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Rootedness and Mobility in International Indigenous Literatures

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Rootedness and Mobility in International Indigenous Literatures

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Rootedness and Mobility in International Indigenous Literatures

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Indigenous cultures have long traditions of travel and mobility that empower them to survive, adapt to changing physical and political contexts, and create new futures for themselves. This dissertation, *Rootedness and Mobility in International Indigenous Literatures*, proposes a critical perspective that recognizes travel and migration neither as elements foreign to Indigenous cultures nor as symptoms of their hybridity or assimilation. Rather, they are central elements of Indigenous tradition, and as such inform contemporary Anglophone Indigenous writing as well as international Indigenous political actions. Understanding the place of travel within Indigenous cultures leads to a deeper understanding of the Indigenous peoples' rights, which include not only the right to land, but also the right of free movement. Such mobility is not in conflict with but is instead complementary to a powerful sense of place and rootedness.

The three chapters examine texts which hinge on cross-cultural contacts among Indigenous groups, and deal with novels by Thomas King, Leslie Marmon Silko, and

Witi Ihimaera. Rather than merely seeking the legacies of colonialism in Indigenous texts, this dissertation acknowledges the devastating impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples but does not give colonialism center stage. Instead, the center belongs to Indigenous traditions and the dialogue that takes place between the stories being written today and the ancient stories and histories that have been passed down through generations. In exploring these novels and the cultural landscapes their authors call home, we see that travel, migrations, and the resulting intercultural contacts are not incidental, but integral to many Indigenous cultures, and contribute to a growing sense of Indigenous internationalism. Mobility and travel are not in conflict with, but instead coexist with a sense of rootedness and place. Thus, as we look at contemporary cross-cultural contacts among Indigenous authors, artists, and activists, it is vital to understand the long Indigenous histories both of rootedness and mobility.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Travel, Mobility, and International Indigenous Identities

Indigenous cultures have long traditions of travel and mobility that empower them to survive, adapt to changing physical and political contexts, and create new futures for themselves. This dissertation proposes a critical perspective that recognizes travel and migration neither as elements foreign to Indigenous cultures nor as symptoms of their hybridity or assimilation. Rather, they are central elements of Indigenous tradition, and as such inform contemporary Anglophone Indigenous writing as well as international Indigenous political actions. Understanding the place of travel within Indigenous cultures leads to a deeper understanding of the Indigenous peoples' rights, which include not only the right to land, but also the right of free movement. Such mobility is not in conflict with but is instead complementary to a powerful sense of place and rootedness.

This project arose out of an interest in the international Indigenous peoples' protests and conferences surrounding the 1992 Columbian quincentennial. I spent the fall of 1991 in Mexico and Guatemala on a program abroad, and part of the program entailed meetings with people who were organizing Indigenous groups. Even groups in relatively remote areas were not only aware of the upcoming 500-year anniversary (for which many had some kind of commemoration planned), but also saw their own local struggles as connected with those of Indigenous peoples in other parts of the Americas. These experiences raised my awareness of and attention to the commemorations of 1992. While governments in Europe and the Americas organized international celebrations of Columbus's voyage of "discovery," Indigenous peoples organized counter-

commemorations to contest the celebratory Eurowestern narrative. Native peoples of the Americas were at the forefront of these counter-commemorations, but they were joined in their efforts by Indigenous peoples from around the world. For example, an international conference of Aboriginal peoples was convened outside the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro; while most attendees were from the Americas, groups as far-flung as the Ainu in Japan and Saami from Scandinavia sent representatives as well ("Ainu Represented," "Indigenous Village"). A similar meeting took place in Panama in October of 1992, including Indigenous leaders from five continents ("Indigenous Peoples"). The first World Indigenous Youth Conference took place in 1992 in Quebec City, Canada, and drew participants from all over the world. Rigoberta Menchú's 1992 Nobel Peace Prize also served to focus international attention on the struggles of Indigenous peoples, as did the United Nations' declaring 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People.[1] Groups as diverse as the Saami, the Inuit in Canada, the United States, Greenland and Russia, the Cherokee in the United States, Mayans in Mexico and Guatemala, and the Ainu in Japan were visibly organizing their resistance around a collective identity: that of Indigenous peoples. In *The Origins of Indigenism* (2003), Ronald Niezen notes that "one of the distinguishing marks of this [Indigenous rights] movement is the extent to which, unlike ethnonationalism, it is grounded in international networks" (9).

[1] Wanting to keep 1992 focused on positive representations of Columbus, Spain successfully petitioned for 1993 to be the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, rather than 1992 as originally proposed (Moorehead). Against the wishes of Indigenous representatives, the UN also decided to use the term "people" rather than "peoples," as the term "peoples" indicates groups with the right of political sovereignty and was thus opposed by UN member states with Indigenous groups within their boundaries.

But where are the roots of this sense of international Indigenous identity? Given the linguistic and cultural differences that exist among Indigenous groups, and the differing experiences of colonialism, how did the idea of Indigenous commonality develop? Was it a product of globalization, a process that, as Antonio Hardt and Michael Negri propose in *Empire* (2000), was increasing international contact and migration? Hardt and Negri suggest that

> A specter haunts the world, and it is the specter of migration. All the powers of the old world are allied in a merciless operation against it, but the movement is irresistible. Along with the flight from the so-called Third World there are flows of political refugees and transfers of intellectual labor power, in addition to the massive movements of the agricultural, manufacturing, and service proletariat. (213)

This "specter of migration" that haunts the narrative of globalization has been of ongoing interest to postcolonial writers and theorists, as much of the migration Hardt and Negri describe has been from formerly colonized nations. Most critics have focused primarily on contacts between postcolonial nations and their former colonizers, contacts that are still structured by the hierarchies of colonialism. Few scholars have examined international and intercultural contacts outside of these hierarchies, and the problem that results from this oversight is the reestablishment of imperial culture as the center, and continued relegation of colonized cultures to the margin.

My undergraduate work had been heavily centered on postcolonial literature and theory, but as I began paying more attention to the concerns of Indigenous peoples, I

began to wonder why postcolonial theory, in spite of claiming global scope, did not seem to address Indigenous groups. When white Australians are considered postcolonial, the term "postcolonial" becomes inadequate to describe the situation of Aboriginal Australians, who have not only lived through British colonization, but continue to be colonized by the "postcolonial" Australian majority. The term "postcolonial" is also simply inaccurate for most Indigenous groups, as they are still colonized. There is no "post" in the Indigenous colonial situation.

Leaving aside the question of terminology, however, it is still worth asking whether some of the insights developed by postcolonial theorists can be usefully applied within an Indigenous context. A close look at postcolonial and Indigenous theories suggests that these conflicts may not be as extreme as they initially appear. Part of the issue is that "postcolonial theory" is a wide field, encompassing such diverse approaches to history and culture as—for example—Marxism, postmodernism, nationalism, and essentialism. In spite of its name, postcolonial theory is often interpreted as including anti-colonial works written before the end of colonialism, most notably Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, published during the Algerian war for independence in 1961; certainly Edward Said's writings on Palestine speak of an ongoing situation of colonization. Postcolonial theory also prominently includes works that elide or erase histories of contemporary colonization and Indigenous resistance: seminal works such as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989), in which settler colonies such as Australia and New Zealand are defined as postcolonial, leave little space for the struggle of

colonized peoples in these areas. Although Indigenous peoples in these states are mentioned, they are neither the focus of the text nor does their presence seem to have any effect on the "postcolonial" identity of the settler colony.

