territoriality at the core of its carceral chronologue.<sup>91</sup>

Terminal creeds describe the 'hard rind' of monotheism and the chronologue.<sup>92</sup> Creeds are akin to beliefs; they must be believed by individuals and groups to retain their power. Terminal creeds are thus static mass belief systems of received wisdom that are often perpetuated accidentally. This does not absolve acolytes of terminal creeds, but rather suggests that they can do violence by negligence, epiphenomenally damaging to Indigenous sovereignties. *Ocean Story's* terminal creditors do not *try* to harm Indigenous peoples or places. They are just apathetic to them. Manifest manners, or deliberate methodologies of oppression, are the schematics for these creeds—the preachers to the masses—and manifest manners are the policies of injustice, not the performances. The bundled beliefs that devastate(d) Indigenous sovereignties in the chronologue's past, present, and future are terminal creeds, quotidian normalisations of unjust conditions 'designed to create a perfect crime—a crime where the victims [and many of the perpetrators] are unable to see or name the crime *as a crime*.'<sup>93</sup>

Given time, terminal creeds are self-destructive—a terminal illness in locations that Achille Mbembe calls '*death-worlds*.'<sup>94</sup> Through the extirpation and dislocation of Indigenous engagements with the land that seemed to fail to meet the terminal creed of surplus value, '[s]ocial disaster provided the conditions for the

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<sup>91</sup> Zimring, *Clean and White*, 30, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>92</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 130.

<sup>93</sup> Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 15, (italics in original).

<sup>94</sup> Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 40, <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/39984>, (italics in original).

introduction of the land market' in the Americas far more readily than had been the case back across the Atlantic.<sup>95</sup> *Ocean Story* offers proof positive that all settler capitalism is disaster capitalism or, at the least, it comes with the territory.

So, with that groundwork into the critical field done (or, at least, underway) it is time to move oceanward. Silko's *Ocean Story* is the more traditionally "creative" example of storywork memory of the pair I engage in this chapter, and it is situated discursively with, not within, the territorialised chronologue of Indigenous displacement in the Americas. Articulating 'sovereignty as something that can be asserted outside of autonomously controlled territory,' *Ocean Story's* cuts ideological creases through the still waters of settler sovereignty.<sup>96</sup> And, in doing so, Silko primes listener-readers to be emplaced somewhere between worldviews by revealing glimpses as to where the decolonial elsewhere of Indigenous sovereignties might be, flourishing.

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<sup>95</sup> Linebaugh, *Stop, Thief!*, 242.

<sup>96</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 64.

## Part II: The Ocean

### *Cogito Ergo Somewhere: Memory Remedies to the Market of Territorialism in Ocean Story*

*Ocean Story* is a literary oddity. In it, the author calls 'for nothing less than an epistemological shift' in the settler colonial hegemony that holds Indigenous peoples and their cosmologies at the territorial edges of the state without quite letting go.<sup>97</sup>

In this second part, I read the narrator of *Ocean Story* as a concurrently Indigenous and non-Indigenous agent engaging in emplacement through dynamic reciprocity in the territorially confounding context of coastal areas. By working through Silko's own memories and the memories of the Tohono O'odham and Comcaac peoples whose sovereignties are indivisible from the land, *Ocean Story* repositions the chronologue and its property-centric calculations of land-value amongst Indigenous worldviews that rebuke ownership. Thus, settler sovereignty is itself emplaced by Indigenous sovereignties at the nation-state border between Mexico and the U.S., and the regnant power dynamics between these polities are de-naturalised, desanctified.

Set in the early 2000s, the weight of 9/11 hangs heavy over *Ocean Story*.<sup>98</sup>

The Interpreter and her obverse partner, the algebraically abstract 'X', relocate from

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<sup>97</sup> Catherine Rainwater, "'Maybe Einstein was Part Yaqui': Deposing Thought in Works by Endrezze and Silko," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 26, no. 1 (2014): 3, <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/539872>.

<sup>98</sup> Silko seems to subscribe to an unequivocal condemnation of the illegality and inhumanity of the U.S. governmental response to 9/11, aspects of which have elsewhere been comprehensively shown

Tucson. Picking up and packing up where *Almanac* left off two decades earlier in Room 1212, X and the Interpreter move to a town cryptically dubbed Puerto Z, somewhere along the Eastern shores of the Gulf of California.<sup>99</sup> The pair depart Tucson due to X's dread of federal persecution as an Algerian-born mechanic who happened to service the vehicles of CIA agents and 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta at the same time. Fearing loose-end status in a bloodthirsty, conspiratorially minded United States, X purchases a beach house on the Mexican coast and sets to flipping shoreside parcels of property where 'the ocean touches the land, [as] humans want to be there and will pay a great deal of money to be there.'<sup>100</sup>

A spiritual successor to *Almanac of the Dead*, the novella was released electronically to critical crickets in 2011 and has garnered virtually no substantial engagement in the decade since. On the surface it is a novella that has no obvious place in Silko's bibliography; I have had to print out my own copy, and the lack of physical copies of *Ocean Story* ironically brings forward the tension I traced between the concurrent physicality and digitality of Lecha's encoded almanac. *Ocean Story* can be obtained from few sources: direct from publishers Odyssey Editions' website; through Barnes and Noble's discontinued "Nook" service; or via Amazon Kindle (the latter two erroneously list the novella's title as "Oceanstory"). Stranger yet, none of the platforms synopsis the novella, providing an abridged author's biography in lieu. For a MacArthur fellow with double-digit book-length works of criticism devoted

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by Weaver to be in contravention of the Fifth and Sixth Amendments to the Constitution (Weaver, 95-120).

<sup>99</sup> Likely Puerto Peñasco, Sonora, or nearby.

<sup>100</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 211.

to her storywork, *Ocean Story* received—and continues to receive—an astonishing dearth of exposure.

Silko troubles national and coastal borders in *Ocean Story* to highlight the mutability of land in Indigenous cosmologies and the ways that memories safeguard those lands as unassailable sites of sovereignties that elude settled temporal rhythms and territorial restrictions. Peter Ballantyne Cree podcaster Rick Harp observes that the parallels between environmental racism and genocide are clear when one considers that ‘genocide is a *climate*, it’s not a single event, it’s aggregate in nature.’<sup>101</sup> In this context, the similarly “slow-motion” disaster of Indigenous genocide is shown to be profoundly interlinked through by discourses of environmental racism to the conversion of Indigenous lands into real estate. *Ocean Story*’s transmotional critique of territorialism ripostes this monotheistic notion of marketable space, which binds and constricts the mobility of Indigenous peoples. By remembering atemporal versions of the novella’s setting, Silko limns the ‘slow violence’ of creeping territories ‘that occurs gradually and out of sight’ as part of a the ‘hushed havoc’ of settler sovereignty’s self-perpetuation.<sup>102</sup>

In the opening sections of the novella, Silko traces the protracted history of the Comcaac people who ‘belonged to the entire Gulf of California; they made the beaches and fresh water estuaries of the Gulf their home for at least 10,000 years

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<sup>101</sup> Rick Harp, Kim TallBear, and Candis Callison, “The G Word – Why Canada and Genocide Belong in the Same Sentence,” *Media Indigena* 165 (12 June 2019), podcast, 23:50, <https://mediaindigena.libsyn.com/ep-165-the-g-wordwhy-canada-and-genocide-belong-in-the-same-sentence>.

<sup>102</sup> Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2; 6.

before the Europeans appeared.<sup>103</sup> Silko foregrounds the incommensurability between the way that the Comcaac belong to the land in a reciprocal mode of natural reason, and the proprietary sense that accompanies the land as belonging to imperial and later settler invaders. Reviel Netz invokes a territorial triumvirate of '[p]roperties, prisons, borders; it is through the prevention of motion that space enters history' as a technology of containment and marginalisation.<sup>104</sup> Silko takes this idea and runs with it, recounting the steady Spanish theft of Indigenous people and land since 1662, from initial conflicts, to enslavement, through to the reapportionment of Indigenous lands to poor landless settlers. In doing so, she illustrates how the 'logics of white possession and the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty are materially and discursively linked' so that the former relies upon the latter and is thus broadly subtractive.<sup>105</sup> Most importantly, Silko gestures towards the role of settler-mandated territory as catalytic to this dispossessive turn. In *Ocean Story's* decolonial memory this geopolitical technology and its power are unspooled in a coastal environment that operates by logics of natural reason and so intrinsically resists metes-and-bounds territorialisation.

### **X and Puerto Z: Axial Axiology and Crossed Lines in the Sand**

*Ocean Story* strikes dissimilar tones to *Almanac*. Silko pivots from the maelstrom of 'terminator gene mentalit[ies]' in *Almanac* to an ostensibly calmer outlook.<sup>106</sup> This

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<sup>103</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 156.

<sup>104</sup> Reviel Netz, *Barbed Wire: An Ecology of Modernity* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), xi, EBSCO eBook Subscription Academic Collection.

<sup>105</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xiii, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>106</sup> Elizabeth Ammons, *Brave New Words: How Literature Will Save the Planet* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 161.

calm veneer, however, conceals a powerful political depth charge, mirroring the mercuriality of the coastal place-world that hosts the story. Not content with disrupting Western narrative assumptions, *Ocean Story* retrospectively troubles the volatility of *Almanac*, positioning the two in a co-creative frame of frictional transmotion. If in 'ethical terms it might also be useful to think of transmotion as the condition of encounter in which connection does not lead to subsumption or absorption of the other' as David Stirrup suggests, then the surge and seethe of natural reason that Silko emplaces at the ever-shifting lines of encounter between surf and sand illustrates a transmotional ethic of co-constitution.<sup>107</sup> The third-person perspective utilised in *Almanac* that demands of listener-readers' 'radical patience' and 'specular power' in their role as 'circulating witness,' is jettisoned.<sup>108</sup> Silko instead adopts a single first-person perspective that guides us through the whole story and emplaces Indigenous memories *and* suppressed settler memories throughout.

The protagonist—or, as I prefer to think of her, the Interpreter—of the story remains unnamed and she doesn't neatly represent a singular character (though Silko and her memories are clearly a strong influence). In an adjacent context of re-restor(y)ing histories of Indigenous resistance against the monolithic dominant accounts of King Philip's War (or the First Indian War), Brooks argues that the lands Indigenous peoples inhabit are places of individual and communal memory and recollection. For Brooks and her community, history is 'a cyclical activity of recalling

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<sup>107</sup> Stirrup, *Picturing Worlds*, 75.

<sup>108</sup> David L. Moore, "Silko's Blood Sacrifice: The Circulating Witness in *Almanac of the Dead*," in *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Collection of Critical Essays*, eds. Louise K. Barnett and James L. Thorson (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999): 151; 176; 149.

and relaying in which we are collectively engaged.<sup>109</sup> I extrapolate this mode of recollective, prismatic history and propose that such instances of entangling Indigenous atemporal accounts legitimate one another alongside the settler chronologue, ‘layering’ memories over monotheism to emplace Indigenous polities.<sup>110</sup> In this sense, the role of *Ocean Story’s* narrator—the re-caller—is cognate to that of an interpreter, a role which demands re-vision more than repetition or recital. An interpreter’s work is fundamentally transformative; an interpreter must carry meaning across from one place to another with a concurrent awareness of historical “accuracy” and contextual conceptual dynamism. Thus, one can perceive ‘the transformative power of knowledge’ as the deployment of Indigenous epistemological sovereignties ‘unleashed through movement, kinetics or action.’<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, a compelling interpreter must accept that something will be lost in the translation. This is not necessarily a shortcoming. What is lost may be outweighed by what is gained, and in Geniusz’ words ‘Indians are nothing if not a pragmatic people. They do not keep what is not valuable.’<sup>112</sup> For *Ocean Story*, it is best to think of the storyteller in this way, as the Interpreter of the creative memory that the storywork emplaces. In it, one is privy to a singular first-person perspective which relocates the listener-reader in direct discussion with the Interpreter, contradistinctive to *Almanac* in which the listener-reader was jolted about in the panoptic position of the circulating witness. We never learn the Interpreter’s given name, but it is quickly

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<sup>109</sup> Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip’s War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 5, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>110</sup> Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 202.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>112</sup> Geniusz, *Plants Have So Much To Give Us*, 18.

made clear that this detail is of trivial impact on the story's power. As Vizenor's constitutional exiles did in *Treaty Shirts*, *Ocean Story's* Interpreter puts both audience and story in place, and the recurrent question of communal "where," as opposed to an individualistic "who," stays paramount throughout.<sup>113</sup>

As the novella unfolds, it becomes evident that the Interpreter is one of the most faithful manifestations that Silko has placed of herself in a story to date. In addition to the atypical singular perspective, the Interpreter reels off several coincident details that track with Silko's life. These include a parental unit of 'school teachers and secret drunks after school,' some years lived in southeast Alaska, fleeting work as a substitute teacher, and a fractious relationship with manuscript editors who 'complained the protagonist [who we can reflexively read as Silko herself] went through her life aimlessly.'<sup>114</sup> So inflected by personal authorial experience is this character that the generic status of *Ocean Story* becomes contested. The listener-reader is asked—productively—where slippages between creativity and memory occur, and what memories beyond the personal Silko draws from and details in the creases between. By thus deploying herself as a fictional character, Silko asserts a coalitional Indigenous cosmological sovereignty over the emplaced memories of the settler borderlands between Sonora and Arizona. The

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<sup>113</sup> I use terrain to refer to "dry" land. However, when I talk about Indigenous land(s) I encompass waterways as well, adopting Catherine Rainwater's stance that 'ocean waters animate both landscape and inscape' ("Maybe Einstein was Part Yaqui," 17).

<sup>114</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, locs. 22-43. Simon & Schuster had to press very hard indeed to edit *Almanac* down to 763 pages from over 1,500 at its peak. Then, *Ocean Story* was released via Odyssey Editions—essentially a self-publishing imprint for established authors—because Silko and her editors at Viking clashed over publishing another story before the novel she is technically still contracted to deliver to them. As of 2020, nine years on, *Blue Sevens* (if that is still its name) remains unreleased, perhaps unwritten.

descriptive naming conventions of Silko's other works lend a clarifying frame here. *Almanac of the Dead* and *Gardens in the Dunes* both bear the subtitle: 'A Novel.' *The Turquoise Ledge* is designated as 'A Memoir.' These identifiers indicate the generic form that each respective piece of writing takes. Meanwhile, *Ceremony*, as Silko has vehemently restated, is precisely that—a ceremony.<sup>115</sup> Likewise, *Ocean Story* carries no further classification and is also exactly what it claims to be *sans* caveat. It is a story about, with, and for the ocean as much as it is a story of the ocean, and Indigenous stories that remember atemporal places 'do not stop; instead they gain a particular urgency not suited to belletristic literature.'<sup>116</sup> In this generically liminal context, then, *Ocean Story* resists with a Vizenorean ethic of 'natural motion and survivance, not cultural denouement and victimry,' that is augmented by refusing Western generics to allow for the immanence of creative memory.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, the novella's immurement from commercial editors is reflected in the lack of frontmatter, meaning that Silko's own name is not literally distanced from the body of the narrative by copyright notices, intentionally blank pages, ISBN numbers and the like. Her name is followed immediately by the first chapter marker, signifying the inseparability of story and storyteller in the dynamic of Indigenous storywork. This is not the same as claiming a monolithic authority *over* the story and its contents as much as it is emplacing the author *within* the story, amidst the memories.

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<sup>115</sup> See Silko's 1977 interview with Dexter Fisher in Ellen Arnold's *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko* (2000).

<sup>116</sup> Stephanie Fitzgerald, *Native Women and Land: Narratives of Dispossession and Resurgence* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015), 90, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>117</sup> Gerald Vizenor, "The Unmissable: Transmotion in Native Stories and Literature," *Transmotion* 1, no. 1, (2015): 65, <https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/03/tm.143>.

Silko has a knack for embodying destructive tendencies in repulsive characters, and the axially named X is a personified compression of settler society's ideology of territorial dispossession. Catherine Rainwater argues that naming the character thus 'is Silko's way of turning Western strategies of identity erasure back against the colonisers. It is an act of unnamng that destroys temporal and spatial boundaries to a point, but there is deeper nuance at work.<sup>118</sup> X is a stand-in for an abstract societal value, yes, but his granular anonymity contains a multitude of significances that mirror the epistemological crush of the monotheistic worldview. His moniker is emblematic of the sordid history of settler colonial land "acquisition" from Indigenous peoples whose assent was obtained duplicitously. As Lyons has it, an 'x-mark is a sign of consent in a context of coercion... a sign of contamination' that 'compelled Indians to change how they lived' in relation to the land when non-Indigenous peoples imposed a proprietary, property-centric cosmology.<sup>119</sup> Coherent with this conceptual lineage of duress, X is obsessed with marking and defending "his" territory, possessing the 'banty rooster quality' of 'a small man who tried to be imposing' and 'make himself sound more important than he was.'<sup>120</sup> Predictably, X takes centre-stage as one of Silko's most reprehensible characters—no small matter—and a manifestation of exploitative desmotioin constricting Indigenous places with his 'twisted sense of confidence' in the sanctity of real estate.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Rainwater, "'Maybe Einstein was Part Yaqui,'" 19.

<sup>119</sup> Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 1-2, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>120</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, locs. 40-43.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 216.

The hubris of Menardo who presumed to insure clients against the universe; the avarice of Trigg who sought to convert his illicit blood harvesting into a shopping mall experience; the aloof conceit of Leah Blue who contrived to dig a New Venice into the Arizonan desert—X does not compare of to any one of these monstrous characters insofar as the luridness of their violent mores. His deviousness is quieter, but this more muffled characterisation of neo and settler colonial practices builds upon *Almanac*'s critique via that very juxtaposition. Silko observed in one essay that radical 'comprehension need not come from obvious catastrophes... but through more subtle indicators,' flexing some similar critical muscles to Hannah Arendt in her exploration of the 'banality of evil.'<sup>122</sup> And where *Almanac* deals in bombast and visceral extremes almost too abhorrent to believe, *Ocean Story* shows the coalescence of these attitudes to resemble something more ordinary, more camouflaged in a figure like X—he himself a subtle sign of ruin. As a monotheistic avatar of settler greed, X is chillingly believable.

Puerto Z is the abstracted place-world full of '[r]etired gringo drunks' and 'hippie bar flies' that is created and sustained by X and his cadastral cadre of 'real estate crooks' as they continue in the settler colonial custom of Indigenous displacement.<sup>123</sup> The Interpreter recounts the torrid past of the region which was subject to land-grabs agnate to those perpetrated in the U.S. and Canadian settler frontiers. After the 1910 revolution that unseated most of Mexico's landowning elite, Lázaro Cárdenas' government established a land redistribution system that gave

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<sup>122</sup> Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 132; Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), 252.

<sup>123</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, locs. 304; 214.

land to groups of formerly landless people or *ejidarios*. This reapportioned approximately half of Mexico's land over fifty years, remapping the entire country.<sup>124</sup> The shine on this egalitarian movement dulls when one considers the consequences for displaced Indigenous populations; many *ejidos* were allotted parcels of land upon which Indigenous communities lived, including the Comcaac, Tohono O'odham, and Hia-Ced O'odham (the loose basis for *Gardens in the Dunes'* Sand Lizard People who, in 2013, were enfolded into the Tohono O'odham Nation).<sup>125</sup> This was exacerbated by the Gadsden Purchase of 1854 which was, as Jeremy Black's obtuse summary goes, the acquisition for '\$10 million of 45,535 square miles of land, *mostly uninhabited*, south of the Gila River' from Mexico by the United States, further fracturing the Tohono O'odham.<sup>126</sup> Where the story of Indigenous dispossession in North America often fixes upon forced or pressurised dislocation, the Tohono O'odham were dislocated by territorial recalibration whilst staying put, displaced in place.<sup>127</sup> Of course where two separate settler nations tessellate with a shared cosmology, other memories of the way things went are flattened out. In abstract

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<sup>124</sup> Eric P. Perramond, "The Rise, Fall, and Reconfiguration of the Mexican 'Ejido,'" *Geographical Review* 98, no. 3 (2008): 357, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40377336>.

<sup>125</sup> It's significant that the Interpreter also fails to give a flawless account here, much as mainstream history does; Cárdenas galvanised the *ejido* system after taking power in 1934, not in the late 1920s, for instance. Although I have no guess as to whether this is intentional misinformation or a genuine error on the part of the author, it's a slip that reaffirms the importance of a 'communal truth' that complicates history with 'bundles of other stories' (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 31; 30).

<sup>126</sup> Jeremy Black, *Fighting for America: The Struggle for Mastery in North America, 1519-1871* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 260, (emphasis mine). Black neglects to note that the "inhabited" territory included in the re-bordering deal was occupied by the Tohono O'odham, nor does he interrogate the loaded consequences of unilaterally deciding what 'uninhabited' actually means in non-Western contexts. For further explanation of this land theft and its repercussions, see Perramond's 'The Rise, Fall, and Reconfiguration of the Mexican "Ejido,"' Ned Blackhawk's *Violence over the Land*, and William Kiser's *Turmoil on the Rio Grande*.

<sup>127</sup> Note that seasonal migration between what is modern-day Sonora and Arizona was also nominally foreclosed on a more local scale.

terms, the inhabited portion of the Gadsden territory is admittedly minimal. When one remembers that the Tohono O'odham community and their atemporal sovereign polity are/were emplaced on that land, however, it is obvious that the deal carved not only Tohono O'odham homelands but also their people into discrete categories. 'Viewed as desolate, lifeless, and worthless places,' writes Otjen, desert territories 'extend the settler-colonial project by obscuring present Indigenous inhabitation... naturalizing the settler state' and its geography.<sup>128</sup>

It is hard to conceive of a more efficient way to achieve this sovereignty swap than by replacing a divided people within new nations. By this territorial dissection, their designation as American or Mexican before Tohono O'odham, depending on which side of the new borderline they happened to live on, became primary. Correspondingly, their indigeneity was tacitly reduced to a secondary quality of their primary American/Mexican identity, tolerated at best and legally redacted at worst. The Tohono O'odham people were legally, politically, and socially engulfed by settler nationalism and their sovereignty was forgotten as standard. The subsequent establishment of a reservation on the American side in 1917, without equivalent on the Mexican side, entrenched 'the sense of being a people apart,' a division which has broadly compounded in the interceding years.<sup>129</sup>

The slow-but-sure construction of a U.S.-Mexico border wall accelerated under the auspices of the Trump Administration, heralding a new phase in what Western

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<sup>128</sup> Otjen, "Indigenous Radical Resurgence," 135.

<sup>129</sup> Jeffrey M. Schulze, *Are we not Foreigners Here? Indigenous Nationalism in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 6. Schulze does overplay the totality of this cultural severance. Though impeded, relationships between the northern and southern members of the community have taken on a sense of social disparity but not distance.

Shoshone historian Ned Blackhawk has called the 'pandemic relations of violence' installed and propagated by territorial militarism.<sup>130</sup> In February 2020, Tohono O'odham tribal government officials and Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) revealed that the Trump Administration had commenced planned detonations on the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, a sacred site which houses a number of confirmed burial grounds.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, The Wall promises to ravage the natural ecosystems along the border and disrupt treaty provisions for equitable water flow in the Rio Grande. Furthermore, this reinforcement of settler territories would either severely complicate or put paid entirely to a patchwork of formal and informal arrangements that historically allowed a waning modicum of free movement for the Tohono O'odham across the border.<sup>132</sup> Where this once meant traversing the border practically anywhere so long as it was directly to or from the reservation on the U.S. side, tribal citizens must now travel distances that can be physically prohibitive to

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<sup>130</sup> Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 157.

<sup>131</sup> Ryan Deveraux, "Trump Is Blowing Up a National Monument in Arizona to Make Way for the Border Wall," *The Intercept*, February 6, 2020, [https://theintercept.com/2020/02/06/border-wall-construction-organ-pipe/?fbclid=IwAR1UuGDY1yEL9mIFEEjq1VtyuiwYvUYt62eApOug52Jltcuag952qtV8R\\_U](https://theintercept.com/2020/02/06/border-wall-construction-organ-pipe/?fbclid=IwAR1UuGDY1yEL9mIFEEjq1VtyuiwYvUYt62eApOug52Jltcuag952qtV8R_U). The Border Patrol invited press to the demolition whilst Tohono O'odham Nation Chair Ned Norris Jr. testified in Washington D.C. against the desecration (Deveraux, February 27, 2020.) Also amongst Norris' concerns is the state's destruction of huge numbers of federally protected saguaro cactuses, vital to traditional Tohono O'odham food sovereignty (Hennessy-Fiske; Booth).