Indigenist critiques of postcolonial theory have focused on the fact that many postcolonial texts marginalize or ignore the ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples, as well as on the problematic term "postcolonial" itself. The problem with the term lies not merely with the ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples, but also with the implicit association of the term with a progressive conception of history. Thomas King, in his 1990 article "Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial," points out that the term "postcolonial" rests on certain assumptions:

> While post-colonialism purports to be a method by which we can begin to look at those literatures which are formed out of the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor…the term itself assumes that the starting point for that discussion is the advent of Europeans in North America. At the same time, the term organizes the literature progressively suggesting that there is both progress and improvement. (11-12)

Similar critiques, especially of the linear and progressive nature of the term, are familiar from within the field of postcolonial criticism as well. In *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995), Anne McClintock makes an important distinction between postcolonial theory and the word "postcolonial" itself.

> My misgivings are not about the theoretical substance of postcolonial theory, much of which I greatly admire. Rather, I question the orientation

> of the emerging discipline and its concomitant theories and curricula changes around a singular, monolithic term, used ahistorically and haunted by the nineteenth-century image of linear progress. (13)

In "Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial," King also admits that he is "not a theorist," and thus "can not talk about the theory itself, how it works" (10); instead, his primary concern is the term itself. While King's lack of background with postcolonial theory may not be emblematic of the approach of Indigenous critics, it does suggest that the very term "postcolonial" may be a barrier. The term appears to announce that currently colonized Indigenous peoples are not within its purview, and the erasure inherent in the term is more powerful than the efforts at inclusion made by some prominent theorists within the field, such as Gayatri Spivak in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, or McClintock in her abovementioned text.

An additional problem in using a postcolonialist approach to Indigenous literature is the fact that postcolonial theory approaches Indigenous literatures with a predetermined framework of analysis, rather than one that emerges from the literature itself, often resulting a constant compare-and-contrast analysis rather than an analysis in and of itself. Anishinaabe author Kimberly M. Blaeser addresses this problem in her essay "Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Center" (1993), critiquing none other than Vine Deloria, Jr., for defining the parameters of Native literature by way of Western categories. Even if Deloria does define Native literature in opposition to the West,

> [Such oppositions] actually proceed from and reinforce an understanding of the dominant position of the Euro-American literary aesthetic,

> constructing their own identity as they do by its relationship to the master template... The emerging critical language expressing [a] central aesthetic characteristic of Native literature need not or should not have to base its existence or integrity on an oppositional relationship. (57-58)

Blaeser takes Deloria to task for allowing Euro-American categories to take a central position even as he tries to define American Indian literature. Instead, she suggests, a definition of the parameters and aesthetic approaches of American Indian literature may best be found by studying American Indian literature itself, rather than by applying literary categories that have emerged from the study of European literature to the works of American Indian authors. Indigenous theorists should not make colonial discourse the central element of their approach.

The trope of cultural hybridity, which reflects a focus on the colonizer-colonized relationship, has long been a mainstay in discussions of Indigenous peoples. For example, in the seminal 1953 study *Indigenous Peoples: Living and Working Conditions of Aboriginal Populations in Independent Countries*,[2] published by the International Labour Office, the authors describe the difficulty in coming up with a workable definition of "Indigenous peoples":

> Today the result of this common life [between conqueror and conquered] is often a kaleidoscopic process of biological and cultural hybridism. The physical and ethnic criterion still has a certain value for practical

[2] This study led to the ILO's 1957 Convention concerning the Protection and Integration of Indigenous and Other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Populations in Independent Countries. This convention was controversial in large part because it saw assimilation into the dominant community as its primary goal, and because of this was revised substantially in 1989; in spite of the 1957 convention's problems, however, it was among the first documents to recognize the continued existence and rights of Indigenous communities.

> classification, but only in dealing with groups which, like the forest dwellers of the Amazon region, have, because of geographical isolation or social structure, or both, continued to exist in relative purity. (4)

An invocation of cultural hybridity can imply the existence of cultural purity and suggest that so-called hybrid cultures have lost some essential integrity. This version of hybridity echoes the trope of the Vanishing Indian by suggesting that there are no longer any pure, authentic Indigenous cultures, for they are incompatible with modernity; their decline and disappearance were (or are) inevitable. While the idea of hybridity in and of itself does not necessarily suggest the disappearance of Indigenous cultures, it does suggest that those cultures still present today are not quite authentic. In his book *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (1988), James Clifford describes this widespread view as one that sees "the world as populated by endangered authenticities" (5).

More recent postcolonial iterations of hybridity appear to resist the notion of "endangered authenticities." Homi Bhabha, for example, in *The Location of Culture*, sets hybridity in opposition to "the purists of difference" (111) as a means of disavowing fixed identities. Hybridity may be a strategy of resistance to assimilation, as Bhabha explains:

> When the natives [of India] demand an Indianized Gospel, they are using the powers of hybridity to resist baptism and to put the project of conversion in an impossible position. Any adaptation of the Bible was forbidden by the evidences of Christianity. (118)

Bhabha also posits hybridity as existing both in the colonized and the colonizing culture at their points of contact, the liminal spaces. Discussing another missionary effort at colonizing the population of India which makes use of language already "preoccupied" by Hindu traditions, words which have a different valence in the Indian cultural context than in the British one, Bhabha writes,

> The process of translation is the opening of another contentious political and cultural site at the heart of colonial representation. Here the word of divine authority is deeply flawed by the assertion of the indigenous sign, and in the very practice of domination the language of the master become hybrid—neither one thing nor the other. (33)[3]

The focus of Bhabha's notion of hybridity, which echoes throughout postcolonial theory, is the contact zone between colonizer and colonized. While this is a useful area to examine, such a focus elides the multitude of other influences on Indigenous cultures, including traditions that predate colonization, and contact with other Indigenous or colonized peoples.

Centering on the colonizer-colonized relationship is a problem not only in the field of postcolonial criticism. In his study *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (1999), Creek writer Craig S. Womack suggests that in Native American Studies, too, there is a tendency to concentrate on the influence that colonization has had on Native Americans:

[3] Bhabha's use of the term "indigenous" seems to be synonymous with "colonized"; for example, all Indians in India are indigenous. This elides the substantial differences between colonized groups who have gone through a process of decolonization and those who have not. This is particularly notable as India, the area of Bhabha's primary focus, itself recognizes Indigenous "Scheduled Tribes" whose status as tribal differs from that of the majority of the population.

> European contact is a given; toward the purpose of contributing something toward Native Studies, however, I am more interested in what can be innovated and initiated by Native peoples in analyzing their own cultures rather than deconstructing Native viewpoints and arguing for their European underpinnings or even concentrating on white atrocities and Indian victims. (12)

Scholars such as Arnold Krupat and Elvira Pulitano argue for the "hybridity" of Native texts, insisting that written production by Native peoples is always already hybrid. For example, in her 2003 book *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*, Pulitano criticizes Womack's tribally centered approach:

> By envisioning a Native American theory exclusively grounded in indigenous categories… both [Robert Warrior and Craig Womack] seem to overlook the complex level of hybridization and cultural translation that is already operating in any form of Native discourse (including their own). (61)

Establishing Native texts as inescapably hybrid and as artifacts of "cultural translation" again invokes the relationship between Indigenous people and their colonizers as the key source of Indigenous identity and the major factor in Indigenous creative works.

On the other hand, several scholars, including the abovementioned Kimberly Blaeser and Craig Womack, have suggested the necessity of tribally specific approaches, as well as approaches that place Indigenous cultures, histories, and peoples at the center, rather than the margins, of study. Notably, Osage scholar Robert Warrior, in *Tribal*

Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions (1994), argues for the recovery and centering of Indigenous epistemologies in scholarly work, and Craig Womack, in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (1999), develops a tribally-centered methodology for reading Native texts. Neither author denies the importance of colonization in American Indian culture; instead, both focus on the influence of Indigenous literature and culture on Native American literature and intellectual life. Womack's book insists on the importance of specific tribal contexts to the work of Native American authors; he begins with the statement that

> This book arises out of the conviction that Native literature, and the criticism that surrounds it, needs to see more attention devoted to tribally specific concerns. (1)

He also makes very clear that he is not writing "in a rejectionist mode," and that his "argument is not that this is the *only* way to understand Creek writing but an important one" (2). Womack's tribally specific way of reading is not in any way in conflict with an Indigenous internationalist approach such as the one I am suggesting here; rather, the two are complementary. As Womack points out, tribally specific readings do not exclude other readings; instead, they provide a methodology that proceeds from an Indigenous cultural center, a perspective focused not on Eurowestern colonialism but on Indigenous traditions and communities. In fact, Womack suggests that approaching Indigenous literature from the local level may lead to a greater understanding of the international aspects of such literature:

> One of the obvious areas of inquiry in Native studies in the future will have to be the effect of pan-tribalism on Native cultures…[including] beginning global alliances and awareness among indigenous populations worldwide…. How does a study such as this, with its intense concentration on tribal specificity, deal with pan-tribalism? To answer this question, I look at a Muskogee poet whose work is solidly rooted in both Oklahoma Creek Indian realities and national, and international, indigenous perspectives….[I explain] how Harjo's Creek nationalism strengthens, rather than weakens, her ability to take on pan-tribal concerns. (18-19)

A tribally specific approach thus neither ignores the impact of colonialism or Eurowestern cultures on Native peoples, nor does it deny a pan-tribal or international Indigenous perspective; rather, it suggests that understanding an Indigenous writer's national culture and history is central, and will in turn provide a solid foundation for a more internationalist approach.

Combining tribally specific and internationalist readings also enables an approach to Indigenous internationalism that foregrounds lateral contacts among Indigenous peoples and reads these political and cultural contacts in light of strong local—not colonial—traditions of movement. Indigenous internationalism exists in part because of the strength of tribal traditions and identifications, traditions that include mobility as well as contact with other peoples. Contemporary international political contacts are not mere

products of a recent globalization but are the continuation of a long tradition of Indigenous travel and contact.

Definitions

Indigenous identity is neither unitary nor static but is instead in constant motion, resisting easy definition. However, although there is no single, fixed definition of the term, it is still necessary to explore the term and its various meanings. It remains a valuable project to determine some of the term's multiple meanings and how these meanings are invoked in resistance to colonialism, even while the term is in constant motion, fixable and definable only as it is already vanishing. Ronald Niezen, in *The Origins of Indigenism* (2003), states that Indigenous peoples themselves have often been the ones to resist a fixed definition of the term, fearing that it may then be invoked to exclude community members and limit communal rights.

> Indigenous delegates to international meetings have often expressed the idea that a precise, legal definition of the term "indigenous" would impose standards or conditions for participation in human rights processes that would be prejudicial to their interests. For one thing, such a definition would be controlled by the very state powers that they see as the principal source of their exploitation, marginalization, and suffering. What is more, Member States of the United Nations do not follow a formal definition of the nation or the state, so a double standard would be applied to

> indigenous peoples if the terms that are key to their benefits of belonging were interpreted too inflexibly. (18-19)

Even in the necessarily precise field of law, "[t]here is no generally agreed definition of the term [indigenous peoples]" (160), according to Martin Scheinin's 2000 article "The Right to Enjoy a Distinct Culture: Indigenous and Competing Uses of Land," which offers an overview of international and human rights law as it relates to Indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, Scheinin emphasizes that it is generally understood that "[t]here must be another ethnic group and a power relationship involved before the descendants of the original inhabitants are understood as indigenous in the legal meaning of the term" (161).

The first recorded use of the term "indigenous," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is in a 1646 text by Sir Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: or, Enquiries into Very Many Received Tenents* [sic]*, and Commonly Presumed Truths*.[4] A look into the archives of the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* suggests that by the 1830s British colonists and adventurers were using the term regularly to describe people (rather than flora and fauna). Exactly when Indigenous people adopted this usage is uncertain, as many Indigenous records were kept orally rather than in written archives, and what was written may not have been preserved. However, it appears to have been familiar enough by the 1970s, and possibly earlier, that the World Council of Indigenous Peoples used the term when the Council was founded in 1974.

[4] Browne explores why "some men…should acquire and still retaine the glosse and tincture of blacknesse" (323); the term "indigenous" is used to explain that black people in the Americas were "all transported from Africa…and are not indigenous or proper natives of America" (325). A search on Early English Books Online found five other texts from the late 1600s to use the word, four of which were dictionaries of new or difficult English terms.

While Indigenous organizations tend to resist codified definitions of the term and have what Niezen calls an "open-door policy toward participation" (21), there are still implicit definitions at work. Niezen recalls an anecdote from the UN Working Group meeting in 1999, where a representative of the Rehoboth Baster Community addressed the Working Group, claiming discrimination against this community by the Namibian government. Their claim to be Indigenous was at best tenuous, as they are descendants of Dutch colonists who were also allied with German colonizers in the area. The representative was not denied the right to speak, but as he spoke, "hundreds of indigenous delegates silently left the room, then resumed their seats when he had finished" (22).

The descriptions of Indigeneity put forth by the World Council of Indigenous Peoples and other Indigenous peoples' organizations center on what Chadwick Allen in *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts* (2002) terms "the blood/land/memory complex": loosely translated, a focus on community, land, and history. He quotes the words of the WCIP's founding Solemn Declaration,

> We are the Indigenous Peoples of the Earth.
>
> We are proud of our Past,
>
> Our lives were one with the Earth,
>
> Our hearts were one with the Land. (203)

In her introduction to the anthology *skins: Contemporary Indigenous Writing* (2000), Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm places similar emphasis on history, land, and responsibility to the community:

> The writers [in this anthology] come from diverse cultures and histories, from the far north of Canada to the south Pacific islands of Aotearoa. Despite these differences, what all of the writers share is our connection to our homelands, our histories of colonization, genocide, and displacement, and our will to survive and pass the treasures of our cultures to future generations. (vi)

A shared history of colonization, discrimination, and displacement, combined with a close connection to the land, form the basis for Indigenous identity as expressed by the WCIP and by Akiwenzie-Damm. They stop short, however, of explicit definitions; by implication, then, community acceptance is a central component of Indigenous identity.