<sup>132</sup> The International Boundary Water Commission, co-organised by the U.S. and Mexican governments to oversee U.S.-Mexico water rights from cross-border waterways followed the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848) which officially ended hostilities between states ceded Mexican land north of the Rio Grande. The treaty demands that construction of any structure that could affect the flow of the Rio Grande alter its flood plain be mutually sanctioned. As several studies and flood events around pre-existing private border walls in Juárez, El Paso, and Lukeville have revealed, the impacts of a wall on the Rio Grande would be substantial and violate treaty agreements. Akin to the countless treaties that the U.S. has brokered with Indigenous peoples however, these parchment barriers mean what the settler state decides they mean in the 'terminal creed of treaty discourse, the treaty as document of containment, in which the land and the people it sustains are measured, arranged, and subdivided' (Stirrup, 80.) The line between formal and informal border agreements, then, is as concrete as the river border itself.

reach one of the official checkpoint funnels. And in the climate of the Trump presidency's separation of families at the Mexican border, '[t]oday's walls replace yesterday's distances; but both barriers and distance underscore separation' in territorial understandings of space.<sup>133</sup> This compartmentalising and crushing of Indigenous communities between exogenous settler states is a strain of environmental racism at work. It amounts to an exploded instance of the same devastating territorialism that Silko critiques throughout *Ocean Story* on a more narratively manageable scale.

### **Abstract Violence and Roadworks Ahead**

As Linebaugh writes, there 'is a violence in abstraction,' and it is viciously evinced in X's disposition towards the place he finds himself in as he perpetrates all manner of disfigurements on the beach that is 'sacred to the Tohono O'odham.'<sup>134</sup> Pulverising rocks into gravel for roadworks and removing tonnes of sand from the beach, X is not concerned with the land as a place to live, nor as a site of life. His perception of the land is purely commercial, 'more interested in making a road to the beach property than he was in fixing the house in the sand hills. He wanted to be able to drive the jeep up to the beach front from the main road in case he got buyers for the lots.'<sup>135</sup> Pity is, X is chasing bad money with bad money, and as he refuses to let himself be emplaced in this spot by the sea his money dries up fast.

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<sup>133</sup> Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present*, 90.

<sup>134</sup> Linebaugh, *Stop, Thief!*, 91; Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 225.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 239.

Haemorrhaging capital in pursuit of profit, X's mounting anger with his business partners, the Interpreter, and the land itself escalates uncontrollably. As a paragon of temporally carceral monotheism, X is most aggrieved at his surroundings' continued resilience against being commercially abstracted and territorialised. The tides don't keep to the contractors' schedule and the dunes won't bear the weight of the bulldozers. Put simply: that is not the deal the settler chronologue promises. Indeed, X is perennially paranoid about being on the losing end of a deal because of the loser/winner dichotomy, baked into the settler dogma of territory, that he adheres to so stringently. X's endeavours exemplify how '[e]xtraction and assimilation go together' in ideological terms, because the 'act of extraction removes all of the relationships that give whatever is being extracted [— in this case, value—] meaning.'<sup>136</sup> The Interpreter relays later that X's calamities are karmic retribution from another life, yet it seems equally likely that it is the desmotional exploitation of *this* life that is redoubled and revisited upon him within the moral riptides of natural reason.<sup>137</sup>

Silko identifies the coast as a particularly dynamic site of resistance because it is structurally incompatible with stasis, a steady constant that is nonetheless volatile. The transmotional geography of restless coastlines revitalise the place(s) that X attempts to devitalise by acting upon his terminal territorial creeds.<sup>138</sup> The road that X wants to build is desmotion in action—a behaviour that enables defined routes of

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<sup>136</sup> Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 75.

<sup>137</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 371.

<sup>138</sup> See Fiona McCormack, *Private Oceans: The Enclosure and Marketisation of the Seas* (London: Pluto Press, 2017) for an introductory account of the unique challenges that accompany the capitalistic territorialisation of the oceans.

movement with capitalistic profit, resembling to how the Gadsden Purchase ruptured Indigenous sovereignties to “trailblaze” a southern transcontinental railroad. The plots X acquires are effectively stolen with legal acrobatics that are, in fact, only agile in the context of proprietary contracts. He becomes obsessed with driving ‘out to the beach to look at the shoreline to consider how to subdivide the beach’ in the most lucrative parcels possible.<sup>139</sup> When X purchases the tract, the land has already been altered by the *ejidarios* who managed the territory. Years prior, the ‘dunes on the property were bulldozed, loaded and taken by the contractors who built the resort hotels and beach condos in town. Without the protective dunes, the gulf waters were slowly circling behind the beach front and reclaiming the tidal lagoon.’<sup>140</sup> X consistently labours to sanitise the environment, as do most of the denizens of Puerto Z, ‘populated by people from other places’ who are set against being emplaced by the Sonoran shoreline. They march out with brooms daily even though ‘the sand drifted relentlessly into all the dwellings no matter how much sweeping was done.’<sup>141</sup> Typical of the settler colonial propensity to deny complexity in the places they find themselves in favour of reforming them, X fixates on improving the land, harnessing its capital potential by snuffing out the dynamic caprice of natural reason. In denying the imbrication of places, or, insisting on singular territorial boundaries between places, X and the worldview he evinces performs acts of severance: between himself and the land, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous polities, and between cosmologies. The lines on his maps rise up into partitions

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<sup>139</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 255.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, locs. 240-244.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, locs. 263; 343.

instead of digging down into creases. It is this multivalent severance that the Interpreter's ethic of emplacement works to upset as Silko's storywork is done.

In pursuit of improvement X employs a friend of Sondra, his realtor. He hires the "professor"—whose discipline remains murky—to survey the land and design the optimal route for a new road to bisect across the dunes for access purposes. The engineering appears sound; contractors charge \$10,000 to haul in huge boulders from the nearby mountains and 'raided the beach property south of X's property for sand' in order to construct a dike of 'steel culverts to allow the high tide to flow through to the small salt lagoon.'<sup>142</sup> Soon after completion, a great deal of sand is ironically "stolen" from X's property, tell-tale tyre tracks left behind by industrial machinery on the dike road that X himself commissioned for ease of access. The theme of revisited theft (or, alternatively, the undergirding axiom of capitalism) is one that Silko has employed without fail in her works since the colonial witchery of *Ceremony*. This witchery is a behavioural energy that is synonymous with the dichotomous logic structures of imperial, settler, and neo colonialism. Unsurprisingly, then, X's literal land theft is recursively inflicted upon him. What's more, this desmotional payback of manifest manners is ultimately compounded by a subsequent flood of natural reason.

The Interpreter tells that just weeks after the road is finished, a waning hurricane passes through. It is not destructive enough to cause substantial damage, but quite enough to reshape the countenance of the land such that X 'did not

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., loc. 247

recognize the beach. The storm surge filled the lagoon behind the house site to within twenty feet. There was no trace of the dike that held the road or the two metal culverts or even the huge black boulders.<sup>143</sup> In trying to sever and subdivide this inherently, perpetually shifting place between the ocean and the shore, X's machinations are proven antithetical to natural reason and the intractable way this liminal place forecloses rigid territories. His understanding of his surroundings is exclusively progressive, and X ignores the atemporal densities that catalyse Indigenous emplacement in the land—ignores that '[f]looding waters were a cautious gift' in O'odham cosmology, not a challenge.<sup>144</sup> It is not that X abjures change, only that he expects changes to be governable and monodirectional in keeping with the spirit of the settler chronologue. Thus, he typifies 'a relationship with nature that precludes a speaking world' and, in turn, a listening one, too.<sup>145</sup> For X, land is no more than territory inasmuch as is an abstract entity of a calculable axiology, incompatible with transmotion and natural reason. Channelling Menardo's unbowed faith in Universal Insurance against the 'great convulsions' and 'monstrous havoc' of the market<sup>146</sup>—equity-driven capitalism's highest hypocrisy—X is most enraged by his realtor's nebulous failure to pre-empt this disaster. X 'talked about killing the Professor first, and then Sondra second because,' inexcusably, they neglected to warn him that storms exist.<sup>147</sup> The Interpreter, however, has listened to the memories

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., loc. 259.

<sup>144</sup> Zepeda, *Ocean Power*, 3.

<sup>145</sup> Christopher Manes, "Nature and Silence," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 25.

<sup>146</sup> David McNally, *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires, and Global Capitalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 151.

<sup>147</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 259.

of the Indigenous peoples of the region. She has been emplaced by them and takes satisfaction in letting X's aggrandized sandcastles topple.

While X pursues his Sisyphean struggle against the ocean, the Interpreter is tasked with translating real estate contracts and business agreements from Spanish to English for X's new properties in town. She quickly finds herself irked, disinterested, and feeling 'like [she] had narcolepsy.'<sup>148</sup> Her enervation in the face of these documents signals the holistic lassitude that monotheorism tries to foist upon variant Indigenous worldviews, the numbness it induces. In protest, the Interpreter refuses complicity in the machinations of the property market that has ravaged the Indigenous peoples of the Sonoran region and their lands. Related to Simpson's arguments for the potential of generative refusal, Kimmerer claims that '[r]efusal to participate is a moral choice,' and the Interpreter's ethical go-slow evolves from such a refusal into active sabotage—her decolonial praxis stems from an altemporal rhythm.<sup>149</sup> The Interpreter explains that she 'finally invented my own versions of the contract and agreements with a legalese vocabulary that sounded like lawyers' jargon and finished off with many "whereases" and whereofs" [sic],' comfortable in the knowledge that X wouldn't know the difference until he tried to sell.<sup>150</sup> This act itself speaks to a commensurate decolonisation and potential indigenisation of the broader legal schemata of settler nation-states, where '[d]ecolonizing law requires both recognition and repudiation' because 'simultaneous operations of law may take

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., loc. 312. Note that narcolepsy derives from the Greek νάρκη (narkē) meaning 'numbness.'

<sup>149</sup> Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 178; Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 7.

<sup>150</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 486.

place in a single area, across epistemological and ontological frameworks.<sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, the legal mechanics of settler colonial states are entrenched for now, and this framework of governance 'produces a way of thinking – a grammar – which embeds itself in every attempt to change it.'<sup>152</sup> The work that the Interpreter does *for* the moment, then, is subversive as she strives to undermine X as an individual and a settler value. Reflecting the esoteric inarticulacy of commercial property law, Silko reaffirms that the territorial construction of the land plots has little bearing on the land itself and the longer scope of that land as a place through time. Thus, it does not engulf the atemporal memories that help emplace Indigenous sovereignties within those lands. Even if 'land is recast as property, place becomes exchangeable, saleable, and steal-able,' and the settler colonial paradigm prevails for the time being, the Interpreter knows that alternative relationships to land are not necessarily subsumed as a result.<sup>153</sup> Thus, in contra-territorial and atemporal terms, Silko resists a clear story-line, and thickens the plot.

### **Tidialectic Interpretations of Walking Dunes and the Great Black Whale**

As with different formulations of sovereignties, there are cosmological wrinkles between emplaced land as ongoing verbal motion and action and territory as possessively nominal. Edward Casey uses an adjacent method to conclude that the hierarchical relationship between Space (as an upper-case universal form) and place

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<sup>151</sup> Shiri Pasternak, "Jurisdiction and Settler Colonialism: Where do Laws Meet?," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 23, no. 2 (2014): 147-148, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cls.2014.5>.

<sup>152</sup> Bonita Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 25

<sup>153</sup> Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*, 64.

(as one of many lower-case spatial particulars) insisted upon by the cognitive spatio-temporal legacy of the Enlightenment are similarly inflected by hegemonic monotheorist logics. Where the metaphysics of monotheistic rational philosophy position place below the overarching form of Space in an order of hypostatized universals, this extreme logic travels to its logical extreme. In this conceptual mode of control, the idea 'that places are the determinations of an already existing monolith of Space has become an article of scientific faith' which, once identified, transmutes into scientific fact.<sup>154</sup> As a derivative concept of Newtonian physics, Space thus becomes timeless and sterile, 'divorced from time. This view generates ways of making sense of the world as a "realm of stasis", well-defined, fixed and without politics.'<sup>155</sup> In this formulation, Space is isolated from its inhabitants, unaffected by the peculiarities and particularities of the 'crucial interaction between body, place, and *motion*' that accompanies the emplaced existence of people in specific, non-fungible environments.<sup>156</sup> If '[p]lace is a way of knowing, of experiencing and relating to the world and with others,'<sup>157</sup> then this kind of Space facilitates the avoidance of such interactions. If one agrees with Veracini's earlier claim that settler oppression hinges on the society's imagining that system of oppression into being, then the ontological disjunct becomes stark.<sup>158</sup> Just as the Newtonian formulation of Nature as calculable maxims sapped the vitality and variety of nature, the abstraction of

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<sup>154</sup> Edward S. Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," in *Senses of Place*, eds. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 14.

<sup>155</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Zed Books, 2012), 55.

<sup>156</sup> Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place," 23.

<sup>157</sup> Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 61.

<sup>158</sup> Veracini, *Settler-Colonialism*, 64.

Space supersedes the lower-case concept of spaces which, crucially, can overlap without being hierarchically arranged. In fabricating a superfluity of Space as an infinite abstract concept, the fragility of the spaces and places that Indigenous peoples inhabit is rendered theoretically subordinate in the dominant discourse of monotheorism.

Against the grain of X's presumed mastery, the Interpreter's understanding of fluctuating place—considering the ocean and the land as co-generative elements of the novella's emplacement—becomes a strident espousal of Indigenous land-based cosmologies in which 'people make a place as much as the place makes them.'<sup>159</sup> Although ultimately a grounding force, this storied emplacement works by first disorienting the reader, particularly the reader that hails from a background within the dominant paradigms of the West and subscribes to 'the burdens of conceptual reference.'<sup>160</sup> X marks his spot in Puerto Z and aspires to have it anchored in a semblance of temporal, territorial, tangible permanence, evincing the ossifying tenets of monotheorism and the chronologue. Meanwhile, the Interpreter makes and is made by the transmotional charge which oscillates between land and sea, memories and histories as she both emplaces and is herself emplaced.

Elizabeth DeLoughrey develops and adapts Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite's 'tidalectic' philosophy to provide a germane critical lens. She treats 'tidalectics as a dynamic and shifting relationship between land and sea' which

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<sup>159</sup> Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 2000), 187.

<sup>160</sup> Gerald Vizenor *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 71.

activates a 'limitless vocabulary' that deviates from territorially based geo-thinking.<sup>161</sup> This notion places emphases on the forces of whorled motion and vitality inherent to shifting ideological creases and dovetails into a discussion of entangled sovereignties. Synthesising the dialectic drive toward knowledge-production with the rip and reach of the tides, DeLoughrey indirectly articulates the affective role of something like natural reason as well as the spirit of dynamic reciprocity that destabilises epistemological hierarchies:

The ocean's perpetual movement is radically decentering; it resists attempts to fix a locus of history. Focusing on seascape rather than landscape as the fluid space of historical production allows us to complicate the nation state, which encodes a rigid hierarchy of race, class, gender, religion, and ethnicity for its representative subjects.<sup>162</sup>

Admittedly, a laser focus on seascape *rather* than land is almost as critically confining as the converse. Yet the broad decentring undercurrent is exactly what Silko's Interpreter gestures toward throughout her storywork of imaginative memory. She returns time and again to the motif of vitality in and of places—the 'heaving, shivering, breathing, always moving' ocean as a form of land and an agent of ontological and epistemological complication against the immobilising pincers of monotheism and chronologue.<sup>163</sup>

Again, one might think of the fizz where wave cuts into sand before receding as a co-constitutive crease akin to the ideological creases I have highlighted throughout. Tohono O'odham poet Ofelia Zepeda reinforces the concomitance of torsional atemporality that constitute ocean and the Sonoran deserts as places *that*

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<sup>161</sup> DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots*, 1-2; 227.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>163</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 274.

*emplace*. In her collection *Ocean Power*, where 'poems and memories run into each other,' Zepeda evinces the lash of sand in the air as '[m]oving debris that is only moments old, / debris that is hundreds of years old,' and similarly muddles the temporality of the tide with '[o]cean waters newly formed, waters thousands of years old.'<sup>164</sup> Importantly, these atemporal understandings of place are simultaneous assertions of multifaceted sovereignty and resistance against the territorialised chronologue.

A laterally applied version of these tidalectics offers a syntax of political transmotion that conveys the tidal surges of oppression and resistance that culminate in Indigenous acts of resistance. These are disruptive events that the dominant discourse holds aloft as proof positive of the irascible bitterness of Indigenous peoples. Settler powers (state, discursive, etc.), articulate Indigenous assertions of power as protestive in nature, removed from the atemporal tides and surges of political valence that mark out sovereignties. But, as Coulthard avers, such processes of 'resentment' amount to 'a politicized expression of Indigenous anger and outrage directed at structural and symbolic violence that still structures our... relationships with land,' toxically framed by settler territorialism as these relationships are.<sup>165</sup> This dynamically reciprocal tack primes monotheoristic discourse to cede position in *Ocean Story*. The novella's acts of resistance are less violent than in *Almanac*, yet they still carry the same productive charge of emplaced resurgence that renounce fiats of land as commodity. It is worth remembering that the Interpreter herself hails

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<sup>164</sup> Zepeda, *Ocean Power*, 4; 17; 73.

<sup>165</sup> Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 109.

from elsewhere; she is not from *this place*, and she troubles the territorial lines separating settler and Indigenous. Though she comes to Puerto Z by way of ancestrally O'odham land in Tucson, she is not local; this is not her ancestral land, and so her perspective is that of a relative, which changes the pedagogical tenor of the stories she tells and receives, and the memories she keeps going. She is a listener-reader engaged in an ethic of dynamic reciprocity. She learns, listens, and researches the stories of the local Indigenous peoples and tries to allow herself to be emplaced by their memories, in their lands. As such, she is attentive to the dynamics of memory and place that she is entering and does not endeavour to suppress nor subsume these with her own versions. Furthermore, she incorporates the atemporal rhythms that suffuse this place into her own extant frameworks, feeling out the creases they co-create. Put otherwise, she practices emplacement.

Formally speaking, *Ocean Story* appears somewhat 'inchoate and unfinished' as Rainwater puts it in one of two insightful articles that are the sum of critical engagement with the novella to date.<sup>166</sup> One could oversimplify and attribute this to the absence of an editor. However, the unease that listener-readers encounter as a result of the novella's structural amorphousness is a kind of demand levied against them—the lingering hangover of *Almanac*'s readerly trials, where the engagements of 'thought, or imagination, or consciousness' required that the audience 'destabilizes everything, all the time.'<sup>167</sup> That Silko centres the coastline in the

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<sup>166</sup> Catherine Rainwater, "Bohman Order in Leslie Marmon Silko's *The Turquoise Ledge: A Memoir and Ocean Story*," *Literature Interpretation Theory* 24, no. 1 (2013): 16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10436928.2013.754234>. Rainwater is the author of the other article, too.

<sup>167</sup> Rainwater, "'Maybe Einstein was Part Yaqui,'" 20.

narrative as a place of (un?)wavering transmotion is fitting. Occupying a liminal crease between materiality and force, 'waves pose provocative questions for those who would seek to develop an ontological perspective that problematizes accepted notions of time, space mobility, and materiality.'<sup>168</sup> So, Silko impels listener-readers to move with, and contribute to, the ontological friction that the novella produces in order to rethink their own relationships with memory and place and relocate these understandings within wider networks of atemporal histories and worldviews.

'Academicians waste a great deal of effort deleting character, plot, and story from theoretical arguments,' according to Maracle, 'but, really, they just change the words' involved.<sup>169</sup> Stories of emplacement exist in contrary frictions, turbulences that are echoed mantrically by the ocean which 'breathes, shimmers, surges and tosses, turning endlessly against the black basalt.'<sup>170</sup> As the ocean never ceases its movement, the stories that the Interpreter tells reject torpor and retain dynamism through their abrasive concurrency amongst other stories. And this recurrent agency afforded to the ocean, the land, and its features by their consistent association with verbs and actions works alongside *Ocean Story's* sparse cast of characters. The comparative lack of human voices and actors in the novella enlivens the land itself, permitting the vivification of dimensions of the land usually reduced to inanimacy. Silko leaves room for the land, the sea, and the moving suture connecting them to claim verbal agency, flush with Kimmerer's avowal that '[a] bay is only a noun if water

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<sup>168</sup> Philip Steinberg and Kimberley Peters, "Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces: Giving Depth to Volume through Oceanic Thinking," *Environment and Planning D* 33, no. 2 (2015): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d14148p>.

<sup>169</sup> Maracle, *Memory Serves*, 105.

<sup>170</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 141.

is *dead*. When *bay* is a noun it is defined by humans, trapped between its shores and contained by the word. But the [Potawatomi] verb *wiikwegamaa* – to *be* a bay – releases the water from bondage and lets it live.<sup>171</sup> Silko's similar verbal characterisations of oceanic surges, mountains, arroyos, seaweeds, and walking dunes reconfigure the character relationships on display, reflecting the profoundly animate places in the Interpreter's worldview and texturing the negotiated emplacement she undertakes.

Having established the vibrancy of the land, Silko weaves the disparate narratives of Western monotheistic science and incommensurable Indigenous sciences together in the Interpreter's atemporal storywork. One night as the Interpreter sky-gazes, she 'thought of the moon pulling at the weight of the Gulf waters from the east to the west some night until the neck of the peninsula begins to shudder and crack open and then suddenly the ocean poured in around it, and suddenly Baja California and San Diego were an island.'<sup>172</sup> Silko oscillates between the past, present, and future within a single sentence to destabilise the strict linearity of the chronologue. We have seen this conveyed before, through Calabazas' geo-philosophical soliloquys about the non-fungible relations between places, times, and land in *Almanac*. Where Calabazas lectured on the living nature of rocks and chastised his drug-running disciples for suggesting that they look identical, the Interpreter speaks of the 'Walking Dunes' that litter the land between the ocean and the Pinacate Sierra further inland. These 'tall ochre dunes moved restlessly beneath

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<sup>171</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 55, (italics in original).

<sup>172</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, locs. 557-558.

the dark plateau of Pinacate volcanoes,' sometimes moving 'miles from where they had been the day before' over the course of a single dark night<sup>173</sup> Although X's missing sand is declared stolen, there is nothing to say definitively that it was not, instead, reclaimed by either the ocean or these mischievous, animate dunes. One can extrapolate this natural reason to the level of national borders, where the sand drifts engage in the same sort of border-troubling as the Anishinaabeg/Canadian/American waves crested by the *Baron of Patronia*. Indeed, natural reason is transnational and antithetical to both the frontiers of nationalist and capitalist partitions. X's denial of natural reason, of course, disqualifies the possibility of inanimate agency to his mind, but '[n]ature is a shimmer, a bounce of light and a chance of colors,' and the Interpreter accepts this volatile animacy as a dimension of the relationship that the Comcaac and the Tohono O'odham people have with the land—a different set of memories used to constitute the present.<sup>174</sup>

Both the imperialist colonial mission and the settler colonial one that diverged from it hinge(d) on the successful erection of a clear-cut epistemological dichotomy between colonisers and the peoples they colonised. This monotheistic bordering is a form of cognitive violence due to its inherent enshrinement of one worldview as doctrinal. Ironically, Western monotheism historically acknowledges its unfinished status. That is, it has not satisfactorily explained all the world's observable phenomena. Seldom conceded, however, is the notion that its

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., loc. 110.