Some international groups, however, do have explicit definitions of what constitutes "Indigenous peoples." These definitions originate in the International Labour Office's *Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries* (1989; a revision of the original 1957 document), and the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations' draft *Declaration of Indigenous Rights* (1994). From these two definitions, the following four points may be distilled: Indigenous peoples:

1. Were native to a given country prior to the arrival of colonists;
2. Consider themselves a distinct group within the nation and may further be distinguished by their social, cultural and economic conditions;
3. Are determined to maintain their ethnic identity and to transmit their identity and knowledge to future generations; they also strive to maintain their ancestral territories;

4. Form “non-dominant sectors of society,” which in practice is usually held to mean that they are a numerical minority in their country.

These definitions raise as many questions as they answer. In particular, the questions of when colonization begins, and whether colonizing groups might after some amount of time *become* Indigenous, are not addressed. A further issue raised by Indigenous self-definitions is that many Indigenous writers have considered Africans in general to be Indigenous, whether or not they are members of a national minority group, a notion not supported by the above definitions.

The issue of “non-dominance” raises many questions—were black South Africans Indigenous in the apartheid era, and are they no longer Indigenous now? In that case, the distinction between “native” and “Indigenous” is particularly clear and hinges on precisely this issue of non-dominance. What degree of economic and cultural power, if any, might justify or eliminate claims of Indigeneity? Richard Perry, in *From Time Immemorial: Indigenous Peoples and State Systems* (1996), argues that there is a significant economic component to Indigenous identity. He focuses on Indigenous peoples in the settler societies of Mexico, the United States, Canada, and Australia, but in his third section also considers “other states and Indigenous peoples” (8). In discussing Papua New Guinea, Perry notes that “unlike Australia, Canada, or the United States...[Papua New Guinea] is not a settler society....[After political independence,] Papua New Guinea returned to the possession of its Indigenous peoples” (209). But the salient fact, for Perry, is not the political independence, but the continued economic dependence of this former colony. Papua New Guinea’s policies and decisions are largely

determined by powerful transnational corporations, leaving the nominally empowered native people still at the mercy of outside, neocolonial forces. Thus, they are for Perry not only native but still Indigenous: Indigeneity is centrally about access to power, which he considers in an international framework. In Perry's analysis, the Indigenous are the new subalterns, the ones who, apparently by definition, lack access to mechanisms of power.

There may indeed be great internationalist potential in Perry's conception of Indigeneity, as most of the world's peoples begin to fall under the rubric of "Indigenous." The potential for broader-based action based on class begins to take on reality. Tellingly, he discusses some of these notions in a section entitled "Are They Us?": "The trend seems clear. The mass of the indigent populations of states are tending to become 'indigenized' regardless of their ethnic heritage" (251). Indigenous here becomes indigent, the new iteration of the proletariat.

While such an international, class-based alliance of the disempowered would be an important social movement, the use of the term "Indigenous" for such an alliance is misleading, for it ignores what Indigenous definitions tend to foreground: the land. Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) critiques Karl Marx's ideas, in particular his disregard of the importance of the land: "True leaders of the people made return of the land first priority. No excuses, no postponements... First the land" (524). Perry's effort to construct a broad coalition of the underprivileged avoids the central importance of land in the context of Indigenous identity. This importance goes beyond a purely economic analysis—it is not merely about access to the land's resources and power. For example, in 1980, the U.S. Supreme Court awarded $106 million to eight

Sioux tribes as compensation for the Black Hills, taken illegally from the Sioux by the government and mining corporations in 1877. The Sioux reservations are among the poorest in the nation, and yet they refused the settlement, insisting on the return of the land itself. The settlement has now grown to around $600 million, but the tribes still refuse to take the money because the Black Hills have cultural importance. The Sioux response to the legal settlement illustrates the central importance of place and land in Indigenous identifications. Finally, Perry's equation of Indigenous with disempowered—an equation also suggested by the ILO and UN definition of Indigenous people as "non-dominant sectors of society"—calls to mind Gayatri Spivak's caution that claiming agency from victimage may be a profoundly disempowering act.

David A. B. Murray offers a critique of popular views of Indigenous people in his 2004 article "*Takatāpui*, Gay, or just HO-MO-SEXUAL, Darling? Māori Language, Sexual Terminology, and Identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand":

> "Indigenes" are located in societies where the colonizing population (us) is said to manifest a modern, cosmopolitan identity and the colonized population (them) is said to have a "traditional indigenous" identity represented through a totalizing, static, pre-European contact culture concept, revealing "indigenous" to be a very modern term and thus complicating the borders of the us/them binary. (166)

While the stereotypical view of Indigenous cultures is that they are static and unchanging, traditional Indigenous cultures are anything but static. However, the false dichotomy that

Murray identifies between "Indigenous" and "cosmopolitan" remains remarkably common.

History of International Indigenous Contacts

Studying the history of colonized peoples is always a challenge, as the question of "whose history is it?" looms large. It is imperative that we rely not just on those scholarly histories validated by the academy, but that we prioritize Indigenous archives, including oral traditions and written stories, that provide an Indigenous view of history. Moreover, we must recognize that there is no "master narrative" of Indigeneity out there to be "discovered." Instead, there are a wide range of stories that, when connected to each other, offer us a sense of the historical depth and breadth of international Indigenous contacts, and that may provide new insight into local as well as global histories. Rather than offering a historical master narrative, this history provides a variety of moments in which we see some movement toward international Indigenous alliances.

One of these moments comes around 1785, in the United States. In a sermon, Mohegan tribal leader and Presbyterian minister Samson Occom mentions Captain Cook arriving at "Otaihite" (Tahiti) and giving the "Indians" there venereal diseases. Though his use of the term "Indian" follows Cook's own usage, we should not dismiss it as unimportant. Occom, who had been instrumental in forming a pantribal community at Brotherton, in New York, was a skilled orator who well knew the power of language. He was also invested in forming alliances between Native Americans from different tribal

backgrounds, and may well have seen, in the Tahitians, a kindred group about to undergo experiences similar to those of the native peoples he was familiar with. While we can only guess what the impact of his sermon was, it is quite possible that it gave Occom's Christian Indian community of Brotherton a sense that they were connected not only to other Americans, but to Polynesian native peoples as well.