<sup>174</sup> Vizenor, *Native Liberty*, 213. Metatextually, Silko's decision to name the novella *Ocean Story* is likely a related acknowledgement to the ancestral inhabitants of the lands where the story plays out, riffing as it does on Tohono O'odham poet Zepeda's *Ocean Power*. Evidently, Silko sees few and fine lines between story and power.

underlying premises, the venerated Scientific Method, and *eventual* omniscience might be confuted. Early sections of *Ocean Story* evoke the seemingly discrete approaches of Indigenous knowledge systems and monotheism alongside one another, slipping them into the same places. Silko's aim is not to reinscribe these worldviews as unbridgeable any more than it is to reconcile them. Rather, she works to reveal these incommensurable epistemologies as planar, overlapping, and she underscores that—to echo Bang and Medin's question—what matters first is who's asking.

The Interpreter's journey of emplacement oscillates stylistically between something like a scientific geological survey and a creation story, as it reassesses the differences between the two. The Interpreter's telling of the stories gradually demystifies each account via the passage back and forth between the narratives, reminiscent of Morrison's 'literary archaeology.'<sup>175</sup> It's a tangling kind of job, and the Interpreter demonstrates a keen awareness that perspectival pluralism—Andersen's epistemological density—is vital. Whilst the ongoing, unyielding assertion of Indigenous worldviews is an exigent decolonial strategy, the most effective way of getting these worldviews to resonate in dynamic reciprocity is by embedding the 'internal contradictions, cracks, and fissures through which Indigenous life and knowledge have persisted and thrived despite settlement' as mutual shadow survivance within ideological creases.<sup>176</sup> Doing so protects them from excision, erasure, or regression into the '[f]oundational theories' that 'have overburdened

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<sup>175</sup> Morrison, "The Site of Memory," 71.

<sup>176</sup> Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*, 61.

tribal imagination, memories, and the coherence of natural reason, with simulations and the cruelties of paracolonial historicism.<sup>177</sup> In short, a productive refusal to adhere to settler colonial logics is not the same as a refusal to deal with them.

This sifting motion in storywork recalls the tidalectics of the ocean. Moreover, it highlights one way that 'land can be considered as a teacher and conduit of memory,' as emplaced stories are told and retold to impart reciprocal ethics of relationality and deploy sovereign altemporalities.<sup>178</sup> The Interpreter's prismatic explanation of Californian tectonics first details how '[s]even million years ago, a zone of separation developed on the Eastern Pacific Rise[...] [t]he torsional stress caused the south end of the sheared land slab to rotate westward, creating the sea way that was to become El Golfo de California.'<sup>179</sup> Immediately after, listener-readers encounter a contrary creation story of the geologically linked Pinacate Sierra. This version claims a 'lava tube near the base of the big peak is sacred to the Tohono O'odham people because Itoi, Elder Brother, one of the oldest deities, lives there.'<sup>180</sup>

Importantly, these ostensibly incongruous memories are both offered as reified, existing in ideological creases; neither takes primacy, and the stories of the Tohono O'odham are not categorised as "mythology" in the ontologically reductive sense. They simply *are*, just as the fluctuations of the tectonic plates simply *are*. What is important for Silko is that the listener-reader recognise that both accounts are stories, '[n]ew narratives in the form of scientific reports and computerized tracking

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<sup>177</sup> Vizenor, "The Ruins of Representation," 12.

<sup>178</sup> Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*, 57.

<sup>179</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 127.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 142.

[that] now mingle with older land narratives.<sup>181</sup> They may be told from incommensurable perspectives, with disparate vocabularies. They may be coherent with another and they may not. They *are* stories nonetheless, and we would do well to bear in mind that '[s]ingle stories are shallow, but easily manipulated to support inequality, bigotry, and self-interest. Complexity challenges manipulation.'<sup>182</sup> Like the tectonic grinds described, the Eurocentric settler chronologue shudders as Silko situates her audience within a geologically emplaced temporal span running into the millions of years, decentralising humans and settler monotheorism in the stories to follow.<sup>183</sup>

Altogether, these prismatic alternative stories comprise a greater emphasis on syncopated shifts between worldviews. These currents of thinking immerse listener-readers in the 'chaotic but *rhythmic* turbulence,' the 'persistent underlying churn – a dynamic pattern of repetition and re-formation' that constitutes the transmotion of the ocean and the terrain it alters in Silko's storywork.<sup>184</sup> Having synthesised jarring stories of the land, the Interpreter poses an epistemological query:

Who knows the ocean best? Is it the oceanographer or the marine biologist, the one who studies and performs experiments on ocean water? Is it the fisherman, the one who feeds himself from the ocean? Is it the one who sleeps next to the ocean every night as his ancestors have

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<sup>181</sup> Fitzgerald, *Native Women and Land*, 90.

<sup>182</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 37.

<sup>183</sup> Which also enfold a culturally inflected form of anthropocentrism. I use Eurocentric to connote anthropocentric tendencies throughout, yet wish to be clear that "anthropocentrism" itself is a term that presumes an impossible uniformity of humanity. See Kathryn Yusoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2018) for an inquiry into the vexed magnitude of the designation.

<sup>184</sup> Steinberg and Peters, "Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces," 250.

done for thousands of years? Is it the one who swims in the ocean? Is it the one the ocean takes, does that person know the ocean best?<sup>185</sup>

No clear answer is forthcoming. The implicit answer, as seems to be borne out by Silko's weave of myth, history, and imaginative memory, is the one who listens to all of them, ocean included, and resists the urge to fit them together neatly. Any of these perspectives are privileged and limited to differing degrees by their respective immersion, distance, and interdependence. Crucially, these are not weaknesses that can be overcome on a personal level. It is only on a communal scale, where each party engages in dynamic reciprocity, that something striving for (though never achieving) a holistic knowledge of this place can emerge.

DeLoughrey writes that one of transcontinental colonialism's earliest narrative projects was one of 'mystifying the importance of the sea and the migrations across its expanse.'<sup>186</sup> Contemporaneously, ships traversing the Atlantic bore a self-ordained Enlightened society tasked with dispelling that same mystification. And so, in the infancy of settler colonialism, the 'mariner was a hero of practical reason' who pressed at the edges of 'a frontier of capitalism and colonial expansion.'<sup>187</sup> It is therefore important to recognise the coeval interplay of story and science working throughout these colonial strategies in the same way that we recognise that the dispossession of Indigenous lands was precipitated by 'the hydrogeopolitics of imperialism.'<sup>188</sup> These hydrogeopolitics transformed the availability and agency of

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<sup>185</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, locs. 118-122.

<sup>186</sup> DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots*, 2.

<sup>187</sup> Margaret Cohen, "Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe," *PMLA* 125, no. 3 (2010): 660; 657, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25704462>.

<sup>188</sup> Isabel Hofmeyr, "Provisional Notes on Hydrocolonialism," *English Language Notes* 57, no. 1 (2019): 13, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00138282-7309644>. See David Cassuto's *Dripping Dry* (2001) and

waterways as a cornerstone of the affective narratives of conquest. Recognising the vitality of the land, the Interpreter relates a Comcaac story warning of a large black whale that has been known to rise from the depths before seafarers and beachcombers. The whale is fickle and must be treated in an attentive way to avoid disaster: 'you must not panic and turn away from it, whatever you do. Meet the black whale calmly and you will be blessed and protected by special grace; turn away from the black whale and you will be crushed.'<sup>189</sup> The message to non-Indigenous interlopers is clear: recognise Indigenous peoples' incommensurability and sustainable relationships with their sovereignties and places are possible; turn away and it's only a matter of time until you end up like X (or Y, or Z).

This storied knowledge directs a mode of intimately reciprocal emplacement within the coastal land and ocean that operates on multiple registers because, per Santa Clara Pueblo scientist Gregory Cajete, 'oceans are the context... we cry the oceans, we excrete the oceans, we eat the oceans, and we become the oceans.'<sup>190</sup> The black whale may, for instance, denote a wider ethical imperative of care for the land and its more-than-human denizens, one that appropriately dwarfs the scale of individuals or even individual communities. Elsewise, it could be a storywork-encoded set of instructions as to how to survive rogue waves that 'stack up into towering monsters that can break boats in half. For years the authorities disputed reports of rogue waves one hundred fifty feet or more in height; but photographs

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Marc Reisner's *Cadillac Desert* (1986) for concurrent hydropolitical histories that have shaped the land of the arid southwest into untenable oases that do not resemble the lands that Indigenous peoples cultivated for millennia.

<sup>189</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 168. Indicated, too, in Zepeda's poem "Under The Sea," as she warns "[i]f you turn your back to the ocean, / say "excuse me."" (*Ocean Power*, 79).

<sup>190</sup> Cajete, *Native Science*, 301-302.

from satellites supplied the proof' that Indigenous stories already contained as an outcome of their emplacedness within the shifting dynamics of the land's natural reasons.<sup>191</sup> The story may mean neither, it may mean aspects of both. It may mean other things altogether. But, almost certainly, it does not mean one or the other.

The interplays of stories and sciences have another iteration in a more familiar American whale narrative. In June 2011, mere months after the publication of *Ocean Story*, Silko was engaged as keynote at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Melville Conference in Rome. She spoke in kindred terms of Melville's 'little hope for the future because the crimes of humanity were never reckoned with.'<sup>192</sup> Vizenor likewise lauds Melville's pursuit of 'the ironic visionary and moral transcendence of a crippled sea warrior and transmotion of a mighty white whale' and named one of *Treaty Shirts*' constitutional exiles after Moby Dick.<sup>193</sup> The discursive conversation that Silko sparks with her great black whale is transmotivational shadow survivance at work where '[s]hadows are vital, animate, both subject and object,' and the 'active memories... of heard stories.'<sup>194</sup> Read along with Vizenor's evocation of Moby Dick as a bulwark of natural reason defending malformed fish in *Treaty Shirts*, Silko demonstrates a dynamically reciprocal tangle of co-affective literary sovereignties.

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<sup>191</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, locs. 203-209.

<sup>192</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko "Indian Hater, Indian Fighter, Indian Killer: Melville's Indictment of the 'New Nation' and the 'New World,'" *Leviathan* 14, no. 1 (March 2012): 97, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-1849.2011.01553.x>.

<sup>193</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Native Provenance: The Betrayal of Cultural Creativity* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 46, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 96; Gerald Vizenor, "The Ruins of Representation: Shadow Survivance and the Literature of Dominance," *American Indian Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (Winter 1993), 11, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/1184777?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1184777?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents). See also Melville's 1857 story *The Confidence Man* which indicts Jacksonian removal policies of Indigenous peoples.

By drawing attention to the similarity between the Comcaac story and *Moby Dick*, Silko insinuates the Indigenous story as antecedent to Melville's opus without claiming derivation. Furthermore, she poses a more or less self-answering question as to how one garners unfathomable levels of recognition and study whilst the other barely ripples the critical surface. Antonio Barrenechea claims that Melville 'fills the US cultural vacuum with American content that predates the United States and British America,' serving as a cultural weatherglass, interpretable in manifold contexts to reveal manifold ethics.<sup>195</sup> He argues that Melville consciously deploys the White Whale as an avatar for a pre-European America that ultimately whelms Ahab's colonial fury.<sup>196</sup> Whilst complimentary of Melville's literary treatment of Indigenous presence and anti-colonial bite, Silko goes further to tell a shadow story, both in palette and form, that symbolically foregoes the Great American Novel with a torsional Indigenous narrative of sovereign emplacement. Whereas Melville's novel sprawls to *Almanac* proportions, Silko's novella is a two-hour read; whereas the White Whale wrecks the *Pequod* and pulls Ahab down to the abyss, the black whale offers salvation, for those willing to face it and its power. Silko offers a divergent literary history to what is, in many respects, another divergent literary history—an atemporal memory, thickening the narrative that emplaces America in the Americas and pluralises the perspective. If Melville reveals 'the powerful appeal and the danger inherent in western rationalistic thought: the belief that ideology and Truth are indistinguishable,' then Silko's narrative extends beyond to suggest alternative

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<sup>195</sup> Antonio Barrenechea, *America Unbound: Encyclopedic Literature and Hemispheric Studies* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 10.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

creases of ideological truths supported by Indigenous worldviews, without conceding to an epistemological binary.<sup>197</sup> As Kirwan attests, 'Native American fiction is equivalent to the canonical works of American or European writing – they share narrative and formal structures – not because it is different but rather because it is a rich genre' that expresses rich and dense literary sovereignties.<sup>198</sup> Rather than rewriting the canon, Silko issues a demand for dynamic reciprocity; she decanonises settler stories with a burst of natural motion, 'the surge of ocean waves, and the mysterious weight of whales.'<sup>199</sup>

### **Territorial Terminal Creeds Coming Home to Roost**

The contiguity of national and state borders, private property lines and so forth weaves a latticed geopolitical narrative of contested finitude with a winner/loser binary in-built, and this suits X just fine. For one party to thrive territorially, another must wither. The land is a finite resource, usable for finite reasons, with financial responsibilities—a rule of under-the-thumb that rationalised the theft of Indigenous lands on skewed moral grounds throughout the chronologue. Thus, the 'toxic geographies' of 'property [are] not simply about land and possessions. It is... a series of mythologies that are firmly rooted in traditions of dehumanisation, exclusion, and

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<sup>197</sup> Laurie Robertson-Lorant, "Red Bones, White Bones: The Native American Presence in Moby Dick," *Comparative American Studies*, 1, no. 3 (2003): 384, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14775700030013008>. While Robertson-Lorant's reading of Melville's colonial critique is sound, their general grab-bag approach to Indigenous studies is concerning (including a reliance on the work of accepted fraudster Jamake Highwater). This citation does not represent endorsement of the article as a whole.

<sup>198</sup> Kirwan, "Remapping Place and Narrative in Native American Literature," 5.

<sup>199</sup> Vizenor, *Native Provenance*, 47.

privilege.<sup>200</sup> In few places is this violent fallacy more codified than North America, 'soaked' in a clipped 'Indian history' that is invoked by the chronologue to mask Indigenous sovereignties and momentum.<sup>201</sup> Conversely, as Miriam Kahn attests, 'place is many things and speaks in many voices – individual, biography, shared history, meaningful memory, and moral lesson.'<sup>202</sup> If territorial discourses enforce a linear chronologue on land and spatial discourse inflicts an atemporal abstraction on the same, talking in terms of place, in terms of land, offers us powerful atemporal and emplaced alternatives that rely on experience, memory, and natural reason. When communal storywork and the prismatic Indigenous memories they transmit are emplaced in land, they assume a multivalent position that rebukes the settler chronologue. If '[t]o an oral culture, memory is governance, it is being,' then stories of land and storied lands limn extant forms of Indigenous governance that cannot be easily erased.<sup>203</sup> These two ideological narratives—of place and territory—surround *Ocean Story's* central figures. And, by associating differing philosophies of the land with characters, Silko reduces the physical and cognitive distance that sits between people and the places they inhabit as part of a holistic cosmological reimagination.

X believes his intrepid, desmotional spirit guarantees him unfettered liberty or, rather, the capitalistic sense of freedom-to-impede-others'-freedom. This is illustrated by his unrestricted traversal of the border from Arizona to Mexican Sonora,

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<sup>200</sup> Neil Nunn, "Toxic Encounters, Settler Logics of Elimination, and the Future of a Continent," *Antipode* 50, no. 5 (June): 1331; 1342, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12403>.

<sup>201</sup> Fitzgerald, *Native Women and Land*, 6.

<sup>202</sup> Miriam Kahn, "Your Place and Mine: Sharing Emotional Landscapes in Wamira, Papua New Guinea," in *Senses of Place*, eds. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 168.

<sup>203</sup> Maracle, *Memory Serves*, 66.

a 'free zone; no visa or papers required of Canadians or U.S. visitors.'<sup>204</sup> The border embodies the uneven distribution of obligations and responsibilities that accompany a discourse of territory, where *la frontera* has been, and continues to be, a one-way membrane. The peculiar hubris stoked by X's privileged mobility is revealed in generally inconspicuous behaviours, including his habit of carrying an illegal pistol with a naïve impunity because he trusts the 'gringo legend that Mexican cops won't pat down another man's crotch.'<sup>205</sup> X's axial name permits the transposition of manifold identities and groups, signifying the wide demographic of Silko's critique. In interview with Laura Coltelli, Silko proposes that 'human beings seem to invite these negative deadly energies.'<sup>206</sup> X doesn't just invite; he goads. Apparently, 'he wanted everyone to know he had balls,' and between hurtling in his jeep across hungry sand dunes and slicing through the waves in his speedboat, X presumes a desmotional superiority over his surroundings.<sup>207</sup> This terminal creed of detachment yields escalating misfortunes for X that do culminate in his death. It is a motif that pulses through Silko's work, and he joins Menardo, Max Blue, Trigg, and others in the ranks of the desmotional dead.

X receives ample opportunities to re-address the terminal creeds undergirding his exploitative outlook. His stubbornness, however, proves fatal. X's absolute faith in desmotion intensifies as he acquires 'expensive mastiff dogs which

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<sup>204</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, locs. 646-650

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 537.

<sup>206</sup> Laura Coltelli, "Almanac: Reading Its Story Maps after Twenty Years: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko," in *Howling for Justice: New Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead*, ed. Rebecca Tillett (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 195.

<sup>207</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 59.

he wanted to breed and use as guard dogs' to safeguard his real estate.<sup>208</sup> Then he doubles-down and becomes embroiled in a high-stakes Argentine cock-fighting ring. His monotheistic, monetised relationship to these animals yields violence for all involved. A pack of 'strange wild dogs with yellow eyes, short tails, and mangy red hair started to shadow the mastiffs' on the Interpreter's beach walks, tacitly transgressing, probing the guardians of X's self-defined territory.<sup>209</sup> X agrees to provide security for the up-to-\$100,000-valued fighting animals of his 'Argentine friends who flew with their roosters in private jets.' Just days after signing the liability contracts, the same wild dogs slaughter the cocks in the pens X provides, leaving '[f]eathers and blood' sown 'everywhere sticking to the cage wires, to the perches to the water dishes to the ground [sic].'<sup>210</sup> The power that the affluent owners have over the animals is dispelled by reframing the place in which the roosters' deaths occur. The wild dogs are 'metaphors as motion, as cosmototemic natural motion,' and emissaries of natural reason that hark back to the cosmototemics of Moby Dick's casino aquarium and Justice Molly Crèche's courtroom in *Treaty Shirts*.<sup>211</sup> The roosters are *supposed* to die in the sandy arena where their killing can be monetised by the viscosity and visibility of their forced combat. But the roosters' gladiatorial combat is replaced within the context of natural reason; those same killings are not in service of monetary gain and actively sap X's capital lifeblood when his Argentine associates demand compensation. Despite all efforts to fortify the market, the neo-capitalist boom of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that Silko decried in *Almanac* has reached a

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., loc. 106.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., locs. 411-417.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., locs. 487; 772.

<sup>211</sup> Vizenor, *Native Provenance*, 128.

nadir in the wake of the global recession by the times *Ocean Story* takes its place(s). Those terminal creeds have been revisited, continue to be compounded with interest, and X flails angrily against the tide in his mad dash for bad cash.

Even when his jeep is almost devoured by the walking dunes on a drunken ride back from his favourite gringo bar, X fails to arrest his misplaced faith in desmotion. Harboured nil doubt that the all-terrain vehicle can deliver on its name, he races full-speed along the wet cake of beach-sand. One cannot help but recall Menardo's fascination with the universal power of his (not so) bulletproof vest. In an echo of settler injustice perpetrated against the land and its Indigenous peoples, it is arrogance, not ignorance that causes X's misfortune; '[o]f course there were holes and irregularities under the wet sand, but if he drove fast enough, the Jeep would cross them before the tires bogged down.'<sup>212</sup> As long as X continues to progress rapidly and steadily, without pause or review, he is sure he will not be stymied. Of course, capitalistic desmotion writ large is impelled by the same tendencies. In his abstract certitude in the uniformity of velocity and surface tension, X overlooks 'an outcrop of dark basalt boulders the size of bathtubs.'<sup>213</sup> He veers to avert collision and is quickly ensnared by the softer sand of the walking dunes as Calabazas' long-hanging atemporal warnings come to life.

Rendered as immobile as his calcified worldview, X languishes thirty feet below the high-tide mark as the encroaching surf gradually, iteratively redraws the territorial boundaries of the land to demonstrate how 'the liquidity of the sea

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<sup>212</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 551.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 557.

complicates control.<sup>214</sup> After a string of desperate phone calls, a tow-truck rescues the 4x4. Even confronted with such unequivocal indicators that his behaviour towards the place he inhabits is set to ruin, X fails to change. Although '\$75 for the tow seemed like a bargain' for the salvage, 'after X paid it he was angry again. This time he hated Mexican tow truck drivers' instead.<sup>215</sup> X gets several chances to listen to natural reason and read the parlous state of his own relationship with the Indigenous lands. He is invited time and again to participate in the dynamic reciprocity of emplacement. That he escapes these scrapes in spite of his money, not because of it, is lost on X, though. Unable to engage Indigenous memories of the region that complicate his territorial rubrics, X stays lost.

### **The Special Grace of Ocean's Scrotums**

Later, X takes to the open sea with the Interpreter in his boat. He braves the churn of deeper water rather than hugging the coast to shave time off their journey to the realtor's office. Unsurprisingly, X's arrogance is punished again. The speedboat sinks in a final lashing of irony: a few nights earlier, the same wild dogs that preyed on the roosters under X's guard stalk the Interpreter and the juvenile mastiffs along the shore. She fires warning shots from her Derringer to 'frighten the wild dogs, but I never realized the derringer's bullets hit the skiff.'<sup>216</sup> The Interpreter's transmotional acceptance of natural reason nullifies X's desmotion and stops him from meeting the

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<sup>214</sup> Steinberg and Peters, "Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces," 258.

<sup>215</sup> Silko, *Ocean Story*, loc. 581.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 900

deadline to acquire more property before new government ordinances come into force and restrict his visions for development.

As the skiff slips down to the seabed, X also disappears from sight, and the Interpreter waits in the ocean for 'that slow rising wave' to claim her. In the roil of the breakers, she sees 'something huge and blackish-green moving toward me in the water' from her periphery. '*Whatever you do, don't turn away from the black whale.* These words came back to me.'<sup>217</sup> Remembering the frictional stories of the Tohono O'odham and Comcaac people who have been emplaced here by the land for millennia, the Interpreter faces the black whale. As the communal memories assure, she is indeed protected by a special grace. She is saved by a natural raft of tangled sea-vegetation, by 'dozens and dozens' of what the Comcaac call 'ocean's scrotums -- bigger than I'd seen before -- the size of softballs, shiny and green.' The Interpreter's dedication to transnational resistance and to remembering the stories of this place are rewarded as she climbs aboard the 'snarl of floating roots and stems and bulbous fruit.'<sup>218</sup> The raft bears her further away from shore, but she doesn't worry. She trusts in the natural motion of the sea. She has potable water in the ocean's scrotums, as she has learned from Comcaac stories and from observing the mastiffs as they gnaw the fruits that wash ashore during their walks. She has the cool water to stave off overheating, and she has her own body fat for nourishment. Eventually, she is rescued by local fishermen who take her back to port. They turn down her offers of remuneration, refusing to monetise her life or the act of salvation

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., locs. 896; 838; 848, (italics in original).

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., locs. 847; 872.

itself. X escapes the wreck too, but only temporarily. Weeks later, barrelling along a canyon in the same jeep that narrowly escaped submersion, X plummets into the cavernous crease of an infamous arroyo that boasts an odd 'electromagnetic pull emanating from it.'<sup>219</sup> It comes as little surprise that the arroyo is laced with sediment washed down by the rainwaters that flow to the ocean from the walking dunes and the Pinacate Sierra.

After her rescue, the Interpreter understands that 'all the land, would be reclaimed by the ocean but long before that... the tall wave of the indigenous people would reclaim all the land.'<sup>220</sup> This payoff—the return to the motif of peoples and lands that was *Almanac*'s coalitional, co-constitutive focus—is more than realisation. In one sentence, the ocean's unbound power to transgress manmade territories, to ignore, obliterate, and reform boundaries passes over to the people. The Interpreter both witnesses and works this transference of transmotion via the story she is telling and thus becomes part of the story's emplacement. Listener-readers further catalyse this process, layering new ideological creases over the contra-territorial contours. It's a shift of the kind that 'actively demands not just a future, but also the control of that future.'<sup>221</sup> Such influences are intimately related to the land as a co-constituent of

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., loc. 656. This narrative turn riffs on stories of cars being drawn into an arroyo on the reservation borderline at Laguna that Silko mentions in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*. Just as in that recollection the 'story of the young man and his smashed-up Volkswagen was now joined with all the other stories of cars that fell into that arroyo,' X's folly is also entangled within this storywork as a facet of Silko's creative memory (51).

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., loc. 900.

<sup>221</sup> Rebecca Tillett, "The Indian Wars Have Never Ended in the Americas: The Politics of Memory and History in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," *Feminist Review* 85 (March 2007): 37, <https://www-jstor-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/stable/30140903>.

atemporal Indigenous sovereignties; 'it is Indigenous storywork that will hold us in relational embrace with Indigenous resurgences and worldviews.'<sup>222</sup>

Control over the land means something quite different in the monotheistic settler cosmology of 'devious property rations and reductions' than it does in most Indigenous ones.<sup>223</sup> Human social primacy is a distinctly exogenous concept. People and the land are not discrete categories; there is a more complex, more-than-human relationship of mutual emplacement to account for, and this variegated distinction is explored by Vizenor's *Interior Landscapes* as he disturbs the conceptual membrane that tends to distinguish the natural from the urban. To a different border, then, and a different kind of emplacement.

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<sup>222</sup> Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, "Introduction," in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, eds. Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo (London: Zed Books, 2019), 8.

<sup>223</sup> Gerald Vizenor, "Constitutional Consent: Native Traditions and Parchment Barriers," in *The White Earth Nation: Ratification of a Native Democratic Constitution*, eds. Gerald Vizenor and Jill Doerfler (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 9, ProQuest Ebook Central.

## Part III: The Cityscape

### *Interior Landscapes* and Entangled Urbanity

*Ocean Story's* eddying narrative demonstrates that natural reason inheres in the intractable, patterned chance of the world. It is a lambent energy that cannot be snuffed by a monotheistic epistemological drives towards abstract notions of domain or territory. Natural reason is not, however, dampened in urban environments, where property is codified and consolidated most visibly. Rader explains that to 'read the United States is to explicate the narrative of boundaries, borders, and bodies,' and in settler cityscapes this narrative is articulated in particularly knotted expressions of overlapping sovereign polities.<sup>224</sup> Ruxandra Rădalescu argues that Silko's Indigenous host in *Almanac* co-opts the presumptively—apparently definitionally—settled urban space of Tucson as an integral lynchpin of land reclamation to make it, 'rather than a U.S.-based city' an Indigenously complicated, 'deterritorialized city.'<sup>225</sup> Although scholars frequently limit their explorations of Indigenous literatures to reservations, forests, and plains, it is disingenuous to engage the ideological creases between Indigenous and non-Indigenous understandings of land using purely rural optics. Doing so indulges the same "extinction myths" that I join the arguments against. Specifically, the myth of the vanishing Indian 'that allowed Europeans and their descendants to claim and

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<sup>224</sup> Dean Rader, *Engaged Resistance: American Indian Art, Literature, and Film from Alcatraz to the NMAI* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 70.

<sup>225</sup> Ruxandra Rădalescu, "Unearthing the Urban: City Revolutions in Silko's *Almanac*," in *Howling for Justice: New Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead*, ed. Rebecca Tillett (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 123.

adopt an American identity that, without these myths, belonged to Native peoples.<sup>226</sup> It amounts to settler society's greatest wager. Namely that, odds *heavily* on, Indigenous peoples would succumb to genocide, given enough time and not enough territory. This notion, of course, is materially refuted by Indigenous presents and presence, which are especially vivid in the attemporalities of indigeneity in the American cityscape. Indigenous flourishing, in simple terms, not supposed to be plotted this far down on the timeline of the chronologue. And yet.

Indigenous peoples' agency in the placemaking of North American cityscapes is typically minimised in the chronologue, a tendency which is ideologically tyrannical. The hokey notion that 'Native people in the city are barely people; they are instead shades of the past... linked to a lost nature' entrenches cities as alienating places within settler nationalist rubrics that demand of Indigenous peoples total assimilation or, otherwise, exile.<sup>227</sup> Settler memories of and about Indigenous sovereignties in cities are carceral, restricted to honorific street-names or dispossessed street-sleepers. Silko takes up a broadly anti-urban stance, claiming that '[h]uman beings only function happily within a certain size of settlement.'<sup>228</sup> Whether she is right or not, the contemporary expansion in and of urban centres *is* intractable in North America as much as anywhere else. Thus, an understanding of

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<sup>226</sup> Sarah Schneider Kavanagh, "Haunting Remains: Educating a New American Citizenry at Indian Hill Cemetery," in *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture and History*, eds. Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 152, EBSCO eBook Subscription Academic Collection.

<sup>227</sup> Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 9, EBSCO eBook Subscription Academic Collection. Although Thrush focuses on the northwest and Seattle, his broader assessment of Indigenous experiences of "the city" is salient to my discussion as well.

<sup>228</sup> Coltelli, "Almanac: Reading Its Story Maps after Twenty Years," 201.

Indigenous emplacement without mendacious narratives of urban Natives being definitively out-of-place is vital to sustain a 'network of aesthetic affiliations that refers back to a tribal centre even as it explores other places.'<sup>229</sup> If the territorial means and means of settler sovereignty are engineered to exclude and engulf Indigenous polities, cities are developed to represent the most robust icons of both those extremes in action.

Much of this chapter has proposed multivalent counter-narratives to the chronologue of settler colonial property development, whereby land continues to be divvied up, built upon, and abstracted for profit. In the settler colonial imaginary, this accretion of territory is held up as tantamount to the expulsion of indigeneity. Settler sovereignty remaps and makes room for the sow, root, and sprout of its own aspirational indigeneity. It looks like yet another example of Tuck and Yang's settler moves to innocence in real-time, prescribing an assimilationist narrative whereby '[r]epressing the history of Native American dispossession works to protect the possessive white self from ontological disturbance.'<sup>230</sup> But such a hermetic conceptualisation is only kept cosmologically airtight by dint of the declensionist mythos of Indigenous absence, wherein the territories acquired by the settler state are cleared of Indigenous peoples, worldviews, altemporalities, and places which are all co-constitutive. Veracini raises an apposite concern about the location—as both noun and verb—of settler colonialism:

if settler colonial relationships are characterised by conquest *and* displacement, their location is crucial. It is not a coincidence that the

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<sup>229</sup> Danne Jobin, "Gerald Vizenor's Transnational Aesthetics in *Blue Ravens*," *Transmotion* 5, no. 1 (2019): 52, <https://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/transmotion/article/view/572>.

<sup>230</sup> Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 51.

cultural traditions of the settler polities often focus on real or imaginary locales putatively epitomising specific national attributes: the 'outback', the 'backblocks', and most famously, 'the frontier.'<sup>231</sup>

The important principle that settler colonialism is *not elsewhere* does not mean that settler colonialism looks identical *everywhere*, and Veracini navigates that tension with care. The specific localities and operations of settler colonialism are manifold, and so the modes of resurgence that do disruptive work are similarly diffuse.

Though discourses of Indigenous sovereignties and land focus typically on rural areas—those places that bear fewer and less tangible markers of settler dominance—it is important not to elide the interior landscapes of the city. Whether or not Silko is right that cities are incompatible with traditional Indigenous lifeways (and one might say the position chimes a little prescriptive), Indigenous sovereignties have, will, and do perdure in cities. They *seem* static, further from natural reason, and less susceptible to atemporal understandings, perhaps, but they are not settled. Just consider that 'there are more urban Indians in the United States today – Indians who still maintain a tribal affiliation despite living in an immersive, pluralist city environment – than there are Indian people living on any type of reservation.'<sup>232</sup> Admittedly, Vizenor's storywork about urban indigeneity is not the most contemporary account of creased cityscapes I could engage here. That said, his peculiar positionality amongst 'loose families at the end of the depression in the cities' through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century provides an important atemporal perspective of 'new tribal provenance / histories too wild in the brick' to be confined in 'shoes too

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<sup>231</sup> Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present*, 51.

<sup>232</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 27-28.

narrow.<sup>233</sup> Thus, through transnational moves to and from the Twin Cities, Vizenor traces the ideological and material geneses of urban Indigenous presents and presence as both influenced by and resistant to the dislocation of the settler chronologue.

The cityscapes of North America are geopolitical nodes where the settler colonial project is most visibly consolidated in the chronologue. Despite the front-and-centre sway of frontier narratives in the popular imaginary, cities are cement and mortar, developmental artillery that solidifies settler omnipresence in its new territories. In this simplistic conversation, the prevailing story tells that 'indigenous peoples and cities inhabit each other's antipodes – they and their histories seem mutually exclusive, one representing the past, the other the future.'<sup>234</sup> Speaking about Indigenous places without engaging with the cities that ever-growing numbers of Indigenous peoples inhabit (and the land and cities beneath that they have always inhabited) buttresses the settler narrative of exteriority that Indigenous peoples and polities are frequently lumbered with. In the plainest terms, '[e]very piece of North America is Indigenous land regardless of whether it has a city on top of it.'<sup>235</sup>

In the settler colonial worldview, the power exerted to simultaneously reshape the land and extract from it is sedimented within the cityscape, which becomes a hub of personal and cultural agency. "The city" is a location where one can make something for and of themselves, so long as one plays by the accepted

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<sup>233</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 3; 31.

<sup>234</sup> Coll Thrush, "Review of *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* By Penelope Edmonds," *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 2 (May 2011): 303, <https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2011.80.2.303>.

<sup>235</sup> Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 195.

ruleset. That is, the one determined by ‘the extremely discursive warfare that colonization represents – the need of settler nations to attempt to erase the worldviews of the Indigenous peoples whose territories they claim.’<sup>236</sup> In reality, the promise is not that one can make *something* of oneself in the Big City; one is welcome to make *one thing* of oneself, chosen from a menu of settled archetypes. In the process of overlaying cities physically, conceptually, and ideologically over and above Indigenous lands, the settler state alters the landscape significantly and shows its geopolitical ‘formations [to be] *territorially acquisitive in perpetuity*.’<sup>237</sup> Essentially, the accrual of territory is unfinished until its Indigenous connotations are overcome, smothered entirely by ‘asphalt paper’ and ‘tar truck[s] that sealed the streets.’<sup>238</sup> Even then, the invasive sovereignty continues to amass its own portfolio of evidence for its fictive indigeneity via the sift between assimilation and exile for Indigenous peoples in and from the urban sphere. By seizing scraps of Indigenous worldviews—in part accomplished by appropriating and adjusting the names of Indigenous places and people for cities, streets, parks and the like—the city displays a typically hodgepodge variety of Indigenous markers.<sup>239</sup> This is a co-terminous tactic that strengthens settler moves towards indigeneity and saps the Indigenous presents/presence that already inhere within the lands the city occupies. These moves coalesce to accomplish a variety of what Chadwick Allen has called ‘colonial reinscription: attempts at *d*ecoding and *r*ecoding indigenous landscapes so that they

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<sup>236</sup> Lawrence, *“Real” Indians and Others*, 39.

<sup>237</sup> Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 125, (italics in original).

<sup>238</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 34-35.

<sup>239</sup> For an excellent book-length investigation of such Indigenous ‘layers in an urban palimpsest’ that render the cityscape an ‘imbricated place,’ check out Thrush’s *Native Seattle* (14; 69).

can be appropriated into the colonial power's economic and cultural systems.<sup>240</sup> With all that in mind, Indigenous sovereignties nonetheless continue to emplace cityscapes in thicker arrays of relationships to the lands they sit on. Vizenor's storywork recalls atemporal worldviews that illustrate Indigenous roots continuing to burst through cracks in the tarmac, even where the 'memories must be soiled with petroleum' and the 'earth... soaked with oil.'<sup>241</sup>

Urban places are by no means unexplored by Indigenous literatures of the Americas. Recent stories such as Cheyenne and Arapaho author Tommy Orange's *There There* and Lakota writer Theodore Van Alst Jr.'s *Sacred Smokes* offer evocative accounts of the intersectional issues confronting Indigenous people—especially youth—in urban places.<sup>242</sup> Similarly, Vizenor's extensive project of storywork has consistently conveyed and created narratives of Indigenous presence and presents in settler cityscapes through the years. Scholarship abounds on his urban trickster narratives, and I will refrain from contributing another reading to this well-paved path of criticism. As such, I won't talk about the city as a *space* for transnational Indigenous resistance, resurgence, and sovereignties.<sup>243</sup> Instead, I address the

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<sup>240</sup> Chadwick Allen, "Blood (and) Memory," *American Literature* 71, no. 1 (March 1999): 111, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2902590>.

<sup>241</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 35.

<sup>242</sup> Tommy Orange, *There There* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018); Theodore Van Alst Jr., *Sacred Smokes* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018).

<sup>243</sup> For clarity and brevity, by "the city" I am largely referring to medium-large settler colonial cities. The histories of North American cities are complex and disparate in many ways; the perspectives detailed in Orange's Oakland, Van Alst's Chicago, and Vizenor's Minneapolis, for example, are all substantively incommensurable. I do, however, bundle the common colonial anatomies of these incommensurable experiences to propose a reflective analysis of these urban centres' shared nodes in the network of settler colonial power formations. All three of these places, for example, were inaugural sites for the Bureau of Indian Affairs' relocation program that primarily encouraged Indigenous war veterans to assimilate into urban post-war America. For more on the national and international disparities between settler-colonial city formations, see Lawrence's *"Real" Indians and Others* and Penelope Edmonds' *Urbanizing Frontiers*.

emplaced stories within the cityscapes that Vizenor remembers as confluences of natural reason. Such non-dichotomous perspectives that interact to link the urban and non-urban start to dissolve the settler barriers that further divide Indigenous communities along territorial in-or-out lines. As Orange explains it:

We've been moving for a long time, but the land moves with you like memory. An Urban Indian belongs to the city, and cities belong to the earth... We ride buses, trains, and cars, over, and under concrete plains. Being Indian has never been about returning to the land. The land is everywhere or nowhere.<sup>244</sup>

The city, then, is a place that is just as much an assemblage of complex land relations (however modified) that are constituted by memory, as those lands occupied by Indigenous nations on a legally "sovereign" register. Though scholars like Laura Furlan examine the concept of place in urban Indigenous contexts, such treatments often swap place and space interchangeably. Or, alternatively, they aspire to differentiate the two without actually doing much differentiation at all. Furlan, for instance, is on the money in suggesting that '[I]and is always part of the story, even when the story is about the urban space.'<sup>245</sup> But this problematic lack of distinction that yields the conceptual incongruities that arise from space/place muddling lingers; much like settler colonialism writ large, 'spaces,' just like settler societies, 'obscure the conditions of their own production' in a manner that naturalises and neutralises the principles that undergird them.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Orange, *There There*, 5.

<sup>245</sup> Laura M. Furlan, *Indigenous Cities: Urban Indian Fiction and the Histories of Relocation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 219, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>246</sup> Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009), 10, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Vizenor's natural reason does not pull up shy of the city limits. It is a transmotional energy that abjures the territorial cordoning of urbanity off from nature and reveals that 'conventionally perceived Indian space and urban space historically overlap' as much as they continue to converge in the present.<sup>247</sup> The liminal oscillations of Indigenous emplacement between desert, land, and sea possess a peculiar immanence, and it is arguably clearer precisely how those landscapes shift to disrupt territorial control. But the overlapping cultural and ideological creases that complicate contested urban places of indigeneity are no less powerful, no less resurgent as enactments of Indigenous sovereignties. As Mi'kmaq legal scholar Bonita Lawrence summarises, 'land appropriation or privatization in both Canadas and the United States has always been accompanied by specific attempts on the part of the colonizer to rewrite or further fragment how Native peoples conceptualize themselves' by distilling their diverse sovereignties into a singular oppositional "Indian" identity counterposed against that of the settler consciousness.<sup>248</sup> Where '[t]he omnipresence of Indigenous sovereignty is part of the ontological condition that shapes patriarchal white sovereignty's investment in itself and its anxiety about dispossession,' one of the most tense places of collision with Indigenous sovereignties within that settler imaginary is the cityscape.<sup>249</sup> Indigenous people are meant to leave their cosmologies behind when they pass through the membrane of the urban sphere. So, what happens to that settled sphere when they refuse, when they agitate?

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<sup>247</sup> Furlan, *Indigenous Cities*, 2.

<sup>248</sup> Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others*, 39.

<sup>249</sup> Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 147.

## Myths, Metaphors, and the Mighty Mississippi's Crease of Natural Reason

*Interior Landscapes* is offered up to listener-readers as an assemblage of 'Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors.'<sup>250</sup> This categorisation induces an immediate ontological friction and disturbs generic conventions by muddling the supposedly adverse forces of fiction and fact. David Murray contends that *Interior Landscapes* 'works by obliquities and in fragments, rather than, like in most autobiographies, within the narrative conventions of realist fiction.'<sup>251</sup> As a literal act of recollection, Vizenor draws from a range of vignettes—published, unpublished, unwritten, unheard—and bundles them together into a form of memory-writing that eludes definitive categorisation more and more nimbly the closer one looks. Born in the midst of the Great Depression, Vizenor's formative memories are all contexted by the 'wild tones and tensions of that time' where economic pressures further impelled Indigenous people to gravitate towards cities and, by settler logics, abandon their territories. In counter-memory, then, *Interior Landscapes* is a fundamentally generic exercise in de-territorial practices 'roused in literature, in myths and memories, and in the worldviews that roam between crossblood reservations and the cities.'<sup>252</sup> If Indigenous 'movement in and around these [settler] cities is vastly complex and impossible to generalize,' then such transnational vivacity also actively rebukes the abstractive homogenisation that comes from bundling Indigenous peoples together in the city as fungible "urban Indians" without

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<sup>250</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, front cover.

<sup>251</sup> David Murray, "Crossblood Strategies in the Writings of Gerald Vizenor," in *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*, ed. A. Robert Lee (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2000), 26.

<sup>252</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 37.

specific communities.<sup>253</sup> The 'territorial sovereignty of indigenous people was created and validated strategically in Western law, only to be subsequently constrained, limited, or usurped,' and by this framework specific Indigenous peoples are concomitantly restricted to their colonially enforced territories apart from their urban relatives.<sup>254</sup> This is, in part, the attitude of dominance that *Interior Landscapes* combats as Vizenor narrates the shifting presence of natural reason, of 'heron and crane totems in the wild cities' beyond colonial fiat of possessive sovereignty and monotheism.<sup>255</sup>

Vizenor has spent much of his literary career writing through the alternate precariousities and privileges that accompany his positionality as a self-identified postindian 'crossblood on the natural margins of a cultural contradance' between Indigenous and settler societies.<sup>256</sup> As Lawrence explains, 'the lives of urban mixed-bloods do not necessarily correspond to the tight boundaries dividing Native and white,' and the experiences of urban Indigenous peoples are invariably distinct from those of Indigenous peoples who live on reservation lands, though they are not separate.<sup>257</sup> This dimension sits in an ideological crease that produces tensions better engaged than overcome. The distance that most Indigenous people who live in urban environments have between them and their ancestral communities' land-bases has historically provoked contentions within communities. Vizenor begins *Interior Landscapes*, much as he does the preamble of the Constitution of the White Earth

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<sup>253</sup> Furlan, *Indigenous Cities*, 14.

<sup>254</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 8.

<sup>255</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 4.

<sup>256</sup> Gerald Vizenor, "The Envoy to Haiku," *Chicago Review* 39, no. 3/4 (1993): 55, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25305717>.

<sup>257</sup> Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others*, 11.

Nation, with an explanation of who and how he is in communal, practice-oriented terms. He begins with an imaginative atemporal remembrance that extends before himself and beyond nuclear family borders. This constitutes a break from received norms of autobiographical life-writing and follows Goeman's idea that how one 'organize[s] writing is important in understanding the way that territories and places emerge' in politically valent terms.<sup>258</sup> Vizenor tells the story of five totemic tricksters who 'endured as the crane, loon, bear, marten, and catfish clans' and constituted the first Anishinaabeg families.<sup>259</sup> On his paternal side, Vizenor is a descendant of the crane clan, and his autobiography traces many transformative migrations of the crane from White Earth to the city of Minneapolis and back.

This first chapter, 'Families of the Crane,' is a network of creased creative memories in which the perspective of the narrator is positionally volatile. He foregoes a typically stratified family tree, introducing first his paternal grandmother Alice, followed by his father Clement, before reaching back abruptly to 'Keeshkemun, grandson of the first leader of the crane families... a man who inspired compassionate stories' and 'resisted the influence of the crown colonies.'<sup>260</sup> In tracking back thus, Vizenor couches his ancestry in direct terms of sovereign Indigenous resistance. He then proceeds to describe subsequent generations with similar emphases given over to their entangled relationalities to settler forces and territories. Basile Hudon dit Beaulieu, Vizenor's third-great-grandfather, was a European fur trader responsible for his share of the 'beaver, bear, marten, and

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<sup>258</sup> Goeman, *Mark my Words*, 184.

<sup>259</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 3.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

ermine, hunted and murdered in the continental fur trade' that Vizenor denounced in *Treaty Shirts*.<sup>261</sup> Basile's son Paul, wife Margaret, and their family became the 'first settlers on the White Earth Reservation' in 1867, an ironic twist of colonial language that reinforces the fundamental exogeneity of territorial reservation establishment in the United States.<sup>262</sup> According to Vizenor, 'Truman, their last born, is my great-grandfather,' and the atemporal muddling of tense here merits attention.<sup>263</sup> Truman *is* Vizenor's great-grandfather, still, long after his death, and this demonstrates that ancestral ties in this White Earth worldview are not past at the point of one's passing. The relationship remains current, and it shifts as a current; the death of a relative does not precipitate their relegation to an irrevocable position of sub-existence in carceral time. It agitates the chronologue. This notion takes on a peculiar potency inasmuch as Vizenor's nuclear family—his son, wife, ex-wife, etc.—are afforded scant attention throughout. This is not neglect; it is a reconfiguration of received conventions of both autobiographical form and outwardly spiralling familial hierarchies of importance. Vizenor's recollections are atemporal stories that remember what the person in question did, and to/with whom. So, this constitutive approach to family keeps the relation very much present, asking not so much where one is situated as a dimension of communal emplacement with land, but rather asking '*what happened here?*'<sup>264</sup> As Noodin explains, 'action is the main character' in Anishinaabeg language, stories, and memories and, fittingly, we hear that 'Truman

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<sup>261</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts: October 2034 – A Familiar Treatise on the White Earth Nation* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2016), 105.

<sup>262</sup> Vizenor *Interior Landscapes*, 14.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>264</sup> Thrush, *Native Seattle*, 207, (italics in original).

was a hauler of logs; his breath was hard' as Vizenor engages in creative remembrance to enliven his ancestors through their action.<sup>265</sup>

Truman's brother John, meanwhile, is remembered as 'a great story teller, one of the best on the reservation; he even knew where the best stories lived and were remembered.'<sup>266</sup> Here, at the outset of Vizenor's orientation of himself amongst his network of ancestral relations, he reaffirms the interdependence of stories and places. Evinced the sentience of *Aadizookaanag* stories, Vizenor emplaces the narrative histories of his community. He does not speak *for* this community; he speaks *about* and *with* the community, and speaks for his several connections to them. What's more, he shows the stories to have verbal agency. They live in places, they are remembered in places, they are contingent upon 'the presence of the ground and the ground of presence.'<sup>267</sup> Much of this text progresses to describe and decode an urban environment that is in many ways disconnected and yet mutually inflected alongside the proprietarily 'checkerboard White Earth Reservation' and the legal land base of the White Earth Anishinaabeg.<sup>268</sup> Vizenor's project inscribes and uncovers connective pathways from the 'reservation heirs on the concrete' to the legally sovereign lands that Indigenous communities occupy outside the cityscape.<sup>269</sup> These transnational fissures unsettle the territorial bounds of the state and, thus, Vizenor's emplaced storywork evinces 'the trace as actual physical presence on/in an

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<sup>265</sup> Noodin, "Megwa Baabaamiiaayaayaang Dibaajomoyaang," 177; Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 15.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> David L. Moore, "The Ground of Memory: Vizenor, Land, Language," in *Native American Survivance, Memory, and Futurity: The Gerald Vizenor Continuum*, eds. Birgit Däwes and Alexandra Hauke (New York: Routledge, 2017), 98.