Throughout the 1800s, Polynesian people, Hawai'ians in particular, began settling in the U.S. and Canada. There is, of course, a long history of Polynesian voyaging, both within and outside of Oceania, and Polynesians were sought after as sailors on European and American ships. David Chappell, in *Double Ghosts: Oceanian Voyagers on Euroamerican Ships* (1997), explains that "Oceanians knew that the sea was a road map, not a barrier, and that sailing routes, like highways, connected worlds" (173)—what Epeli Hau'ofa famously referred to as "our sea of islands." Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) is perhaps the most well-known image of the mixing of cultures that was common in the shipping industry throughout the 1800s.[5]

In 1787, a Hawai'ian chieftain named Kaima traveled aboard a U.S. ship to China and North America, and returned to Hawai'i a year later. His experiences encouraged other Hawai'ians to travel abroad. As a result of their seafaring, a relatively large number of Hawai'ians were present in North America even in the early 1800s. Many Hawai'ians lived and worked at Fort Vancouver in the Northwest, under a deal made between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Hawai'ian king; after being released from their indentured service, many of the Hawai'ians stayed in the U.S., and there is evidence that

[5] Chappell notes that by the mid-1800s, Polynesians comprised about one-fifth of the sailors in the American whaling fleet (42).

they intermarried with local Native American communities. By the 1810s, Chappell notes, Hawaiians in the Northwest of North America were serving on ships, at shore stations, and alongside French Canadian and Iroquois *voyageurs* in fur-trapping expeditions (102).

The number of Hawai'ians on the U.S. East Coast was somewhat smaller, but not insignificant. One of the early documents of these expatriate Hawai'ians is the 1819 book *Memoir of Henry Obookiah, A Native of Owhyhee, Who Died at Cornwall, Connecticut, February 17, 1818, Aged 26*. The memoir, published by Edwin Welles Dwight, draws from a variety of different sources, including, in all likelihood, Henry Opukahaia himself. (The memoir refers to him as Henry Obookiah; however, his name was Opukahaia.) Opukahaia was an enthusiastic Christian convert who wished to return to Hawai'i as a missionary. What was to become the Cornwall (CT) Foreign Mission School was founded in order to provide him and other "heathen" students with an education that would qualify them for such missionary work.

The Cornwall school represents an early moment of Indigenous internationalism; at its inception, it had "eleven pupils, seven of them coming from the Sandwich Islands [Hawai'i]. There were twenty three students the second year and at its peak in 1823, there were thirty six" (Reuman 7). According to headmaster James Treadwell's inaugural address, the Cornwall pupils' backgrounds were as follows: Six men from the Sandwich Islands (Hawai'i), six from the Society Islands, an "Indian youth" from Pennsylvania and one from Canada (one of whom was probably Abenaki), seven Cherokees, two Choctaws, two Malays, and two whites. Intriguingly, the Cherokee students include two prominent Cherokee leaders, John Ridge and Elias Boudinot; Choctaw leaders McKee and Israel

Folsom also attended the school. This suggests that the school played a role in shaping the leadership of two major North American tribes and may well have fostered ideas of international Indigenous community, even if that was not the school founders' intention.

Opukahaia's *Memoir* proved so popular that a second edition was issued in 1819, and it was translated into both Choctaw (1827) and Haida (1857). More research remains to be done into the reasons for the translation into these two Native American languages, but the translations suggest that someone, presumably either white or Native American missionaries, believed that Choctaw and Haida people could identify with this Native Hawaiian travel and conversion narrative, perhaps because of some perceived kinship of these three culturally and linguistically distinct groups.

The whaling and sealing industries were among the few places in the Americas where people of color could reliably find employment. Aboard such ships, as ships' logs show, contacts among Indigenous peoples from a wide range of places was not uncommon, but since few if any Indigenous voyagers kept their own journals, the nature of those contacts—even whether they shared a language in common—remains unclear. As a centers of the whaling industry, Aotearoa New Zealand played host to a great many voyagers, among them Indigenous peoples from across Polynesia and the Americas. One of these voyagers was a Pequot man named Elisha Apes, who jumped ship and settled in Aotearoa in the 1830s, marrying a Maori woman of the Ngai Tahu iwi. Rather than becoming subsumed in the dominant culture—as happened to so many Native Americans who married whites and whose descendants no longer know their tribal background—Apes must have maintained some connection to his own culture of origin, for his

contemporary Maori descendants are still well aware of their Pequot ancestry. In fact, Nicola Walsh, one of Apes's descendants who works for Ngai Tahu and who spoke to me about her family, visited the Pequot tribe in Connecticut several years ago to let them know they had cousins in Aotearoa. Knowledge of a Native American-Maori connection appeared, anecdotally, to be relatively widespread, if perhaps not common, in Aotearoa. I first heard about it from a Maori man on the North Island, and encountered a number of other people (both in person and online) who were familiar with some version of the story (though often, the tribal background was mistakenly identified as Cherokee). Alongside the awareness of kinship with other Polynesian peoples, such (potentially) widespread awareness of familial connections between Maori and non-Polynesian Indigenous peoples may contribute to an openness toward international Indigenous alliances, both political and cultural.

Contact among Indigenous peoples certainly contributed to an awareness of shared experiences and shared oppression. For example, in 1847, only sixteen years after the Choctaw Trail of Tears, a traumatic removal accompanied by starvation and massive casualties, a group of Choctaws raised $710 to send to Ireland, where the colonized Irish were suffering through the catastrophic potato famine, including massive dislocation as well as starvation. To raise such a large sum of money only a few years after the devastation of forced removal suggests the importance the Choctaw attached to their felt connection to the colonized Irish people (as well as the significance of Choctaw intermarriage with Irish Americans). George Copway, an Anishinaabe minister who

traveled to Europe around 1850, also notes a particularly sympathy for Ireland in his narrative *Running Sketches of Men and Places*.

One fertile area of inquiry—as well as possible source for the perception of kinship between radically different Indigenous groups—are the various Lost Tribes theories of the 19th centuries. Such theories held that particular Native American, Polynesian, or other peoples were actually Lost Tribes of Israel. William Apess, a Pequot minister, offered a lengthy excursion on this topic in his 1829 autobiography; interestingly, his writing also gestures toward unity not only among Indians, but among all peoples of color. Other 19th-century authors focus on the topic as well, and it was a popular method for missionaries to raise money for converting Indigenous peoples, since Christian doctrine holds that the Second Coming can only occur once the Lost Tribes have been found and converted to Christianity.

These are only a few of the historical connections among Indigenous peoples. There are many more, such as the First Universal Races Congress in London in 1912, and the Pequots who were exiled to Barbados during the 17th century and to this day have maintained a community there. The wide range of these connections suggests that such contacts may not have been as exceptional as they may at first appear. While more research is necessary in this area, it is equally important to connect existing research and knowledge in order to gain a more complete picture of these contacts.

Travel and Migration

Many contemporary definitions of "Indigenous" emphasize rootedness, connection with the land, as a primary source of identity for native peoples, and I do not wish to suggest that this connection is anything less than crucial. However, this emphasis on rootedness has often, both in theory and in politics, served to elide the importance of travel and migration in Indigenous culture. The distinction I make between travel and migration is that travel is movement by an individual, or a small group of people, while migration involves the majority or all of the community. There are many different kinds of travel and migration, and especially in the case of Indigenous peoples these have not always been voluntary.

Indigenous travel has, historically, rarely been recreational, the kind of diversionary or experiential tourism that Erik Cohen discusses in "Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences" (2001), and that is familiar from many modern travel narratives. Even those Indigenous people who composed travel narratives, like George Copway or Henry Opukahaia, were not traveling for the sake of tourism, but instead were traveling because it was a necessary element of supporting themselves financially. Indigenous travel was and is affected by the economic reality that Indigenous communities and travelers often do not have access to financial capital. While contemporary Indigenous travelers need not secure their transpacific passage by working aboard a whaling ship, their travel may nonetheless relate to work, as international conferences of Indigenous activists, librarians, artists, or other groups become more and more common. Such travel

may or may not require extensive financial resources, as it is sometimes subsidized by local communities or international organizations—as is the case for the protagonist in Witi Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story*, whose Maori protagonist's trip to Canada is funded by an arts organization.

Traditionally, individual travel is present in many tribal stories. For example, as I discuss in my first chapter, in her 1996 book of essays *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, Leslie Marmon Silko tells an old Laguna Pueblo story of Kochininako/Yellow Woman and her travels:

> Each day, Kochininako has to walk farther and farther from the village to find fresh water for her husband and children. One day she travels far, far to the east, to the plains, and she finally locates a freshwater spring… Just as she fills her water jar and turns to hurry away, a strong, sexy man in buffalo-skin leggings appears by the pool… Able to transform himself from human to buffalo in the wink of an eye, Buffalo Man gallops away with her on his back. Kochininako falls in love with Buffalo Man, and because of this liaison, the Buffalo People agree to give their bodies to the hunters to feed the starving Pueblo. (70-71)

Yellow Woman is a traveler who travels in service to her people; without her mobility, her water-deprived community would be unable to maintain its roots in the land. Her travel, individual though it is, is in service to the larger community; without her willingness to venture out of familiar territory, her people might have perished. Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday tells a similar story in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969):

> Long ago there were bad times. The Kiowas were hungry and there was no food. There was a man who heard his children cry from hunger, and he went out to look for food. He walked four days and…came to a great canyon. …A voice spoke to him and said, "Why are you following me? What do you want?"…The man answered that the Kiowas were hungry. "Take me with you," the voice said, "and I will give you whatever you want." From that day Tai-me [the sacred Sun Dance doll] has belonged to the Kiowas. (36)

Among the Maori, the voyager Kupe, who, on his own, explored and named much of the Aotearoa coast, is a culture hero. He is said to have opened the North Island up for Maori colonization, and while there is some debate on the timing of his voyage in relation to Maori voyaging overall,[6] his voyages of exploration are still commemorated today; a statue of him stands near Wellington harbor.

Group migration also plays a significant role in many tribal stories. Some Cherokee origin stories, for example, suggest that the Cherokee originally came to their homeland from an island off the coast of South America, while others suggest an eternal presence in their homeland in southern Appalachia. The Cherokee leader Sequoyah, who developed the Cherokee alphabet, is widely believed to have died in Mexico while searching for the southern kin of the Cherokee who remained behind after the Cherokee migrated northward. Daniel Heath Justice points out that,

[6] See Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whaiwhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End*, 34-37, for more on this debate.

> Although Cherokee wisdom traditions include stories about the creation of the world in what is now southern Appalachia, they also include stories about migrations and movements from lands far removed from those mountain ridges. The specter of removal first begins to haunt the Cherokees in these stories. (48)

In light of these stories, Justice suggests that "Indigenousness doesn't always require an eternal presence in a particular location: though not necessarily elastic, the relational principle of peoplehood is adaptable to multiple spirits and sacred landscapes" (49). Indeed, many Indigenous groups, including the Maori, the Anishinaabe, the Kiowa, the Hawai'ians, the Crow, and many others tell how their people traveled over long distances before finally settling in the place that became their homeland. (It should be noted that while migration stories are common, some tribes' origin stories suggest that they have always occupied the same lands, although—as in the case of the Laguna, discussed in Chapter One, movement may still play an important role.)

The example of the Cherokees also serves as a reminder that there is a vast gulf between voluntary migration and forced removal, and that many Native communities today were driven from their ancestral lands against their will by colonizing forces. These forced migrations, such as the Cherokee Trail of Tears, or the Potawatomi Trail of Death, and even the many removals of the pantribal Christian Indian community of Brotherton, which occupy a middle ground between forced and voluntary movement, are generally experienced as traumatic events, unlike the voluntary migrations of traditional stories. Traditional migration stories generally involve the tribe seeking a particular location,

often with a sacred aspect to it (like the Anishinaabe, who were told to seek a place where "food grows on water"), and when the people arrive at their destination, they recognize the place as always and already their home. Forced removals involve the loss of precisely that home, with no possibility of return, and in addition to the traumatic loss of sacred and ancestral land, also usually entail extensive loss of life among the community.

Contact among Indigenous peoples after colonization contributed to an awareness of shared experiences and shared oppression, in particular the experience of forced removal, as the example of the 1847 Choctaw donation to Ireland demonstrates. The wide range of such transnational connections suggests that such contacts were not as exceptional as they may at first appear, and also that they have played a larger role in contemporary Indigenous cultures than many scholars acknowledge. Rather than an exclusive emphasis on roots, those of us working in Indigenous Studies should recognize what Indigenous migration stories are telling us, and be open to what scholars of the interconnected islands of Oceania already know: "[T]o search for roots is to discover routes" (Teaiwa, qtd. in Diaz and Kauanui 319).

Summary

This dissertation places several works of Indigenous literature in a framework that acknowledges the importance both of local traditions and of transnational contacts between Indigenous cultures. Because my original plans for this project—examining works by Indigenous authors from every continent—would have required a multi-volume

set, I narrowed my focus to the Anglophone world. Though Indigenous peoples do connect with each other across linguistic barriers, focusing on groups who share a common language and who were all at some point subjects of British colonization narrowed the field to some degree. I also chose to focus on authors who were relatively well known, as introducing new authors is often a project unto itself, and might have overwhelmed the underlying issues of Indigenous internationalism. However, while I do incorporate the most well-known works of the authors I chose—Thomas King's *Green Grass Running Water*, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, and Witi Ihimaera's *Whale Rider*—I decided to focus primarily on novels which had not received a great deal of critical attention, but which foregrounded international contacts among Indigenous peoples.

The first chapter, "Home is Where the Indians Are: International Indigeneity, Mobility, and Home in the Work of Thomas King," focuses on the work of Canadian Cherokee author Thomas King, including his radio show *Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour*. A member of the Cherokee diaspora, King has often explored the common ground between his Cherokee heritage and the First Nations cultures of his chosen Canadian home. Both his work and his biography reflect Cherokee traditions of migration and travel. Rather than imagining diasporic, urban Cherokee like himself as alienated from the community by physical distance, King suggests that for people far from their own nation's land base, home may be found with other Indigenous people, anywhere there are Indians—places that feel familiar even as they are also different. And as all of North America was once Indigenous land, King's Indigenous internationalism also serves as a

critique of the stereotypical alienated Indian who cannot thrive away from his nation or reservation. Instead, King lays claim to all of North America as an Indigenous homeland, and suggests that alienation is in the eye of the beholder.

The second chapter, "'*We* are internationalists!': Rootedness, Migration, and Indigenous Internationalism in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," examines the 1991 epic novel by Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko. *Almanac* imagines a world where Indigenous peoples unite to challenge multinational corporations and corrupt governments, thereby reclaiming their land and their sovereignty. Silko's Indigenous peoples include not only Native Americans from the U.S., Mexico, and Canada, but also African Americans and Africans, a vast imagined community. The novel suggests that international contacts are essential to Indigenous peoples in the struggle for sovereignty. Ancestral connections to the land are vital, but so are the links created by those who have journeyed away from their ancestral lands—a perspective that can be traced to Laguna traditions and stories like the narrative of Kochininako/Yellow Woman.