<sup>268</sup> Fitzgerald, *Native Women and Land*, 50.

<sup>269</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 30.

environment; as transitive verb... and the tracing of history.<sup>270</sup> Crucially, though, this is not a regressive movement. Nor is it a monodirectional one, because transmotion and the sovereign charges it carries are nourished by unbridled natural reason. Vizenor's depiction of an urban Indigenous experience is not marked by a myopic yearning for homecoming to a 'tighter seam of tradition,' a narrow dimension of indigeneity that splutters in the smog of settler cities.<sup>271</sup> Instead, he indigenises the abstract urban space. He reifies it because where 'urban Native people appropriate urban spaces as Native spaces, the sovereignty movement from the reserves is inevitably strengthened.'<sup>272</sup>

It is also important to note that this first chapter is the only one of twenty-nine that is not attributed to a specific month and year. Granted, the chapter spans a large amount of calendar time, but the habit of nailing down each chapter to a monthlong period that Vizenor exhibits elsewhere is an ironic turn, as practically every chapter transgresses this timeframe by flitting back and forth through years at a rapid clip. Blaeser argues that from an Anishinaabe perspective '[w]e become the stories we tell. They circle round us. They inhabit us. We become the people and places of our past,' and Vizenor's narratives meander, intertwine, and retrace such that they form atemporal storied denials of the settler chronologue.<sup>273</sup> The chapters run on in a superficially chronological order, but operate internally with an atemporal, digressive energy whereby people, places, and events are visited and

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<sup>270</sup> Stirrup, *Picturing Worlds*, 94.

<sup>271</sup> Vizenor and Lee, *Postindian Conversations*, 92.

<sup>272</sup> Lawrence, "Real" *Indians and Others*, 232.

<sup>273</sup> Kimberly M. Blaeser, "Vizenor and the Power of Transitive Memories," in *Native American Survivance, Memory, and Futurity: The Gerald Vizenor Continuum*, eds. Birgit Däwes and Alexandra Hauke (New York: Routledge, 2017), 77.

revisited in fresh contexts to reveal fresh perspectives on erstwhile “settled” accounts of urban places. The atemporal stories he tells connote more than just alterior perspectives of the passage of time; they re-member and re-imagine the function of time as it pertains to generational links to the past and the future. Speaking about the composition of *Interior Landscapes*, Vizenor explains that he ‘was not an isolated self and could not think about myself without the presence of many others’ in order to triangulate that sense of self such that the ‘pronoun, as an interior voice, is converted anew by the reader.’<sup>274</sup>

Vizenor has spent a life navigating back and forth between the city and the reservation, and the interplay between these different, yet imbricated places is itself a source of transmotional emplacement with ‘imagination, a verbal noun.’<sup>275</sup> International crossings are also not only the purview of Vizenor’s literary cadre, and a great deal of Vizenor’s scholarship is deeply transnational, ‘a tensive union of memory, tropisms, traces of convergence’ between ‘the mythic reservations where tricksters roamed and the cities where his father was murdered.’<sup>276</sup> Key to transmotional understanding of this transitivity, however, is the fact that this movement is always parsed in terms of the places it happens between; the transmotion itself is emplaced. Michael Snyder contends that ‘Vizenor equates Native transmotion with Native sovereignty, favoring over nationalist notions of sovereignty, which, rooted in territoriality and partisanship, can impinge on the

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<sup>274</sup> Vizenor and Lee, *Postindian Conversations*, 58-59.

<sup>275</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 263.

<sup>276</sup> Vizenor, *Native Provenance*, 132; Gerald Vizenor, “Crows Written on the Poplars: Autocritical Autobiographies,” in *I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers*, eds. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 101.

mobility of the sovereign intellectual.<sup>277</sup> It is an unjustified reduction to suggest a clean interchange between transmotion and sovereignties, since the two are vitally fluid and to suggest there is a neat equivalence invites a worrying tone of conceptual stagnation. Nevertheless, Snyder's recognition of the contra-territorial charge inherent to both ideas Vizenor's framework is an important crease, as is the observation that they do not play well with nationalism. As aforementioned, the tensions that arise between reservation and urban Indigenous experiences as a result of this kind of sovereign disjunct can be divisive. 'Urban Native communities,' writes Lawrence, 'are diasporic environments... composed of the fallout from government regulation of Native identity' and there is a sense by which 'urban Native people are able to maintain this flexibility' of sovereign identity 'precisely because they have no collective land base' to be restricted to or stripped of.<sup>278</sup>

I don't presume to make judgements on the efficacy of Indigenous political approaches. That's not my place. That being said, Vizenor's transitory upbringing offers an angle that regularly gets brushed over in discussions of Indigenous sovereignties which treat the urban environment as a lesser site of Indigenous autonomy when counterposed against reservation lands. In a chapter associated with October, 1943 Vizenor recalls an epiphanic childhood encounter with the Mississippi river—which occupies a complex place as 'American literature's most symbolic waterway'<sup>279</sup>—as it flows through the city of Minneapolis. As he does so, one gets an

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<sup>277</sup> Michael Snyder, "Gerald's Game: Postindian Subjectivity in Vizenor's *Interior Landscapes*," in *Gerald Vizenor: Texts and Contexts*, eds. Deborah L. Madsen and A. Robert Lee (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 48.

<sup>278</sup> Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others*, 208; 231.

<sup>279</sup> Kirwan, *Sovereign Stories*, 144.

insight into the influence of natural reason and what it looks like in the cityscape. As a meandering, thickening, and diluting thread of connectivity that eludes the tight territorial boundaries of those 'highest and most progressive stage[s] of empire [whose] precondition was the absence of Indigenous peoples,' the Mississippi carries natural reason through Minneapolis.<sup>280</sup> Its waters sluice into the sewer system, burn off and rise into the morning air, and run into every room with a tap. Vizenor writes about days passed playing truant from school in the third grade as a pivotal time, that his 'state of development as a mixed-blood descendant of the crane was bound by the river, backseats, basements, institutions, and my new friends at school.'<sup>281</sup> The Mississippi River acts here as the transmotional permeation of the territorial membrane between city and land where Vizenor's 'interior landscapes were enhanced... in the cold brown water when the river swelled in late spring.'<sup>282</sup> Describing how he and his friends would swim under a pair of bridges and listen fearfully to the thunderous rumble of steam trains barrelling above, a literal overlay of the urban on the natural is evoked. In the progression of Vizenor's personal philosophies, this becomes a key point wherein we see the way that 'passion enlivens reason' as opposed to jeopardising it.<sup>283</sup> I have explained that the attemporal flow of *Interior Landscapes* strains against the closed categories of month and year that are ascribed to each chapter, but in this case there is a particular significance. October

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<sup>280</sup> Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers*, 239.

<sup>281</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 47.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

is Vizenor's birth month and, in this vignette, it implies a kind of ideological rebirth—one of many that occur throughout the text.

This is a brief section in the autobiography, but it constitutes a critical turn as a young Vizenor comes to realise that '[t]he real demons were in the wild train wheels, the crack and groans of the support beams... the demons rained coal dust down on our wet bodies... we were blessed by the river hosts. I knew then that my fate would never be sealed in public schools.'<sup>284</sup> This sea change in personal perspective is deeply memorial and irrevocably tied to the rush of 'shadows on the dark [Mississippi] river', much as the rest of *Interior Landscapes* foregrounds the land.<sup>285</sup> Vizenor confronts a settler social narrative whereby water 'in the urban context' is misapprehended 'as something that is simply consumed, not produced or encountered.'<sup>286</sup> It is a story which also resonates with the positionality of Indigenous peoples in the cityscape too, as unencountered, unproductive, already consumed. This portion of the chronologue which champions '*urbs nullius*—urban space devoid of Indigenous sovereign presence' is a story which Vizenor reflects, inflects, and deploys as a transnational emplacement of purportedly diasporic Indigenous folks and sovereignties in the heart of settler territory.<sup>287</sup>

Again, there are arguments to be engaged regarding the way that Vizenor's postmodern verve can be read as tending toward ambiguity; Weaver warns that this variety of 'postmodernism and postcolonialism, which set out to overthrow various

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>286</sup> Steinberg and Peters, "Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces," 17.

<sup>287</sup> Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 176.

oppressions,' shelter a dangerous potential 'to enthrone oppressions of their own' in kind.<sup>288</sup> Yet I argue that such readings are overly reductive in that one should invoke Vizenor's decolonial strategies in coalition with powerful material resurgence, not in lieu (whether Vizenor would sign off on that view is a different matter). Concluding that particular swathes of land are singularly vital to Indigenous sovereignties or not at all misses the point(s) of practiced transmotion and its 'slow currents' which 'turn the leaves, cover the stones,' never settle.<sup>289</sup> Vizenor's theoretical ideas are not constrained from application to other Indigenous contexts any more than are those of Coulthard, Simpson, Justice, or Silko. Just as harmful as applying Vizenorean theory to Indigenous communities and lands as a panacea without attentive adaptation would be to refrain from applying it to these communities and their lands at all. Natural reason is 'a communal adjective of survivance over dominance' that emerges variegated and emplaced in specific lands and places that face specific challenges to sovereignties.<sup>290</sup> The headwaters and early tributaries of the Mississippi are one such focal site for the entire project of natural reason, and they undergird a number of Vizenor's fictional and non-fictional works, all suffused by that 'particular alchemy of memory in the theoretical and creative work of Vizenor.'<sup>291</sup>

October 2034: 100 years and change since the implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act. Almost a century after Vizenor learned to 'measure my uneven

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<sup>288</sup> Weaver, *Notes From a Miner's Canary*, xi.

<sup>289</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 49.

<sup>290</sup> Vizenor, *Native Liberty*, 17.

<sup>291</sup> Blaeser, "Vizenor and the Power of Transitive Memories," 176. See *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles* (1990), *Chair of Tears* (2012), and *Father Meme* (2008) as a selection of novels in which the Mississippi holds a special gravity.

breath with the river,' Indigenous constitutions and lands have been abrogated by federal decree in the foggy prospective future of *Treaty Shirts*.<sup>292</sup> Vizenor, as atemporal author, character, and bearer of memory returns to the Mississippi in 2034 on the White Earth Nation. Having seen the visionary CWEN that he co-authored be summarily invalidated, he celebrates his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday with 'the seven exiles and many other admirers. On a cold night a few days later, he walked alone into the solitude of the red pine forest and vanished near the headwaters of the Mississippi River.'<sup>293</sup> Both his first and last experiences of the river are transformative, and both emphasise the importance of emplaced natural reason to his expressions of sovereignties. 'Beginning and end are homologues,' though, according to Weaver, and the sovereignties coursing through Indigenous storywork of the Mississippi transgress carceral time in the bookends of the chronologue.<sup>294</sup> An individual born and died in years of territorial settler recalibration of Indigenous land bases, Vizenor's notions of dominion over land become frames but not shackles for his dynamic, reciprocal worldview.

### **How, When, and Where Sovereignties Take Place: It's All in the Present**

The fact that Vizenor includes photographs of the relatives he mentions in two interludes to *Interior Landscapes* is unremarkable in and of itself. What does deserve comment is the photograph that he chooses to place first amongst these. The image

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<sup>292</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 89.

<sup>293</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 30.

<sup>294</sup> Weaver, *Notes From a Miner's Canary*, 40.

is a facsimile of the documentation for a fee simple patent land allotment of eighty acres of land that Alice Beaulieu, Vizenor's paternal grandmother, was granted by Theodore Roosevelt's government in 1908. The 'handsome document bore the red embossed seal of the United States General Land Office' and was followed in 1910 by another eighty acres of territory.<sup>295</sup> The allotment document speaks in an awfully paternalistic tone, making the onerous claim that the 'UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in consideration of the premises, HAS GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DOES GIVE AND GRANT... the lands above described.'<sup>296</sup> Alice's ownership of the land described is couched in explicit terms of private territory, demarcated by its cartographic coordinates, and apportioned without any sense of the effervescent 'heartbeat, ravens on the wing, the rise of thunderclouds' that feed and express natural reason as a dimension of incommensurable Indigenous sovereignties.<sup>297</sup> In a display of ontological dissonance, Alice 'tried to understand the description but she never located the land on the reservation.'<sup>298</sup> Alice's comprehension of the description is not attributable to any kind of intellectual deficiency; it speaks to an incommensurability of worldviews that the monotheistic state makes no attempt to engage with, in dynamic reciprocity or otherwise. The state deigning to grant her this acreage is an ironic turn of 'the specious evolution of dominance' that underpins the hegemonic settler polity and its sovereign supremacy.<sup>299</sup> To Alice, the allotment of this parcel is quite fundamentally

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<sup>295</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 17.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-55.

<sup>297</sup> Vizenor, *Native Provenance*, 47

<sup>298</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 17.

<sup>299</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 86.

unintelligible in cosmological senses, and the lack of any emplaced experiential ties or remembrance of the place that the grant refers to render it impossible to find. Regardless of how precise the topographic coordinates may be, they are still prescriptively coordinate with a monotheistic framework of territory that does not cohere with natural reason. As such, she 'sold her government land allotment and moved with her eight children to Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, and later to Minneapolis. She held this new world on a sideboard, but the tribal beams were checked and the wind was cold.<sup>300</sup> Alice refused the carceral call of the American state to engage in a non-reciprocal relationship of ownership with the land. Instead, she opted to insinuate another crease of Indigenous sovereign presence into the urban environment of Minneapolis where her grandson would be 'haunted by the wind, by the scent of oil.'<sup>301</sup>

As received in the nationalist registers of Eurocentric conceptions of the last 600 years, the notion of territory is fraught in Indigenous contexts. In geophysical and epistemological terms, that strain of "territory" evidently does not seem to represent an entirely appropriate framework within which to speak about Indigenous relationships with land, nor a faithful way to engage with Indigenous sovereignties. It does, however, remain a bulwark against erasure in the political metaframe of settler colonialism. If, as I have suggested throughout, Indigenous sovereignties are active and atemporal, then the call for meaningful dynamic reciprocity between fundamentally incommensurable conceptions of territory is vital and vitalising.

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<sup>300</sup> Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*, 17.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

Consequently, displacing settler colonial oppression and dispossession seems to demand involving the emplacement of Indigenous worldviews *and* the emplacement of settler monotheism by ideologically creased Indigenous worldviews. Carlson observes, 'the realities of U.S. settler colonialism' dictate that 'not every claim of sovereignty can be rooted in the ongoing possession of ancestral or self-sustaining territorial autonomy.'<sup>302</sup> For peoples like the Tohono O'odham, whose territories have been parcelled, purchased, and partitioned by national settler frontiers to leave their sovereignty high and dry, the chronologue leaves scant recourse that is consistent with its own internal narrative mechanics. Even when continual presence and sovereign control of an Indigenous community *is* incontrovertible in legal terms, the chronologue invites spatial division, deploying boundaries of carceral time to displace and disavow. The sort of storywork undertaken by Silko and Vizenor as they remember other truths about the chronologue and other truths without the chronologue emplaces sovereignties in messy tangles that abjure territorialisation. They demonstrate where Indigenous sovereignties are, where they might be, and where settler sovereignty *is not always*.

According to Michiel de Vann, the addition of the productive suffix *-orium* to *terra* is inconsistent with regular Latin convention (which would require that it be affixed to the end of a verbal stem-word).<sup>303</sup> He treats this as a lexical hiccup, but I think there is more to this etymological oddity, perhaps unintentional, that we can harness. Indeed, perhaps it is an error borne of ideological comprehension, not just

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<sup>302</sup> Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty*, 27.

<sup>303</sup> Michiel de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 616.

grammar. Perhaps grammar is an aspect of ideological understanding. If we treat *terra*/land as more than just a noun, more than a possessive label and instead talk about it as verbally inflected by action, by doing, the cognitive dissonance eases. Or, if it does not ease, it becomes generative. Land may not be a verb in and of itself—in English at least—but the ‘worlds in transition, always already in existence, and constantly in motion’ that land emplaces signify innumerable relationships, all characterised by balances, imbalances and, crucially, actions.<sup>304</sup> In this sense one can see the sharpest deviation between territory and land which, as Coulthard reminds us, is ‘a mode of reciprocal relationship’ and not ‘simply some material object of profound importance to Indigenous cultures.’<sup>305</sup> Indigenous lands and Indigenous peoples are co-constituted by mutual emplacement, by atemporal relationships that do not adhere to the settler chronologue and the uniformity it represents. *Ocean Story* and *Interior Landscapes* are storywork articulations of creative memory that demonstrate this dense cosmology one might call natural reason, though it likely goes by many other names with even more ideological variegations.

Indigenous sovereignties are imperilled if they are disconnected from land, but to understand the connection(s) through adversarial territorial associations of ownership curtails the heterogeneity of emplacement and monotheorises the land. If initial Indigenous/settler encounters over land were, as Coll Thrush contends, a case ‘less [of] *terra incognita* than [of] *terra miscognita*,’ then it is important to treat those encounters, in an atemporal sense—as present (here), present (now), present

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<sup>304</sup> Fitzgerald, *Native Women and Land*, 17.

<sup>305</sup> Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 60-61.

(deployed), and altogether as sovereign presence.<sup>306</sup> Leanne Betasamosake Simpson suggests that the 'concept of constellation provides a different conceptual way of collectively ordering beyond individual everyday acts of resurgence' and I want to carry this forward into my afterthoughts about what comes after thoughts in studies of Indigenous sovereignties.<sup>307</sup> As I turn to a closing reconsideration of the practical deployments of Indigenous sovereignties that Silko and Vizenor's transmotivational storyworks of constitution, atemporality, and emplacement quicken, Simpson's constellational evocation crackles. Constellations are made and remade, imagined and reimagined, remembered and retold not only by the distant stars that compose them, but by the visionary and contingent lines that connect them. And in discussing the various ideological creases that liken and distinguish Indigenous sovereignties from settler sovereignty, the latter must be replaced by the former just as the former are by one another.

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<sup>306</sup> Thrush, *Native Seattle*, 22, (italics in original).

<sup>307</sup> Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 216.

Coda

After Thoughts on Indigenous Sovereignities: Activating Dynamic  
Reciprocity in Theories, Theorising Dynamic Reciprocity in  
Activism

'Indigenous peoples must lead the way'<sup>1</sup>

Nick Estes

'*How* molds and then gives birth to the present. The *how* changes us. *How* is  
the theoretical intervention'<sup>2</sup>

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

**Where, When, Who, and How Does This Leave Us?**

Even as I have explored the ways in which Silko and Vizenor's storyworks evince and energise Indigenous sovereignties, my approach as a listener-reader resists teleological conclusions beyond identifying the activism I advocate is ongoing. So,

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (London; New York: Verso, 2019), 158, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>2</sup> Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 19, <https://www-jstor-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt77c>, (italics in original).

while a conclusion sounds off-key, I offer a coda that concludes with questions, a related arrangement of after thoughts that chafe against my earlier readings. At the outset of this thesis I claimed that the contested discourse surrounding sovereignty in Indigenous contexts over the last half century is ideologically skewed by reductive definitions of sovereignty itself. This collapsing mode arises from misplaced efforts to reconcile incommensurable Indigenous worldviews with the dominant settler colonial paradigm of political sovereignty, which itself hinges on the abstraction and territorialisation of politics, epistemologies, cosmologies, histories, geographies, and temporalities. These techniques of suppression singularise sovereignty as a binary possession that is unilaterally held or withheld; they funnel and monotheorise sovereignty as Enlightenment-derived epistemology has done across various registers since the first waves of colonial globalisation to fabricate a paradoxical level playing field of exploitation—to fight freedom with Freedom. Crucially, this is a temporal territorialisation as well as a spatial one. As possessive noun, this ineffable “sovereignty” is a switch that can be flipped to impose the cessation of Indigenous sovereignties *or* legitimate them with equally harmful consequences. Historically, this underscores that ‘Anglo-American willingness to recognize Native sovereignty’ extends only as far as the settler state’s ability ‘to blunt the legal implications of that recognition’ does.<sup>3</sup> In this way, rather than engaging manifold Indigenous sovereignties, the settler state works to bridle a speciously unified “indigenous Sovereignty” by determining what it “is” and “is not.”

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<sup>3</sup> Gregory Ablavsky, “Species of Sovereignty: Native Nationhood, the United States, and International Law, 1783-1795,” *Journal of American History* 106, no. 3 (December 2019): 600, <https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/jahist/jaz503>.

This misleadingly rigid ‘what-is-it’ question that so frequently shapes discourse around “indigenous Sovereignty” is a Sisyphean one that I have not—and will not—tender an answer to in this project. I take as given that the existence, power, and legitimacy of Indigenous sovereignties are indisputable. This is both because “indigenous Sovereignty” is a dubious umbrella under which to uniformise diverse political ontologies, and (relatedly) because I have not undertaken a study of sufficient depth to offer a robust or good-faith account of any specific Indigenous sovereignties in conclusive terms. Doing so would undermine my attempt to walk-the-walk of the dynamic reciprocity I have propounded—that is, demonstrating Indigenous sovereignties’ immense and intractable potential to inflect and affect monotheistic settler sovereignty without settler validation. I have pursued a similar ethos of enquiry as Mark Rifkin in rendering ‘visible the presence of other potential trajectories of Indigenous flourishing’ via formally diverse sovereignties, without mapping those trajectories.<sup>4</sup> These stories—sovereign agents and actants—are for me to engage, not to unpack, and I mean that concerning ethicality and capacity. Contextualising and decentring the ‘what-is-it’ question, I have instead shown that the work of dismantling settler dominance in sovereign terms is quickened by deploying different types and seeing them borne out in ‘the sure transmotion of sovereignty’ that pulses through Silko and Vizenor’s storywork.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 192, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>5</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 23.

In Chapter One, I addressed the ways that Vizenor tackles the constitutional ‘who-are-we/they’ of White Earth sovereignty in the Anishinaabeg context with a transmotional strain of Indigenous storywork, which is ‘action, it is process’ that enlivens forms of ‘mobiliz[ation] for grassroots transformation’ and structural change as inseparable constituents of Indigenous sovereignties.<sup>6</sup> This storywork—a communal storytelling and story-listening praxis that is fundamentally pedagogical in nature—carves an ideological crease in which the commonalities and tensions of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation and its literary amendment *Treaty Shirts* are explicated. The two texts co-create a relationship of dynamic reciprocity that constitutes one dimension of Indigenous sovereignty whereby the CWEN’s ‘creative thesis has continued in exile, and has advanced the notion of transmotion in art and literature’ to significant political affect and effect despite the unsure status of the CWEN itself.<sup>7</sup> Vizenor’s constitutional work both describes an Indigenous mode of storywork as a kind of governance and emphasises that constitution is a process; to constitute is to imagine and to make up, to deploy and to do, to envision and to realise. The CWEN and *Treaty Shirts* are both imaginings of constitutive sovereignty as verb, which troubles the nominal, contingent structure of possessive settler sovereignty which is seldom secure through time for Indigenous peoples. Time, it transpires, matters not just as measure but as method and means of sovereignties. This yields another question more elucidative than “what”—“when?”

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<sup>6</sup> Jo-ann Archibald Q’um Q’um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo, “Introduction,” in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, eds. Jo-ann Archibald Q’um Q’um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo (London: Zed Books, 2019), 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts: October 2034—A Familiar Treatise on The White Earth Nation* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2016), 116.