The third chapter, "A Maori Destination: Travel, Transnationalism, and Cultural Survival in Witi Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story*," focuses on Maori author Witi Ihimaera's novel *The Uncle's Story* (2000). This novel tells the story of Michael Mahana, a young gay Maori man, and of Michael's uncle, erased from the family's memory for the crime of loving another man. Torn between his homophobic Maori community and his own sexuality, Michael only begins to synthesize these two elements of his identity after meeting gay or Two-Spirit First Nations people at an Indigenous peoples' conference in

Canada. Upon returning to Aotearoa New Zealand, Michael begins to fight for change in Maori attitudes toward gay people, while simultaneously fighting for the preservation of Maori culture. Culture has long been a battleground for Indigenous peoples under colonialism, and Ihimaera's novel points out that lateral contacts and alliances among Indigenous peoples, rather than the hierarchical relationships between colonizer and colonized, can motivate change within Indigenous communities without the fear of culture loss, or of one culture dominating the other.

Rather than merely seeking the legacies of colonialism in Indigenous texts, this way of reading, even as it acknowledges the devastating impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples, does not give colonialism center stage. Instead, the center belongs to Indigenous traditions and the dialogue that takes place between the stories being written today and the ancient stories and histories that have been passed down through generations. In exploring these novels and the cultural landscapes their authors call home, we see that travel, migrations, and the resulting intercultural contacts are not incidental, but integral to many Indigenous cultures. This mobility is not in conflict with, but instead coexists with the sense of rootedness. Thus, as we look at contemporary cross-cultural contacts among Indigenous authors, artists, and activists, we must understand the long Indigenous histories both of routes and roots.

CHAPTER ONE

Home is Where the Indians Are:

International Indigeneity, Mobility, and Home in the Work of Thomas King

> [W]hat remains is the firm base that we have in places—even if sometimes the places aren't our own to begin with. I'm Cherokee from Oklahoma, but I don't think of Oklahoma as home. If I think of any place as home it's the Alberta prairies, where I spent ten years with the Blackfoot people. I'm not Blackfoot, but that feels like the place I want to go back to.
>
> Thomas King[1]

The artificiality of borders is a constant undercurrent in Canadian Cherokee author Thomas King's work, in particular the U.S.-Canadian border and the problems it presents for Aboriginal individuals and communities. This border marks the boundaries between two colonial powers, and thus does not resonate for Indigenous peoples on an emotional or ideological level. As King writes in his 2003 book *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*, "the border doesn't mean that much to Native people in either country. It is, after all, the figment of someone else's imagination" (102). On a material level, however, the border remains extremely significant, as it has the force of two colonial states behind it, states currently interested in tightening border controls due to the so-called "War on

[1] Canton 3.

Terror," the "War on Drugs," or for health-related reasons, as during the SARS outbreak, the avian flu epidemic, or the more recent drug-resistant tuberculosis scare.[2]

The simultaneous insignificance and power of the border are vividly illustrated in King's story "Borders" from his 1993 collection *One Good Story, That One*. In "Borders," a Blackfoot mother and son trying to go from Canada to the United States wind up trapped in the no-man's-land between the U.S. and Canadian borders. As they leave Canada, they are waved through the Canadian border controls, but when they try to enter the U.S., they are asked to declare their citizenship. The mother claims Blackfoot citizenship, for the U.S.-Canadian border crosses through Blackfoot territory, and maintains that she does not recognize the legitimacy of either the United States or Canada to claim her as a citizen. When the U.S. border guard asks her, in an attempt to ascertain her citizenship, "Now, I know that we got Blackfeet on the American side and the Canadians got Blackfeet on their side. Just so we can keep our records straight, what side do you come from?...Canadian side or American side?"[3] she responds, "Blackfoot side" (135-136). But because the Blackfoot are not recognized by the U.S. or Canada as an independent nation, she is refused entry to the U.S., and when she turns the car around to re-enter Canada, she is also refused re-entry into Canada. When she tells the Canadian

[2] In February 2006, the *New York Times* ran a front-page article on drug trafficking in Indian country, entitled "Through Indian Lands, Drugs' Shadowy Trail," which strongly suggested the need for more federal control of Indian reservations close to or straddling U.S. national borders, as there is a "violent but largely overlooked wave of trafficking and crime that has swept through the nation's Indian reservations in recent years…In the eyes of law enforcement, reservations have become a critical link in the drug underworld. They have helped traffickers transport high-potency marijuana and Ecstasy from eastern Canada into cities like Buffalo, Boston and New York, and have facilitated the passage of cocaine and methamphetamine from cities in the West and Midwest into rural America."

[3] "Blackfoot" is the term used in Canada, "Blackfeet" in the U.S.; thus even the tribe's name indicates the existence of the colonial border.

guard that she is Blackfoot, the guard responds, "I know…and I'd be proud of being Blackfoot if I were Blackfoot. But you have to be American or Canadian" (138-9).

The dilemma is only resolved when, after two days of being confined to the no-man's-land, the media arrive to cover the story, and a government official instructs the U.S. border guards to let them pass.[4] The resolution to the problem is thus highly individual rather than structural, and the family's return to Canada a week later is uncomplicated only because the guards still remember them. King's story thus acknowledges both the systemic power of the border and the possibility for individuals to destabilize it. In another illustration of the simultaneous reification and destabilization of this border, this story is anthologized in *skins: contemporary Indigenous writing* (2000), one of the first international anthologies of Indigenous literature and the first to be edited by Indigenous people. In the table of contents, which is divided geographically, King's story falls under the category "First Nations and Inuit – Canada." The geopolitical divisions of the table of contents suggest the continuing power of the border, while King's inclusion in the Canadian section even though his Cherokee tribal roots fall on the U.S. side of the border also suggests that individuals may cross over and maintain multiple connections across that border.

King's novels—*Medicine River* (1989), *Green Grass Running Water* (1993), *Truth and Bright Water* (2000), and the pseudonymously authored *DreadfulWater Shows Up* and *The Red Power Murders* (2002 and 2006 respectively, writing as Hartley

[4] This is implied, but not explicitly stated, in the story: a man in a suit arrives (though it is not specified which side he might represent) and talks at length to the border guards and to the Blackfoot woman, and it is after that that she is let through.

GoodWeather)—as well as his short story collections (*One Good Story, That One* (1993) and *A Short History of Indians in Canada* (2005)) and the *Dead Dog Café* radio show—all offer a range of Native characters but often focus on Aboriginal Canadian rather than Cherokee protagonists, though there are generally secondary Cherokee characters. The stories are usually set in Canada or along the U.S.-Canadian border, and the interactions among Indigenous characters from different Indigenous and colonial nations suggest that King envisions an intertribal community that includes all of Indigenous North America. This intertribal community still understands the importance of tribal affiliations, and so King should not be misunderstood as suggesting that anyone can become Indigenous merely by living close to Indigenous people. Instead, his work suggests an Indigenous internationalism: for Indigenous people who are far from their own tribal land base, home may be found anywhere there are Indians.