In Chapter Two, I explored Silko's imbricated atemporal "whens" of Indigenous sovereignties that complicate colonial temporal constructs by which '[t]emporary sovereignty is essentially a deferred genocide.'<sup>8</sup> As Rifkin notes, the 'question of the degree to which modes of governance officially recognized by the United States as sovereignty can express forms of temporality that differ from dominant Euramerican frames of reference' hangs heavy across Indigenous sovereignty discourse.<sup>9</sup> Again, these atemporal sovereign dimensions gather in tortuous creases and separate into mutually elucidative, variegated histories of the North American continent. Barker is correct in claiming that 'the discursive proliferation of sovereignty must be understood in its historical context,' yet the double singularity of her summation poses its own dilemma because 'authorized histories' with singular contexts 'deny the experiences—[past, present, and future]—of the oppressed.'<sup>10</sup> History, as with capital-S Sovereignty, is coded in settler monotheism as a proprietary concept; you have it or you don't. Histories and temporal assimilation are therefore presented as evidence of the proprietary dispossession of Indigenous peoples just as forcefully as lands are. Accordingly, Silko deploys similar tactics of verb-driven histories, that is histories *done*, to reinforce the atemporal patterns she uses to interrupt the settler chronologue. Barker's emphasis

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<sup>8</sup> Andrea Smith, "Sovereignty as Deferred Genocide," in *Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness*, eds. Tiffany Lethabo King, Jenell Navarro, and Andrea Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 127, ProQuest Ebook Central. I include Andrea Smith's work here on its critical merit and without comment on the ongoing controversy surrounding her claims to Cherokee identity.

<sup>9</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 179.

<sup>10</sup> Joanne Barker, "For Whom Sovereignty Matters," in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, ed. Joanne Barker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 20; Rebecca Tillett, *Otherwise, Revolution!: Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 109.

on context is astute, and by tackling the importance of temporal sovereignties through storywork, Silko navigates creased and divergent altemporalities in a multitextual, metatextual literary revolution that is palimpsestic: it is context all the way down. Altemporal sovereignty is theoretically disruptive. Altemporalities that are embedded and lived in place become actively revolutionary.

In Chapter Three, the conceptual foci of Chapters One and Two were brought to bear, bringing texture to Vizenor and Silko's contradistinctive answers to the broad question "where are Indigenous sovereignties?" Coulthard explains that '[p]lace is a way of knowing' just as much as place is a site of knowing.<sup>11</sup> Embedding a sense of natural reason in their life-writing storywork via creative memory, Silko and Vizenor show altemporal places to be a core dimension of Indigenous sovereignties because 'it is these places that give narratives such resonance over the ages.'<sup>12</sup> Akin to the way that the stories slip over and under their manifold meanings, the emplacement that roots altemporal sovereignties is messy, interdependent, and provocative of contested, co-generative worldviews. A place seldom remains that place alone. *Ocean Story* and *Interior Landscapes* trouble territorial settler frontiers of dominance by highlighting the violence intrinsic to abstracting land as property, an act which abjures the palimpsestic emplacement that occurs amidst altemporal emplacement. Moreover, they dislodge geopolitical settler monotheism by desanctifying its socio-economic primacy.<sup>13</sup> When these narratives occupy the ideological creases

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<sup>11</sup> Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 61.

<sup>12</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 14.

<sup>13</sup> Neil Nunn, "Toxic Encounters, Settler Logics of Elimination, and the Future of a Continent," *Antipode* 50, no. 5 (June 2018): 1341, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12403>.

inscribed by atemporal, co-constitutive Indigenous storywork—once the settler triad of chronologue, monotheism, and territorialised sovereignty is folded into those torsional creases—the fiats of the broad settler worldview are themselves emplaced amongst other sovereignties, unfixed, and set in motion. Monotheism becomes another incommensurable worldview instead of the norm against which incommensurable Indigenous worldviews are measured. Thus, settler sovereignty is pulled into a relational array with Indigenous sovereignties that does not assure, but provides the kindling for, relationships of dynamic reciprocity. Povinelli insists, “[n]ot this” makes a difference even if it does not immediately produce a propositional otherwise.<sup>14</sup> It is in this ethos that I have advanced an account of Indigenous sovereignties as non-contingent entities via which one can face up to the subjugative political genealogy of settler colonialism and ‘imagine otherwise.’<sup>15</sup>

I have argued throughout that Indigenous sovereignties are entangled with one another and with settler sovereignty in what I call ideological creases. I have suggested that ideological creases are borders and exchanges, partitions and portals, layered, linked, and limited. They are akin to *Ocean Story’s* Great Black Whale, cosmological convergences and divergences not to be overcome nor dismissed, capable of reciprocity and ruin depending on what one tries to do with them. ‘Relationality,’ one should remember, ‘is always vexed, if it’s genuine.’<sup>16</sup> Yet

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<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 192.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018), 210.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

that is not to say that relationality between sovereignties need be—or even can be—  
intrinsically competitive.

In conjunction and in friction I suggest that these three chapters collectively  
have themselves creased and contributed to a discursive re-narrativisation and  
expansion of settler-constrained sovereign questions. These sovereignties are  
emplaced in the creases of cityscapes and coastal borderlands in Vizenor’s  
Minneapolis and Silko’s Puerto Z to disrupt the territorial exclusivity of settler  
monotheorism. They fold the linear chronologue across *Almanac*’s pages, creating  
dog ears amidst the Reign of Death-Eye Dog. They transgress the aqueous border  
on Lake of the Woods, creating new sovereign dimensions that illuminate the way  
settler colonial oppression both ‘obscures the conditions of its own production’ and  
likewise obscures the production of its own conditions. The atemporal sovereignties  
therein move around and about it so as to reveal the ‘peaceful settler hid[ing] behind  
the ethnic cleanser’ *and vice versa*.<sup>17</sup> The incommensurable yet supportive sovereign  
dimensions of *Treaty Shirts* and the CWEN illustrate that ‘neither a constitution, nor  
the nation’s government is a magic bullet... solutions must still be animated by the  
citizens.’<sup>18</sup> In sum, I have looked to shift the errant focus on what “indigenous  
Sovereignty” is, to how Indigenous sovereignties are engendered, are engaged, are  
done and never quite done.

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<sup>17</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 14.

<sup>18</sup> Melissa L. Tatum et al., *Structuring Sovereignty: Constitutions of Native Nations* (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, 2014), 198.

## Literary Activism of Insurgence, Resurgence, and Storywork

Each new sovereign dimension I have gestured toward has contributed to an accretive desanctification and resituation of settler cosmological monotheism. The key methodological strategy involved in this reorientation has engaged Indigenous storywork as, among other things, multivalent literary activism that provides the contexts for relationships of dynamic reciprocity between unlike sovereignties. Sean Teuton reminds us that '[l]iberating ideas rely on liberating readings of liberating literature,' and this consciousness remains at the forefront of my interpretation of Silko and Vizenor's heuristic storywork.<sup>19</sup> Though I have consistently warned that monotheistic Western epistemology is devoid of narrative, I have also argued that the settler chronologue is a singularly ordained history. The very process of writing this thesis with both of these ideas in play has consequently highlighted a coterminous binary: no story is no different to one story. *One* story is not a story at all. Or, at the least, one and none reach the same denouement.

In Mary Midgley's estimation, a climate of 'ontological warfare' and the 'exaltation of not being wrong,' have directed the denarrativization of epistemological monotheism.<sup>20</sup> Western science has been cited (here and in wider scholarship) as the most immanent case study into this denarrative pattern, but the same genealogy pervades across disciplinary registers. This story-less epistemological hegemony undergirds law, economics, politics, history, and more

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<sup>19</sup> Sean Kicummah Teuton, *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 22, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Midgley, *The Essential Mary Midgley*, ed. David Midgley (London: Routledge, 2005), 340; 231, EBSCO eBook Subscription Academic Collection.

such that whatever relationships with Indigenous alternatives that these fields claim to participate in are formally engineered by settler society into the chronologue, not stimulated by dynamic reciprocity. Lisa Brooks offers a metaphorical shift in the spatiality of the “field” of historical investigation which brings it into alignment with sovereign storywork. She contests that one might benefit from thinking less in terms of disciplinary fields than a ‘(narrative) swamp which requires different kinds of navigation, or reading practices,’ and naturally abhors enclosure or easy traversal.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, although this is a literarily focussed thesis, housed in a primarily literary disciplinary context, the valence of Indigenous sovereignties, as expressed via storywork, should not be so disciplinarily enclosed in thea of dynamic reciprocity. Stories are the creases and the context, and I follow Goorie-Koori poet Evelyn Araluen Corr’s call to ‘situate literary theory as a tool of a broader storywork practice as opposed to storywork being a subset or specific methodology of literary theory.’<sup>22</sup>

Storywork is indeed methodology, but it is more still. As a set of formally multifarious, constitutive counter-strikes, Vizenor and Silko’s storywork quickens discussions of Indigenous sovereignties *and* the chronologue of settler sovereignty which is sucked in to the swamp. This effect arises in a complicating spirit of liberatory transmotion which ‘races as a horse across the page, and the action is a sense of sovereignty,’ yet is not tantamount to sovereignty *per se*.<sup>23</sup> The three explorations of

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<sup>21</sup> Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip’s War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 10, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>22</sup> Evelyn Araluen Corr, “The Limits of Literary Theory and the Possibilities of Storywork for Aboriginal Literature in Australia,” in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, eds. Jo-ann Archibald Q’um Q’um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo (London: Zed Books, 2019), 197.

<sup>23</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 179.

diffuse articulations of sovereign dimensions I have undertaken outline three necessary deployments of alterior Indigenous sovereignties which are entangled with their Western analogues.<sup>24</sup> In Vizenorean terms, these snarled relationships might be articulated as shadow survivance, 'the natural trace of liberation in the ruins of representation... not the burdens of conceptual references.'<sup>25</sup> But shadow survivance, it seems, has its limits; shadow survivance is pathway and practice, not end-goal, and creases are populated by shadows but not those cast by colonial edifices. To riff on an earlier claim pertaining to sovereignty, the limit of survivance is not survivance. So, to pose another question, how do those three core ideas I have articulated—altemporalities, constitutions, and emplaced memory—move forward to co-realise types of Indigenous sovereignties that are not necessarily incompatible yet are, importantly, incommensurable, with monotheistic settler sovereignty? A more significant question, perhaps, is how can these epistemologically and ontologically dense Indigenous sovereignties emplace settler sovereignty amongst dynamically reciprocal, contradistinctive constellations, to echo Simpson's construction? How is it that storywork quickens this reciprocity past theoretical confines and into meaningful actuality?

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<sup>24</sup> Jean Dennison, "Entangled Sovereignties: The Osage Nation's Interconnections with Governmental and Corporate Authorities," *American Ethnologist* 44, no. 4 (November 2017): 684-696, <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12566>.

<sup>25</sup> Gerald Vizenor, "The Ruins of Representation: Shadows Survivance and the Literature of Dominance," *American Indian Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 7; 10, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1184777>.

## Transmotional Sovereignties: (in)Creasing the Forms of Revolutionary Politics

Many non-Indigenous—and occasionally Indigenous—scholars have fallen foul of collapsing Indigenous cosmologies into a singular, smooth category of indigeneity to mount a riposte to settler states, reminding us that ‘no response to colonial contact can remain innocent of that contact.’<sup>26</sup> Collecting heterogenous Indigenous cosmologies under a coalitional banner of indigeneity is not egregious so much as is treating the *banner itself* as a unitary cosmology. By imprinting a neat ideological border to separate indigeneity from monotheistic settler sovereignty, another false binary arises to interpolate an artificial moiety. This conglomeration both melds Indigenous worldviews and irons out the creases they share. First, Indigenous sovereignties, collectively, are erroneously quantified as (at best) theoretically commensurate, or balanced in concept, with the settler counterpart. The bad-faith assumption in this framework presupposes that Indigenous sovereignties can *only* engage settler sovereignty as a cohesive alliance, placing undue pressure on maintaining a mellifluous tenor of pan-Indigenous ideological harmony and rounding off the edges of ‘jagged worldviews’ so that they tessellate neat and flush.<sup>27</sup> In part, this is attributable to the way in which, for all the extant work showing that Indigenous epistemologies and polities do not participate in a strictly binarised mode of oppositional understanding to monotheism, the meta-framework that has been covertly insinuated to accommodate Indigenous/settler encounters of worldview

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<sup>26</sup> Kimberly M. Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 156. By ‘innocent’ here, Blaeser is not levying an inverse ascription of guilt.

<sup>27</sup> Leroy Little Bear, “Jagged Worldviews Colliding,” in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 84.

regularly adopts this rubric. Consequently, no conceptual room remains to treat cosmologically diffuse verbal Indigenous sovereignties as anything more than constituent parts of a nominal Indigenous whole reacting to settler monotheism. Inversely, this partition also inflates the stock of white supremacy to appear as somehow more substantial than it should be, as one set strong against many in a formation where the 'blunter the edges of political instruments, the sharper their points.'<sup>28</sup> This is where dynamic reciprocity and Simpson's constellational arrays become catalytic. Indigenous sovereignties are indivisible from (though not reducible to) the cosmologies they invoke, and '[c]osmologies are a source of identity and [crucially] orientation to the world.'<sup>29</sup> If settler colonial states like the U.S., Canada, and Mexico rely on a hierarchical blueprint whereby settler sovereignty exists at the top—above and superior to Indigenous sovereignties—then the seemingly improved configuration that platforms a homogenised "Indigenous Sovereignty" simply tweaks the orientation such that settler sovereignty exists *across from* and superior to Indigenous sovereignties with fewer apparent mechanisms to criticise.

Two truths I hold to be self-evident: (1) settler sovereignty is a common vector of oppression to Indigenous polities, and (2) coalitional politics are important to desanctifying settler monotheism and the territorial chronologue it rests upon. The truth of these observations, however, does not preclude transmotion beyond such a

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<sup>28</sup> Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 181, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>29</sup> Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 7.

state of affairs. These ideological creases that contour relationalities between and amongst Indigenous sovereign deployments have shifted, are shifting, and will shift again because, as Kimmerer asserts, '[b]alance is not a passive resting place – it takes work.'<sup>30</sup> Coalitional politics employed between Indigenous peoples to destabilise and dismantle settler colonialism represent an important tactic to address the sober fact that inaction and ambivalence serves the beneficiary structures of the colonial chronologue which can afford—across a number of registers—to wait. Altemporalities, alternative constitutions and palimpsestic emplacements of memory represent concerted and collectivised strategies for colonial displacement. They enable the epistemological displacement of monotheorism, the chronologue, territorialism, and the overarching 'transparency of white positionings' that renders these aspects of settler violence systemically 'unseen and unmarked.'<sup>31</sup>

Ultimately, though, *displacing* settler colonial political frameworks like sovereignty is a malapropos endgame for critical studies into, and critical outcomes of, Indigenous sovereignties. If anything, its dangerous abstractions and valuations render settler colonialism already ideologically displaced enough, yielding the catastrophic consequences I explored in Chapter Three. Monotheorism has less 'failed to mind the gap between concept and reality' in this regard than it has leveraged into being and fortified that very gap to displace colonial logics from the places of their impact.<sup>32</sup> Conversely, ideological creases like those I navigate in this

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>31</sup> Ruth Frankenberg, "Introduction: Local Whiteness, Localizing Whiteness," in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 1; 9.

<sup>32</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 13.

thesis are characterised by messiness, by emplacement and plurality where nothing and no one is left unchanged by the interpellation of worldviews that occurs in these polyvocal spaces. In dynamic reciprocity, this cosmological co-generativity operates without ceding ground in the name of reconciliation, and quickens transnational, incommensurable senses of sovereign density and 'complexity of Indigeneity' that are 'lived everyday.'<sup>33</sup> Because they describe an ethic of sovereign relationality that looks to emplace settler sovereignty explicitly and accountably on Indigenous grounds, the concepts I have deployed throughout are quite the opposite of displacement.

Simpson notes that 'Western liberatory theories can be very useful to Indigenous scholarship and mobilization particularly when they are considered *within* grounded normativity or *within* Indigenous thought systems.'<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, throughout this thesis I have turned to Western thinkers and thoughts as and when they can be deployed in a dynamic of reciprocity with the Indigenous worldviews I engage as we (pronoun invoked from a white positionality) 'have to center Indigeneity and allow it to change us' in substantive cosmological ways.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, settler epistemological and political formations need not to be further displaced, but rather emplaced within that stellar array that Simpson posits, or, put differently, the Sea of Sovereignty painted by *Treaty Shirts'* exiled virtuoso Hole in the Storm; those places where the creases of the constellations or the whitecaps are co-constituted

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<sup>33</sup> Michelle Daigle, "The Spectacle of Reconciliation: On (the) Unsettling Responsibilities to Indigenous Peoples in the Academy," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37, no. 4 (2019): 706, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775818824342>.

<sup>34</sup> Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 56, (italics in original).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

by their contexts, distances, and collisions in transmotion. Thus, the notion of the insurgent atemporal presents/presence of Indigenous sovereignties hinge on bringing the settler state into a fundamentally different formation of sovereign relationships, quite probably kicking and screaming. Following this thread, it is vital to accept that respecting 'Indigenous narratives, phenomenologies, and practices of time as sovereignty, then, is not necessarily an indication that they should be governmentalized' in the mechanisms of the settler state.<sup>36</sup> Often it is a direct indication of the inverse, that the entrenched apparatus of settler governance need to be redesigned with indigeneity at the roots, not grafted on. Such relationships inhabit a far vaster political firmament than monotheistic settler sovereignty imputes amidst the 'waves of shadows' in creases of sovereignties.<sup>37</sup> These creases remain resistant to closure and transmotionally intractable. Just as significantly, they remain entangled with settler monotheism and affect its primacy, disrupting the patronising Western 'positioning of Indigenous studies as *different* [which] needlessly marginalises our *density*.'<sup>38</sup> Ideological creases of dynamic reciprocity rebuke the settler bind whereby the criteria of sovereignty that pass muster for the settler state to recognise "legitimate" autonomy uphold anti-Indigenous philosophies. With a transmotional approach, genuine dynamic reciprocity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews ultimately interpellates settler

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<sup>36</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 186.

<sup>37</sup> Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*, 120.

<sup>38</sup> Chris Andersen, "Critical Indigenous Studies: From Difference to Density," *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 81, <https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v15i2.2039>, (italics in original).

monotheism and the sovereignty it engenders as the crease, not the canvas; a wave, not the sea; a star, not the Sun.

### **'Deconstruction is part of a much larger intent': Eruptive Action and Cosmological Activism at the Grassroots<sup>39</sup>**

Tensions remain. This is no bad thing; tensions, torsions, and incommensurabilities are inevitable in genuine interactions of dynamic reciprocity. Nevertheless, the ongoing work of checking in on and attending to these frictional cosmological terrains is not diminished. Any set of cosmological relationships risks calcification if not regularly re-viewed, and it is crucial to guard against the metastasis of tensions into tangible harms. In this project, ensconced in contexts of Indigenous sovereignties, activism, and resurgence, one of the thorniest tensions I negotiate as a scholar speaks to the distance between grassroots activism and academic activism.<sup>40</sup> Rather than delivering insipid pontification on the value of academic work, I will instead explore the particular concomitances between academic discourse and grassroots activism where Indigenous sovereignties are concerned. The exigent 'challenge is to reframe revolt' via scholarship, given the distinct pressures that Indigenous peoples and their sovereignties endure on practical and daily bases.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Zed Books, 2012), 3, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>40</sup> By which I mean the research and pedagogical prongs of the colonially produced university institution as a category. Although institutionally Euramerican universities have diverse ethea and activities, I address the ideological commonalities they share in a structural sense.

<sup>41</sup> Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2005), 26.

Rifkin wonders if 'the use of the term *sovereignty* impl[ies] a definite relation between institutions of governance and those other areas, textures, or quotidian dimensions of social life,' and the answer probably arises from adjusting the question.<sup>42</sup> If by 'definite' one also means "definitive," then no. Even so, manifold relations connect and crease institutions of governance with those other, less overtly legislative, dimensions of sovereignties. If 'one needs to avoid taking the apparatus of governance... as one's sole intellectual and political frame of reference,' then one should also avoid subscribing to any sole relational frame of reference.<sup>43</sup> The ties between academic discourses and grassroots activism *are* ideological creases of sovereignties. Populating these creases—the kind sustained by Indigenous storywork—one locates concomitant routes to dynamic reciprocity that vitalise the incommensurabilities between academic and grassroots activism rather than overcome them. As Justice affirms, 'when we don't recognize or respect our interdependencies, we don't have the full context that's necessary for healthy and effective action,' and interdependencies mean more than just idea(l)s that are consonant.<sup>44</sup> Identifying *Treaty Shirts* as a storywork amendment to the Constitution of the White Earth Nation does not have an uncomplicated, direct bearing over White Earth governance. It does, however, enliven the ideological creases ravelling governance and other facets of sovereignty, since 'before any political structure can be formed it must be creatively and collectively pictured' outside of its own eventual

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<sup>42</sup> Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 180 (italics in original).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>44</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 5.

legislative mechanisms.<sup>45</sup> Silko's attemporal formations in *Almanac* do not directly perform the work of taking down the chronologue in its everyday carceral operations. What Silko's attemporalities actuate most incisively is the proliferation of messy alternatives and the inscription of creases between the settler chronologue and Indigenous attemporalities, 'both emergent and residual,' to inflect our understandings of Indigenous revolution.<sup>46</sup>

The connective tissue between the political bodies of grassroots and academic activism is important, but so are the rejections and the spaces in between. Silko and Vizenor practice radical visions of Indigenous sovereignties that speak to related yet distinct nodes of activism, and their storywork becomes that 'crucial interweave and imbrications that mesh scholarship and fiction to real-world or *hors-texte* concerns.'<sup>47</sup> Significantly, though, the weave itself is rough, frayed, kinked. The limitations typically applied to activist work in academia are often those engendered by the institutional context, formal syntax, colonial genealogy, and epistemological exclusivity with which academic environs are built. These *are* limitations and should be engaged as such, not reconciled. In one sense these limits refer to the way in which Indigenous epistemologies can be incorporated into academe. In a more important sense, they refer to the incommensurability of institutional academe within Indigenous epistemologies and the sovereignties they feed and are fed by. In *both* cases, navigating the breaks between strands of activism emerges as a job that

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<sup>45</sup> Lisa Brooks, "The Constitution of the White Earth Nation: A New Innovation in a Longstanding Indigenous Literary Tradition," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 59, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/studamerindilite.23.4.issue-4>.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>47</sup> Padraig Kirwan, *Sovereign Stories: Aesthetics, Autonomy, and Contemporary Native American Writing* (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 317.

requires agitative academic work approached with imagination and listener-readers who are 'not afraid to let those imaginings destroy the pillars of settler colonialism' so that less subjugative formations might flourish.<sup>48</sup> The work is not the same, but it is inseparable, and dynamic reciprocity is not A to B.

The dangerous labour of front-line water protectors like Oglala Lakota activist Red Fawn Fallis, whose pressure stymied the progress of the Dakota Access Pipeline and drew international attention to the violation of Standing Rock waterways, is not the same type of work as Cortney Smith's exploration of the political valence of sartorial irony at the protests in the form of acerbic T-Shirt design.<sup>49</sup> The work undertaken by generations of Indigenous lawyers and campaigners that culminated in the Supreme Court's seismic decree that most of Eastern Oklahoma remains unabrogated Muscogee (Creek) reservation land (*McGirt v. Oklahoma* 2020) is unlike the sovereign dimensions that burgeon out of Wilson Weasel Tail's litigative poetics in *Almanac* and Justice Molly Crèche's courtroom in *Treaty Shirts*. These remarks might seem unremarkable, but they are of a kind frequently omitted in academic discourse. These rocks, as the old Yaqui smuggler Calabazas might again remind us, are not identical. Nonetheless, Simpson reminds us that in a Nishnaabeg context 'theory isn't just an intellectual pursuit. It is woven with kinetics,' with transnational action, and 'is contextual and relational.'<sup>50</sup> So, of course, one is not precluded from participating in and across these different forms of activism at different times, at the

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<sup>48</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 263; Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 10.

<sup>49</sup> Cortney Smith, "Ironic Confrontation as a Mode of Resistance: The Homeland Security T-Shirt at the Dakota Access Pipeline Protests," *American Indian Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (Summer 2019), <https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.43.3.0339>.

<sup>50</sup> Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 151.

same time, in different spaces, in the same spaces, and numerous other vibrant entanglements of co-constitutional reciprocity. Transformative action in Indigenous contexts of resurgence is neither “top-down,” nor “bottom-up,” nor a basic “both-at-once.” The subjugative scope of settler colonialism necessitates something more coalitional and more radical. As such, Indigenous resurgence via dynamically reciprocal sovereign formations is an emanative ‘multi-directional assault on colonial practices’ which include monotheistic articulations of institutional epistemological supremacy.<sup>51</sup>

Grassroots activism remains integral to the flourishing of Indigenous peoples’ sovereignties. It is, however, rarely a simple task to gauge the success or failure of such activism because the mechanisms of settler monotheism I have identified still dominate the (arguable dearth of) political narrative. Understanding *and* failing to fully understand the stories that these activists tell and are involved in is a node of commonality where literary activism can show *how* these are successful deployments of sovereignties instead of posing ineffectual questions about *whether* they are successful. The #NoDAPL resistance at Standing Rock has yielded a halt to the Dakota Access Pipeline’s operations. Wet’suwet’en protests against the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline Project have stymied extractive progress, though not permanently. The atemporal Mashpee Wampanoag campaign for federal recognition and the trust status of their land still weathers financial siege tactics, whereby the House of Representatives’ tug-of-war with the Senate and the accretive costs incurred to the

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<sup>51</sup> Philip J. Deloria and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, “On Genealogies of Activism and Scholarship,” in *Speaking of Indigenous Politics: Conversations with Activists, Scholars, and Tribal Leaders*, ed. J. Kēhaulani Kauanui (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 121.

Mashpee over time may render the end outcome moot. The Indigenous-youth-led River Run march in Toronto against state-sanctioned mercury poisoning of Asabiinyashkosiwagong Nitam-Anishinaabeg land at Grassy Narrows provoked outrage, yet the federal government's pledge to build an on-reserve care facility for victims of mercury poisoning falls short of treating the mercury-rich waterways. Māori efforts to secure proprietary rights to their Treaty of Waitangi-protected portion of Aotearoa's 5G spectrum as sovereign taonga Māori (treasures) have borne fruit, but the settler government's stance against 5G development essentially overrides Māori sovereignty for the time being. After decades of Indigenous campaigning, the Washington Football Team retired its slur-name, but as Estes notes '[t]he NFL will still host its games on stolen Native land just minus one extremely racist team name and logo.'<sup>52</sup> Statues commemorating Christopher Columbus have been toppled in North Carolina, California, Virginia; and conquistador Juan de Oñate in Albuquerque, vaunted fore/fauxbear of Menardo's first wife Iliana in *Almanac*, has fallen, too.<sup>53</sup> In New Haven, less than a mile from the archives that hold Silko and Vizenor's papers, the Columbus idol in Wooster Square that I often passed during my research trip was removed on June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020.<sup>54</sup>

All this is to say that such campaigns are the ground zeroes of transnational resurgents and resurgence. But that doesn't get scholars, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, off the hook. Nor, indeed, does it relegate scholarly work to engage

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<sup>52</sup> Nick Estes (@nick\_w\_estes), "The NFL will still host its games on stolen Native land just minus one extremely racist team name and logo," Twitter, July 13, 2020, 2.53 p.m., [https://twitter.com/nick\\_w\\_estes/status/1282674467219464192](https://twitter.com/nick_w_estes/status/1282674467219464192).

<sup>53</sup> Though one white "defender" of the statue opened fire against activists at the scene.

<sup>54</sup> All accurate as of 09 December, 2020.

Indigenous cosmologies and sovereignties to a lower category of priority, because claims to 'knowledge always legitimate certain kinds of actions [and inactions,] and certain kinds of institutions.'<sup>55</sup> Although grassroots and academic activism overlap, they do not do so frequently enough in meaningful ways—they regularly fail to inscribe co-generative creases alongside quotidian activism. Moreover, this lack of meaningful entanglement serves to tacitly reinscribe monotheistic epistemological hegemony and, consequently, circumscribe Indigenous sovereignties. This thesis has not been remedial to these patterns, but I hope that it may precipitate that kind of work.

Importantly, the purpose of this project has never been to show that, underneath it all, these forms of Indigenous activism are actually doing the same thing—that's not how creases of dynamic reciprocity function, and it represents a reckless essentialisation of heterogeneous Indigenous worldviews that 'cannot be reduced to a singular, one-dimensional theory or methodology.'<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, I do not offer a plug-n-play methodological blueprint for what relationships of dynamic reciprocity look like. Rather, I have aimed to demonstrate why, how, and where such cultivational approaches are important. This thesis is not the same work as the enactment of Indigenous sovereignties or divestment from monotheism. It does, however, help to create the conditions where such work can be accomplished, another deepening of the creases where bringing 'Indigenous storywork into the academy as a methodology and as a source of knowledge is an important way of

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<sup>55</sup> Will Wright, *Wild Knowledge: Science, Language, and Social Life in a Fragile Environment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 6.

<sup>56</sup> Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Lee-Morgan, and De Santolo, "Introduction," 6.

countering structural privileges.<sup>57</sup> Importantly, despite the significant work being done by scholars to decolonise academia, it is more immanently important for white and settler scholars to disavow, deconstruct, and desanctify the colonial trappings of sovereignty that endure in academic institutions. Decolonisation in this sense is not a solution. It is a necessary, radical process of significant structural counter-violence/counter-violence. Nor is decolonisation the sole apparatus by which Indigenous resurgence takes place. The two assemblages of ideas are linked but distinct or, rather, ideologically creased.

To return to Q'um Q'um Xiiem's position, storywork is methodology, and it is the methodology that activates dynamic reciprocity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous sovereignties, between activists. Academic engagement with storywork, as I have evinced over the course of this project, demands transmotional 'oscillation back and forth between law and literature, between context and content, to consider the significance and implications of the literary text for the assertion of sovereignty.<sup>58</sup> Just like the Interpreter in *Ocean Story*, one should look to carry meaning across, cognisant of the losses, gains, and turbulence intrinsic to such motion without erasing or ignoring the incommensurable. Like the Interpreter, one should look to stories as the vehicle, trajectory, bridge, and substance of this reciprocity.

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<sup>57</sup> Larissa Behrendt, "Decolonizing Institutions and Assertive Self-Determination: Implications for Legal practice," in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, eds. Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo (London: Zed Books, 2019), 177.

<sup>58</sup> David J. Carlson, *Imagining Sovereignty: Self-Determination in American Indian Law and Literature* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 2016), 124, Kindle.

## Sovereign Storywork as (the) Methodology: Driving Dynamic Reciprocity to Unsettle Scholars into Unsettling Scholarship

So, for all this discussion, how might a good listener-reader of Silko and Vizenor's storywork situate themselves as a subject to or of Indigenous sovereignties? Vizenor repeatedly talks about stories as traces, as 'the uncertain ventures of semiotic translations and the transmotion of native sovereignty,' but this formulation risks eliding the role of the interpreter, the storyteller, the storyworker.<sup>59</sup> On-the-ground resurgence and academic inquiry are linked and limned by storywork as Silko and Vizenor story the former and narrativise and, thus, embroil the latter amidst Indigenous sovereign formations of various sorts and sources. If Indigenous sovereignties are constellational, planar arrays connected and complicated by ideological creases, then storywork as a methodology is the context, that firmament in which they shift. Furthermore, if storywork is a powerful vector of multivalent Indigenous sovereignties, then deploying and engaging that work becomes a political act in a literal sense. Students of literature like myself should therefore approach Indigenous storywork with the appropriate gravity and responsibilities that emerge. Succinctly, they should understand their interpretations of storywork as the work of a political agent, with all of the responsibilities of dynamic reciprocity that follow.

In my account, dynamic reciprocity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous sovereignties describes the latter's responsibility to engage the former not

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<sup>59</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 27.

necessarily *on* its own terms but *by* its own terms. Métis scholar Aubrey Jean Hanson contends that because 'Indigenous literatures do not exist apart from the real world,' reading 'Indigenous literatures entails a responsibility to recognize and respond' in a mode that does not necessarily reduce the distance in between cosmologies but reaches out nonetheless.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the academic burden placed on Indigenous scholars and artists to do the work of explaining Indigenous worldviews—what Daigle labels an 'ask-the-Indian complex'<sup>61</sup>—is lessened, and the influence of Indigenous worldviews is institutionally unshackled from the constraints of endless self-explication.

Accordingly, I consider my work entangled and in discussion with, but not addressed to, Indigenous scholars. Indigenous sovereignties cannot be actualised or legitimised by non-Indigenous entities, but there is no doubt that they can be, and often are, impeded or outright imperilled by them. This violence is partially accomplished by non-Indigenous complicity, and this complicity of erasure has a significant resonance in academic spaces. As Hanson concludes, meaningful '[c]hange can be [though is not always] precipitated by the relationships that form when non-Indigenous people learn from reading Indigenous literatures.'<sup>62</sup> That in mind, the forward-facing, speculative element of this coda in which I detail future research priorities *is* explicitly addressed to non-Indigenous researchers. How we can learn? how we can prime meaningful change? how we can work our way into the

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<sup>60</sup> Aubrey Jean Hanson, *Literatures, Communities, and Learning: Conversations with Indigenous Writers* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2020), 18.

<sup>61</sup> Daigle, "The Spectacle of Reconciliation," 705.

<sup>62</sup> Hanson, *Literatures, Communities, and Learning*, 19.

creases of dynamic reciprocity and be cognisant of the fact that we *are* engaging sovereignties in forms we cannot compartmentalise nor reconcile?

I have tried to be a good listener-reader during this thesis and the research process that has underpinned it. Pádraig Kirwan argues that 'by being *good* listeners, by being *good* neighbors, and by earning the trust and respect of the tellers of the tales that we are so interested in, non-Native readers will come to realize that there is nothing more important than the stories themselves.'<sup>63</sup> This claim does not diminish "real world" concerns for Indigenous people and peoples nor blur the focus on them. Rather, it speaks to the cosmological fact that Indigenous—and, if we learn in good faith, non-Indigenous—lives and the political entanglements they experience are 'incarnations of the stories we tell, the stories told about us, and the stories we inherit.'<sup>64</sup> Monotheism, the chronologue, and the versatile strains of oppression that they enable assume socio-political primacy as either denarrativised or narratively singular, two issues which become functionally coterminous. As such, I have refrained from centring these dendrites of whiteness and coloniality wherever possible whilst still recognising monotheism as a kind of conditional membrane which 'remains invisible to those who can flow into the spaces created by institutions' that are colonial in their architecture.<sup>65</sup> Despite this methodological tack, in conclusion I do address a brief section to those readers who benefit from that very invisibility, particularly in an institutional sense. The conclusions I draw here are

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<sup>63</sup> Kirwan, *Sovereign Stories*, 317, (italics in original).

<sup>64</sup> Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 34.

<sup>65</sup> Ahmed, *On Being Included*, 175.

inexorably tied to my positionality, and the suggestions for further avenues of research that I can credibly tender are similarly inflected.

The kinds of epistemological density I have engaged in this thesis must be taken up in colonial academia not just as context but as set text in order to engage in decolonising initiatives that are in genuine dynamic reciprocity with Indigenous scholars, peoples, and polities. As legatees of imperial and settler colonialism by dint of our positions in globalised universities, it is important that non-Indigenous scholars help foster academic disturbance in order to in-crease 'First Nations stories within the academic and educational milieux' and allow the latter to be transmuted by the former.<sup>66</sup> The responsibility of active sovereign storywork does not end, nor begin, with the storyteller because it entreats 'synergistic interaction between storyteller, listener, *and story*.'<sup>67</sup> Though the term remains imperfect, in the context of literary activism, the other participants in the work—whether students, researchers, teachers, either/and/or—have important responsibilities to carry forward. Discussing *Almanac of the Dead*, Rebecca Tillett locates Silko's readers as being 'invited to activism: to witness, and to join, the commitment to an active response to justice.'<sup>68</sup> Where this invitation is not heeded by those in positions of institutional privilege, the critical infrastructures perpetuating injustice remain unchanged. Elizabeth Ammons asks if we, as scholars, do not include 'hope alongside anger, and activism alongside discourse and *talk about both terms* in each

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<sup>66</sup> Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, *Indigenous Storywork Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 7, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 33, (emphasis mine).

<sup>68</sup> Rebecca Tillett, "Reality Consumed by Realty: The Ecological Costs of 'Development' in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," *European Journal of American Culture* 24, no. 2 (2005): 167, <https://doi.org/10.1386/ejac.24.2.153/1>.

of these pairs, what is the point?<sup>69</sup> In praxes of scholarship and pedagogy, the critical infrastructure of monotheorism remains practically uninterrupted because, per Sara Ahmed, to 'name is not [always] to bring into effect' in academic discourses, just as any other activist sphere, and 'saying diversity can be a way of not doing diversity.'<sup>70</sup> Diagnostic efforts such as this doctoral project should prime the work to come, not be confused for that work. In academia, the settled foundations and patterns of monotheorism I have diagnosed across this thesis continue to go mostly unseen in research and pedagogy. Indigenous critical studies (among other minimised disciplines) is an enclosed field of study in this schema, and is thus epistemologically bracketed as either subset or subject to monotheoristic institutions. The epistemological density of Indigenous worldviews and their dimensions of sovereignty are misrepresented as cosmological novelty, as affective but not effective.

Monotheorism, which is structurally and infrastructurally systemic in academe and settler colonial sovereignty, cannot remain in its current position of primacy as both text and context. The cosmological multifarity of sovereignties I have propounded require not just declaration but dynamic and reciprocal engagement. As I claimed at the start, although the ever-in-flight end-point of dynamic reciprocity between and amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews is one of equilibrium, the distance to travel and the way(s) of getting there are not. The perspectival upheaval I propound calls for transmotional, unsettling scholarship; it

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<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth Ammons, *Brave New Words: How Literature Will Save the Planet* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 12, (italics in original).

<sup>70</sup> Ahmed, *On Being Included*, 117; 121.

calls for work that elicits atemporal, ideological, and formal unease that *will* be deconstructive in nature.

White and settler scholars are not especially capable or equipped to undertake transformative work. In fact, we/they are, and will remain in key ways, incapable and unequipped. But, in positional terms, we/they are the most resourced and the most unfettered. This work runs counter to the survival instincts of academic institutions as they exist in a monotheistic epistemological context. 'Transformation is story based' writes Maracle.<sup>71</sup> This work will be transformative and, in some significant ways, it will be destructive. The reorientation of monotheism as constituent instead of constant in the schemata of sovereign creases cannot meaningfully occur without a seismic formal transformation in research, pedagogy, and the dissemination of worldviews. Philip J. Deloria observes that scholarship 'trickles down so slowly... so slow that it oftentimes seems kind of pointless, and it actually seems like you're not doing very much.' Yet the role of arguments such as mine are not necessarily to enact the transformation, but to assist in priming it. Deloria's position, with which I situated my thesis at the outset, bears repeating: 'scholarship has a role in supporting that' transformation, in 'softening up the audiences so that they're receptive to the argument.'<sup>72</sup> My hope is that this project has done enough work to warm up the crowd, that it has demonstrated the disruptive vibrance of multifarious Indigenous

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<sup>71</sup> Lee Maracle, *Memory Serves: Oratories*, ed. Smaro Kamboureli (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2015), 59, ProQuest Ebook Central.

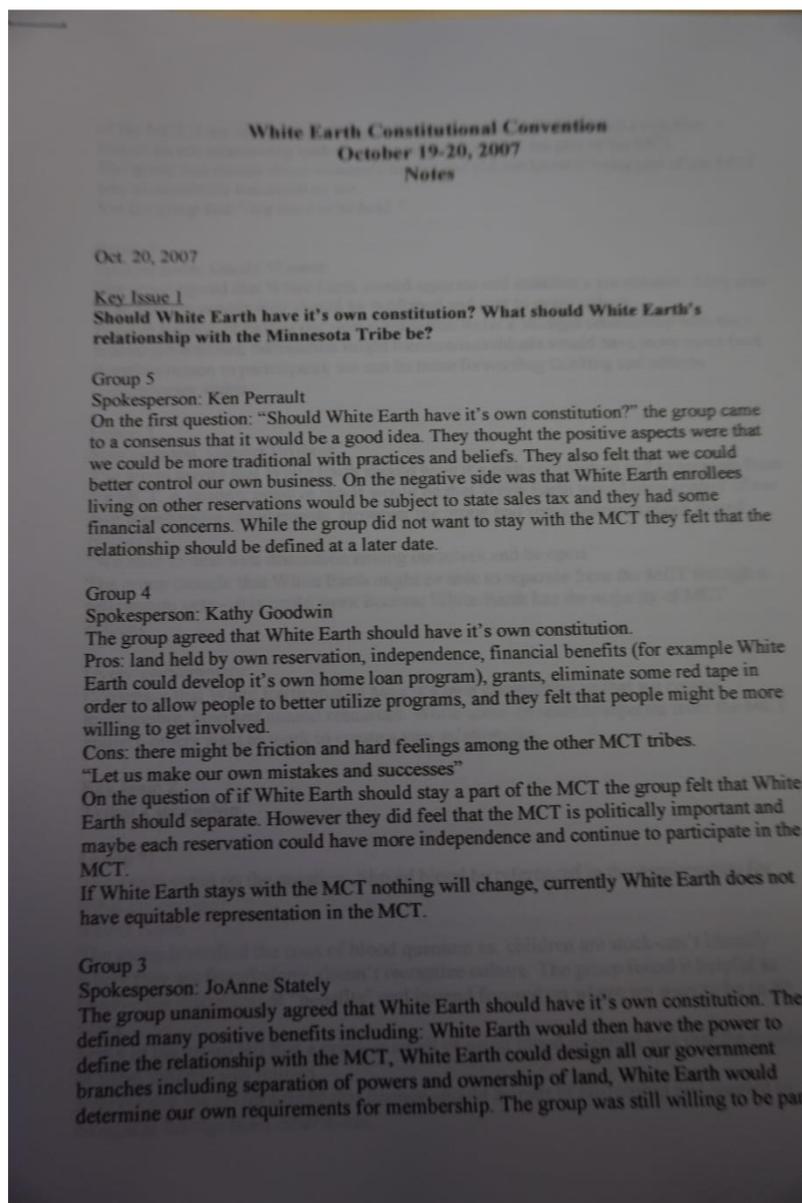
<sup>72</sup> Deloria and Kēhaulani Kauanui, "On Genealogies of Activism and Scholarship," 118; 122.

sovereignties at storywork, and that it will be significantly complicated, deep down in the creases, before long.

## Appendices

### Appendix A:

"White Earth Constitutional Convention October 19-20, 2007 Notes," 19-20 October, 2007, YCAL MSS 539, Box 73, Gerald Robert Vizenor Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.



## Appendix B:

Correspondence from Erma Vizenor to Gerald Vizenor, 7 January, 2008, YCAL MSS 539, Box 73, Gerald Robert Vizenor Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.

Erma Vizenor, 1/7/08 11:57 PM -0600, Re: Convention

X-Real-To: vizenor@unm.edu  
From: "Erma Vizenor" <vizenor@unm.edu>  
To: "Gerald Vizenor" <vizenor@unm.edu>  
Subject: Re: Convention  
Date: Mon, 7 Jan 2008 23:57:55 -0600  
X-Vipinfo: restarted=25 started /var/surqmail/scavs.pl (/var/surqmail/scavs.pl)  
X-Spamdetected: \*; 1.911000 Contains 'Dear Friend'=1.6, cialis=0.3  
X-IP-status: Incoming last 4, First 277, in=248, out=0, spam=0 ip=208.123.20.120  
X-Originating-IP: 208.123.20.120

Good evening Gerald and Laura,

Thank you for your thoughtful and helpful words. I appreciate and take to heart your wisdom and words.

Yes, I, too, feel uneasy about the 'full blood' and leaving the problem to future generations. The enrollment issue is very controversial and emotional but I see progress, albeit small, in thinking and attitudes. I try to keep my views silent, not influence the process or intimidate anyone from speaking, be respectful of all words.

However, I had to respond to Leonard Thompson's question to Robert Howard about 'how many years' will our limited land base hold to a new influx of tribal citizens. Two compelling thoughts came to my mind: it frustrates me to hear our people think in terms of exclusiveness, so untraditional to our culture and way of life, selfish thinking, and it frustrates me to hear our people think in terms of limitations. I have never been a person to accept limitations. I see life without limits, anything is possible, which probably is one reason a little girl, like me, born into extreme poverty, lived in the worst shacks, went to school hungry and cold, ignored by teachers, told by BIA counselor that I was not 'college material,' called a dirty little savage by one principal, and on and on. I was determined to show these school experts they are wrong about me. Graduating in the bottom third of my high school class, I went to college, worked hard, got involved in every committee on campus to help other Indians get into college, graduated four years later with honors, returned home to teach, continued my education for a master's degree in secondary guidance and counseling and a specialist degree in school administration (supt. of schools), and finally going to Harvard where I earned a second master's degree and doctoral degree. I have much faith in God, our Great Spirit who makes all things possible. If I work hard, do my part, God will handle the rest. As I tell our people, "dream big," visions of idealism because where we are looking is where we are going. At last convention, Leonard almost got into ethnic cleansing based on color of skin. Leonard is brother-in-law to Marvin Manypenny, vocal critics which is fine with me but let us respect other words as well.

Yes, the issues for next convention are not as important or strong as issues of enrollment, separation of justice system, and land. To me, these are the most compelling and urgent issues on the table. I think your suggestion for written comments is good. I would like to see a constitution that is simple, not lengthy, but has solid principles. We, as tribal people, walk in two worlds. When I was superintendent of school at Pine Point, my school board made me panic many times because of their slow decision-making when I had deadlines to meet or no funds would be forthcoming. Yes, some decisions should take time, thought, discussion, but other decisions must be made in the moment. We walk in two worlds today.

The constitutional process will be slow, maybe discouraging at times but we must keep at it. I think of my time (5 years) in Camp Justice to oust corruption and election rigging at White Earth. At one time, there were only three of us (Joe LaGarde, John Morrin—a member of Grand Portage, and myself) to carry on the struggle for fair elections. We hatched the plan to take the ballot boxes in the upcoming election. We were successful in stopping the election that day by taking the ballot boxes in two large precincts (Pine Point and White Earth). Within half hour of seizing the ballot boxes, 300 people showed up in the Camp on the front grounds of the tribal headquarters. People were happy, tagging one another, driving through White Earth, honking horns and waving their arms out of the car windows. I received harsh criticism from non-Indians who respect the ballot as almost sacred but they did not understand that every ballot in the tribal boxes were dead, no good, because the elections were rigged by the election board who followed direction from Wadena. The Detroit Lakes newspapers labeled us as "ballot box bandits." But our purpose of further exposing fraudulent elections was rewarded by the media all over the state. Chip Wadena went to the U.S. attorney to get us charged but I had done the research long before, elections were internal matters for the tribe. Like Camp Justice

nted for Gerald Vizenor <vizenor@unm.edu>

Appendix C:

Correspondence from Gerald Vizenor to Erma Vizenor, 8 January, 2008, YCAL MSS 539, Box 73, Gerald Robert Vizenor Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.

Erma Vizenor, 1/8/08 1:13 AM -0600, Re: Convention 2

I appreciate irony, direct and unintentional, especially in literature and history, and there were many ironic moments at the last Constitutional Convention. The proposal by a delegate of "full blood" conversion as a membership option was memorable irony. I am not convinced, however, that the irony was intended, and, while irony is always present in the assertive play of politics, the proposition and declaration of "full blood" was fraudulent and not acceptable. Blood quantum measures of native families and citizenship have always been fraudulent, and the very reasons the convention raised the issue for serious consideration.

I was discouraged by the explanation of the "full blood" option, that the problem could be avoided for a few more generations, or, leave the problem to future generations. The irony is lost in the intentional consequences of ironic avoidance. Some delegates were not as productive, in my view, as they were at first convention, and too many delegates were absent.

I am concerned about the outcome of a third convention, proposed for March 7, 8. The agenda is uncertain, and the proposed constitutional issues do not seem to be as urgent as the first two conventions. I am also worried about the likely demands to seat new delegates.

I wonder, my dear friend, if it would be more productive to invite the original delegates to prepare written comments about the two draft constitutions. I might point out in my comments, for instance, that a constitution must be concise, and yet munificent, or generous enough to accommodate diverse liberal practices and traditions in the community.

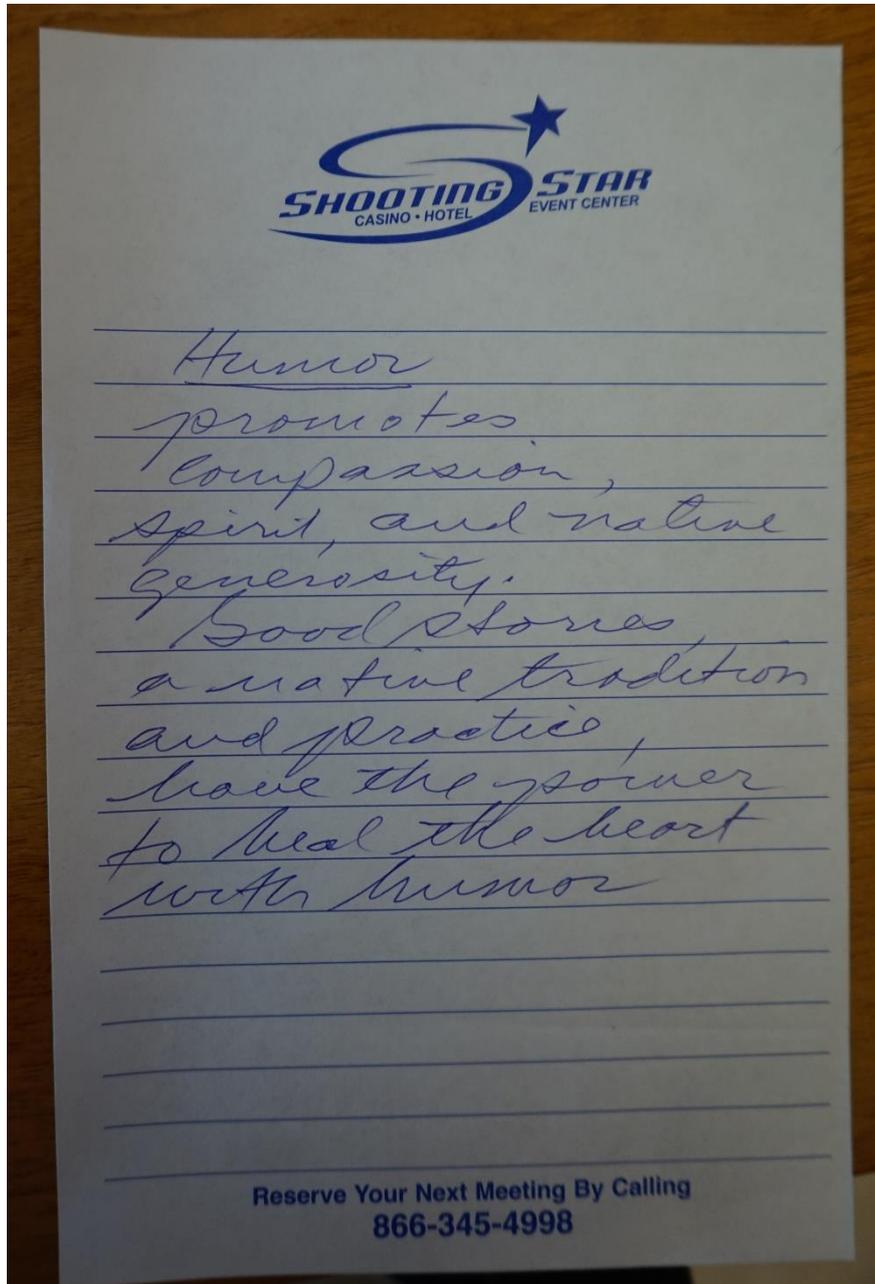
Constitutional discourse is demanding, inspiring, and difficult at times, and perhaps the delegates should consider the provisions more thoughtfully in individual written statements and critical interpretations of the two draft constitutions.

I admire your dedication, as you know, and my critical comments are only in that sense appreciate for your resolve and inspired leadership.

All the best on your travels,  
Gerald

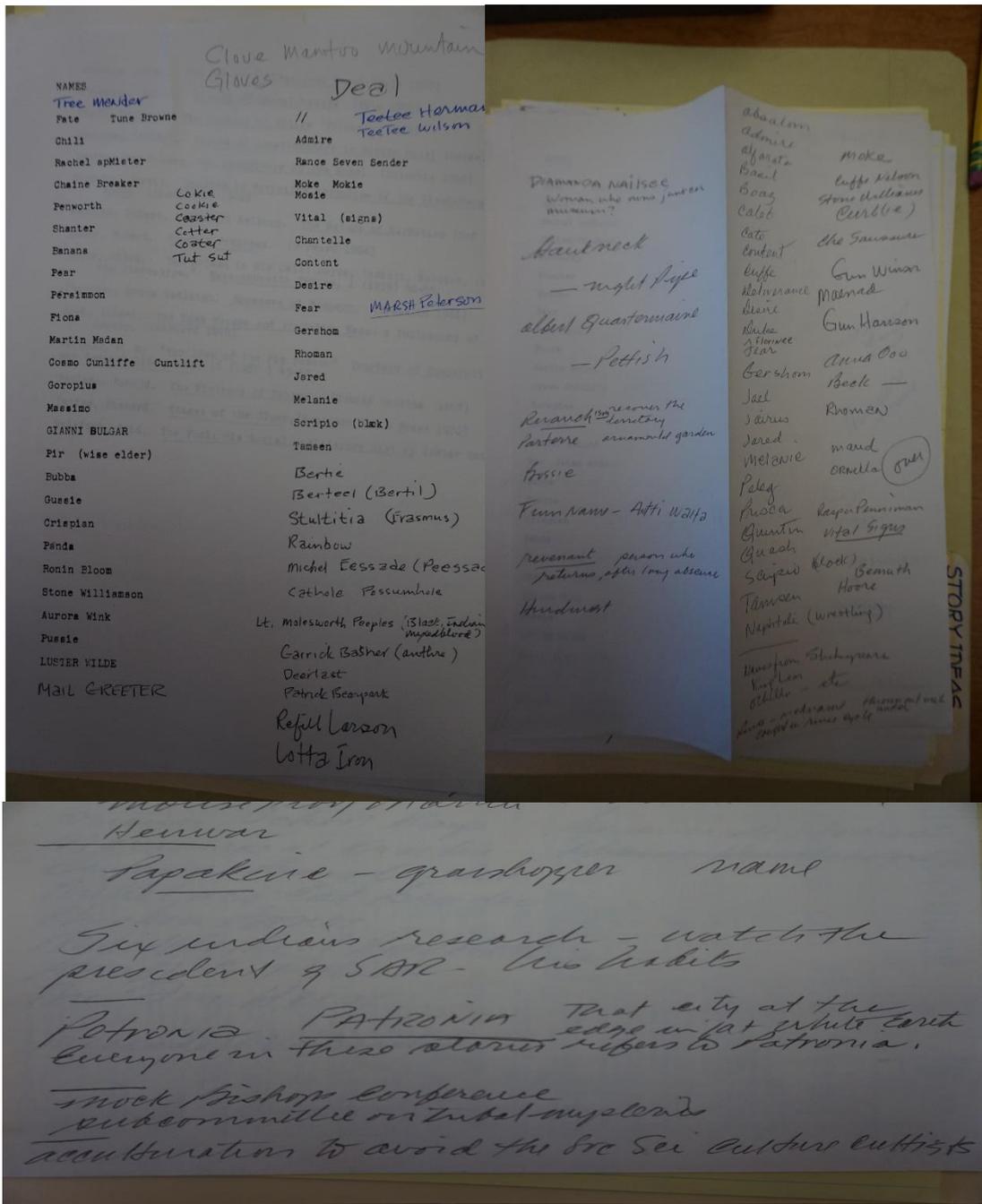
Appendix D:

"Note on Humor at the Shooting Star Casino," 2008, YCAL MSS 539, Box 73, Gerald Robert Vizenor Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.



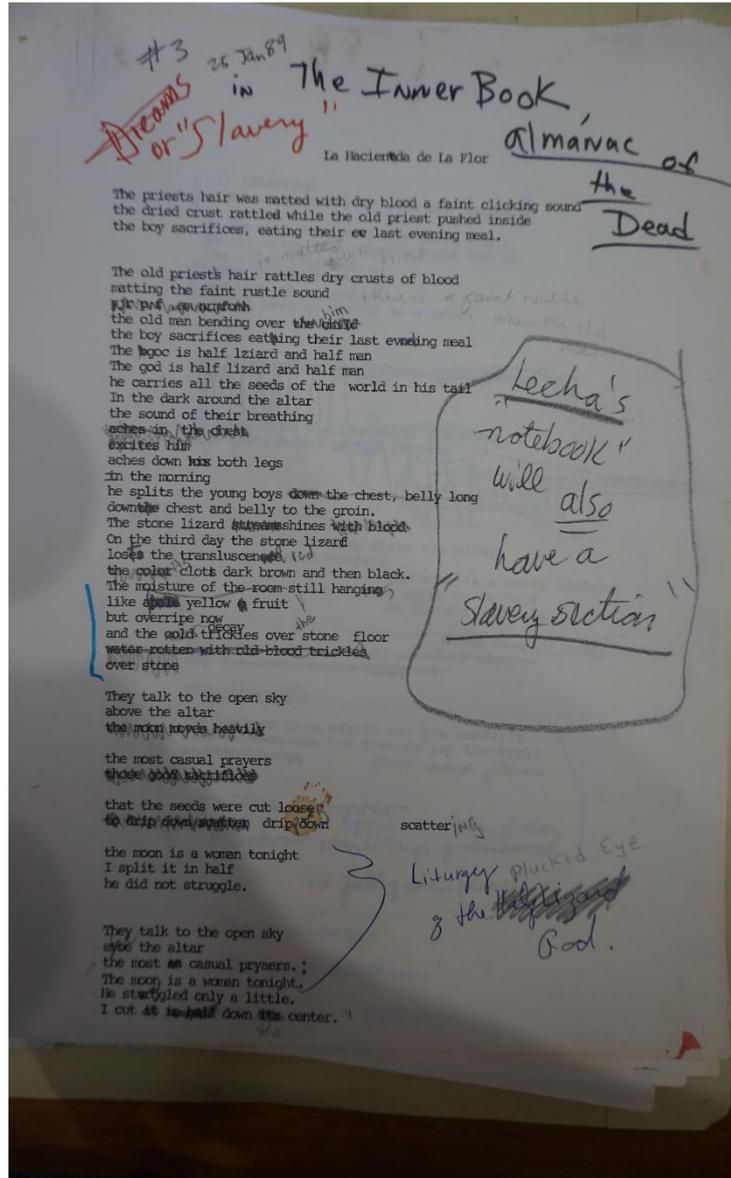
Appendix E:

"Story Ideas and Character Names," YCAL MSS 539, Box 2, Gerald Robert Vizenor Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.



Appendix F:

"The Inner Book of almanac of the Dead," 26 January, 1989, YCAL MSS 637, Box 10, Leslie Marmon Silko Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.



Appendix G:

"Fetishes," 26 January, 1987-1990, YCAL MSS 637, Box 21, Leslie Marmon Silko Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.



Appendix H:

"Mosca Residue," 13 November, 1986, YCAL MSS 637, Box 14, Leslie Marmon Silko Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.

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Mosca imagined space as lengths and widths of time, what he loved whole-heartedly and believed to be true was mass increased velocity. Mosca refused to speculate on what 'might have occurred' on another day.

Mosca went on to say he thought it was all for the best: All the disturbance and press coverage made their individual stories valuable commodities which they had some control over. He told them not to worry. He was dying. Got stuck by a dirty needle or a dirty cock. Mosca never believed he wasn't ~~casually~~ <sup>casually</sup> abandoned by some Great Force or God. Great killers, great fascists, ~~prowl in~~ <sup>prowl in</sup> warm fluid. Mosca doesn't die

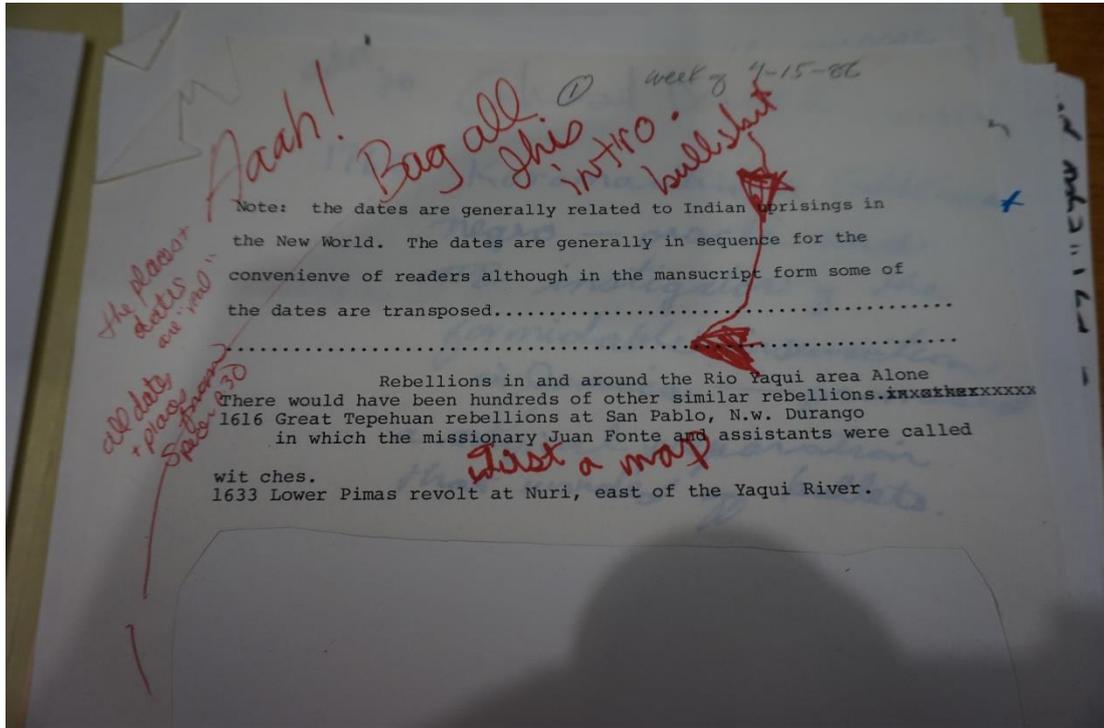
~~Keep your eye~~  
No child, no Indian or mix-breeds would ever get hurt. He tried to remember a book he'd read some years before. He had needed to make a connection between the Massacre at Wounded Knee, and the Ghost Dance. The whites and some of the Christian Indians had feared the rising of the dead <sup>resurrection</sup> Indians but also the return of the great herds of buffalo.

He realized he would run out of time before he got much figured out. Of course then he remembered the detail was Calabazas swore he had never even heard stories about any human as shit-slick as Mosca was.

Years later all of them might be forced to testify at a great trial for ~~bestial~~ <sup>bestial</sup> crimes against all life on earth. identical to a detail in an entirely different story.

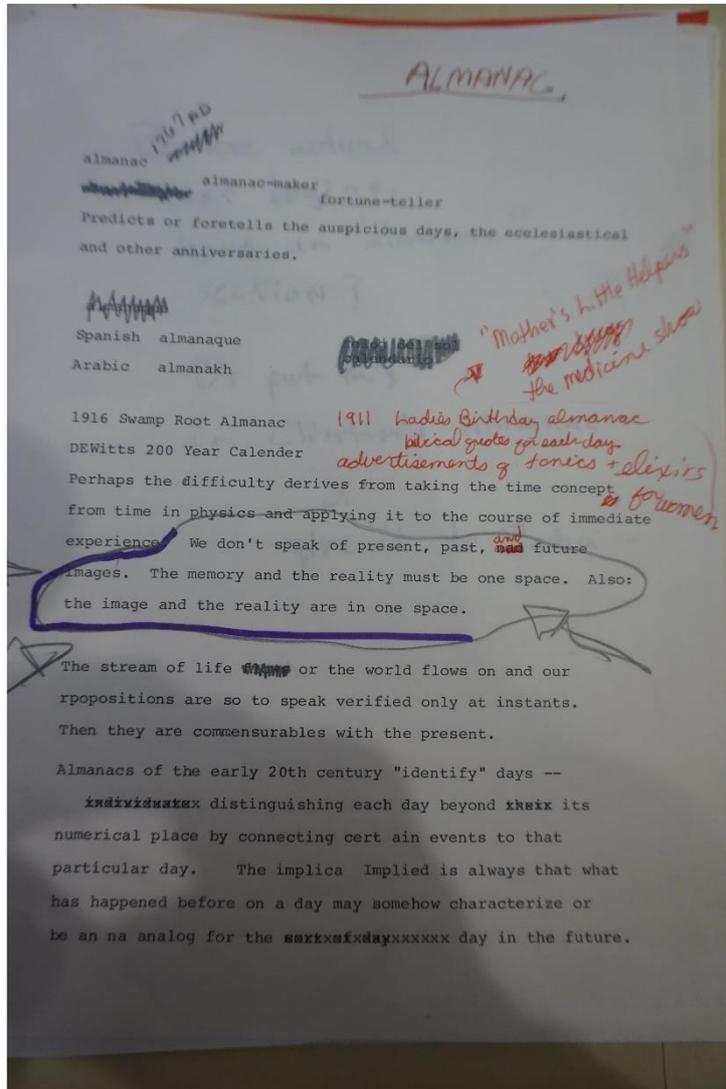
Appendix I:

"Aah! Bag all this intro bullshit!" 15 April, 1986, YCAL MSS 637, Box 14, Leslie Marmon Silko Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.



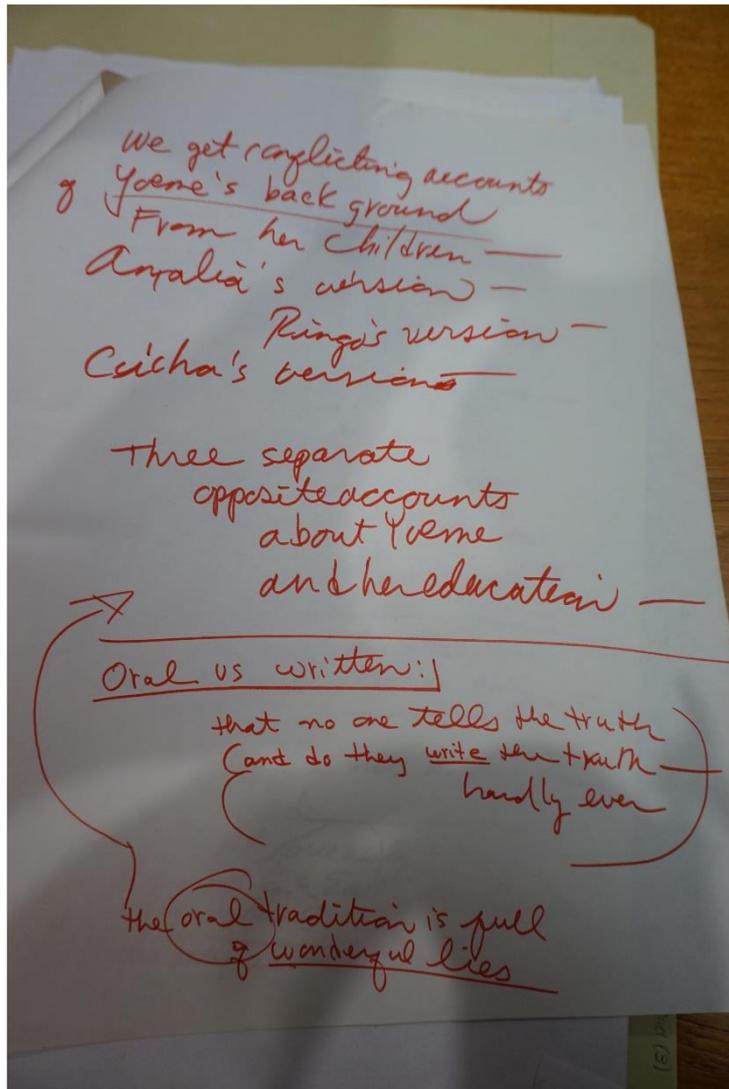
Appendix J:

"ALMANAC," 15 April, 1986-1989, YCAL MSS 637, Box 10, Leslie Marmon Silko Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.



Appendix K:

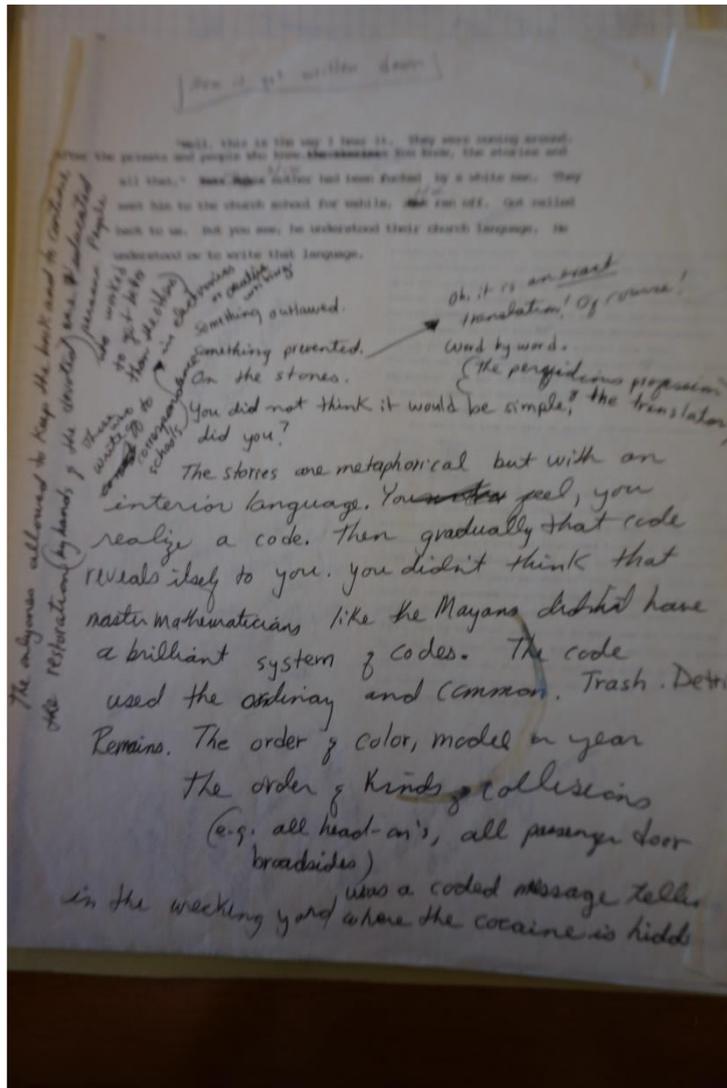
"the oral tradition is full of wonderful lies," c. 1988, YCAL MSS 637, Box 14, Leslie Marmon Silko Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.





Appendix M:

"Thoughts on Philosophy and Mathematics," 1985, YCAL MSS 637, Box 26, Leslie Marmon Silko Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.



Appendix N:

"Note on Tense," c. 1985, YCAL MSS 637, Box 8, Leslie Marmon Silko Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.

Stop going into the Past so much  
~~with Calabazas or Liria~~  
when dealing with Calabazas or Liria  
in the Present.  
<sup>show</sup>  
~~the~~ the Past which concerns them  
~~is the~~ but do it by placing it  
in a narrative conducted in  
the present tense.

Menardo is concerned

Appendix O:

"Note on Time" c. 1985, YCAL MSS 637, Box 10, Leslie Marmon Silko Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.

Around 9.13.00.0, the Maya priests were much  
interested in the backward projection of time. ....  
calculations millions of years into the past were  
made. .... calculations at Quirigua carry  
the count much farther into the past. ....  
and there was almost certainly no such  
thing as a zero date.

the concept of the eternity of time

360 days "teen" green jade  
precious stone  
celestial snakes who guard the rain

glyphs for the 360 day year:

jade  
precious water - turquoise  
rainstorm  
screech owl (rains + shavers)  
god of the number 13  
the day of Muluc, serpent god  
of water,  
crab diety

association of  
the year  
with "water"

20 tons - Katan  
bird-like creature  
associated with the  
celestial dragons who send  
rain.

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