As all of North America was once tribal land, King's Indigenous internationalism also serves to critique the stereotypical narrative of the alienated Indian who cannot thrive away from the tribal nation or reservation. Instead, King suggests that alienation is in the eye of the beholder. King re-frames the discussion of what is "truly Indian" to include a far wider range of behaviors and peoples than the stereotypes allow, including the ability to travel and live far away from ancestral lands without losing cultural connections.

In this chapter, I will also discuss the importance of a pantribal view of King, a view that can and should exist side by side with a tribally specific analysis of his work. I will examine the role played by Cherokee history in his writing, primarily in the novel

Truth and Bright Water, and how he uses the idea of travel and mobility in that novel and in *Green Grass Running Water* to question stereotypical ideas about Indians as static and fixed rather than changing and mobile.

Thomas King: Background

Thomas King is of Cherokee, Greek, and German descent and grew up in California. His Cherokee father left the family when King was a young child, but his mother actively maintained ties to his father's side of the family, traveling to Oklahoma regularly and making sure that her two sons knew their Cherokee relatives and their traditions. As a young man, King traveled widely, living for a time in Australia. He has spent most of his adult life living in Canada and considers it to be home, for he is now a Canadian citizen. During his time in Canada, King has developed strong cultural ties to Canadian Aboriginal communities,[5] and he has spent far more time living in or near Canadian First Nations territories than Cherokee communities (which are found in Oklahoma, North Carolina, Arkansas and Georgia). His artistic collaborators are usually Aboriginal

[5] While the term "Aboriginal" is rarely used in the U.S. to refer to American Indigenous peoples, it is in common use in Canada; similarly, the term "Native American" is common in the U.S. but is not commonly used in Canada. (Canadian Indigenous people are also rarely referred to, in Canada, as American Indians.) The term "First Nations" is a designation for those tribes (or enrolled members of those tribes) which have a treaty relation to the Canadian government; for a variety of reasons, not all Aboriginal Canadian people are members of First Nations. Perhaps for this reason, Thomas King most often simply uses the term "Indian," which, while less common in scholarly works, is still a common term outside of academia. These linguistic differences in terminology should also serve to remind us that, though similar, U.S. and Canadian cultures are quite distinct; though I do not intend to valorize the very border that King problematizes, I also do not wish to continue a tradition of U.S. critics ignoring the cultural and political distinctiveness of Canada.

Canadian people.[6] As Arnold E. Davidson, Priscilla L. Walton, and Jennifer Andrews point out in their critical study of King's work, *Border Crossings: Thomas King's Cultural Inversions*, King's biography "throws…[national] demarcations into question, since as a Cherokee writer who moved to Canada, he can be read as a Canadian writer and a native writer, but he cannot be a Canadian Native writer because the Cherokees are not 'native' to Canada" (13). Although King's Cherokee ancestors were not native to the territory that is now Canada, his close ties to Indigenous Canadians and his ancestral affiliation with the Cherokee suggest not only that the colonially imposed U.S.-Canadian border is problematic at best but also that King's work can and should be read as both tribally specific and pantribal. In fact, his stories suggest that for Indigenous North Americans, "home" can be plural, or that it may even encompass the entirety of the continent—everything that was once Native territory. Where others might see his physical distance from Cherokee communities as evidence of alienation or rootlessness, King's closeness to the First Nations where he now makes his home as well as his continuing engagement with Cherokee culture instead provide evidence of Indigenous mobility and internationalism. "Home" may thus exist in multiple places.

In spite of his physical distance from Cherokee communities, King is aware of Cherokee traditions and the importance of connections to home. Thus, a tribally specific critical approach, as Craig Womack calls for in *Red on Red: Native American Literary*

[6] King edited the first anthology of First Nations writers, entitled *All My Relations* (1990), and his radio series *Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour* regularly featured Aboriginal Canadian artists, actors, and authors. He is included in several anthologies of First Nations writing, and in international anthologies he is generally categorized as a Canadian Native author (though not necessarily as a Native Canadian). Biographical information can be found in Davidson et al., *Border Crossings: Thomas King's Cultural Inversions*, esp. 12-13, as well as throughout *The Truth About Stories*.

Separatism (1999), is vital in understanding those elements of King's work that are in dialogue with or emanate from Cherokee history and tradition. In *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (2006), Cherokee critic Daniel Heath Justice suggests that King's Cherokee connections are central to his work.

> Although on the surface King's work seems to focus almost entirely on non-Cherokee subjects…a closer reading demonstrates a profoundly Cherokee sensibility at the heart of his literary texts… [A]n outland Cherokee like King, raised far from the home and land bases of the People, has had to reconnect to the familial and cultural bonds of nationhood in a different way, but one that is no less Cherokee…just a different kind of Cherokee experience. (213)

Because King consistently focuses on First Nations characters and issues, however, it is equally important to supplement a Cherokee reading of King like that Justice offers with an Indigenous internationalist reading of his work. Craig Womack provides a potential template for such a reading in his chapter on Creek poet Joy Harjo in *Red on Red*. Harjo has lived away from the Creek land base (in Oklahoma and Georgia) for a large part of her life; the Southwest, her adopted home, and its tribal peoples are often a focus of her work. In Womack's chapter, whose first section is entitled "The Power of a Pan-Tribal Vision When the Writer Is Rooted in a Solid National Center," he shows that regardless of physical distance, Harjo's work is explicitly grounded in Creek traditions:

> Harjo's themes often concern the Southwest, which has been her home for most of her adult life, but in every collection of her work there have been poems that deal directly with Creek culture and throughout the work a Creek sensibility pervades many of the poems. In interviews, Harjo has attributed her muse to an old Creek woman who speaks to her. (223)

Although Harjo primarily writes about the Southwest, Womack reads Harjo's writing as promising, eventually, her return to Creek territory. King's work, by contrast, could not be read as suggesting his return to a Cherokee home—largely because, while he identifies himself as Cherokee, he also feels his home to be Canada. In the 1994 interview quoted at the beginning of this chapter, King says,

> [W]hat remains is the firm base that we have in places—even if sometimes the places aren't our own to begin with. I'm Cherokee from Oklahoma, but I don't think of Oklahoma as home. If I think of any place as home it's the Alberta prairies, where I spent ten years with the Blackfoot people. I'm not Blackfoot, but that feels like the place I want to go back to. (Canton 3)

King thus sees Blackfoot territory, rather than the Cherokee nation, as home, a perspective that may explain why his works are set not in Cherokee territory but in the homelands of Native Canadian peoples. Often, his characters' tribes are not mentioned by name, as in *Truth and Bright Water* or *DreadfulWater Shows Up*; the Canadian or U.S.-Canadian borderland settings, however, as well as other contextual clues, indicate that the unnamed tribes are often similar, if perhaps not identical, to the Blackfoot or the Cree. King's internationalism does not invoke a singular, Cherokee center and is not "rooted in

a solid national center" as Womack suggests Harjo's pantribalism is. Instead, King's work suggests multiple centers and many potential homes.

Perhaps because King has had so many homes, the authors and storytellers who have influenced King also come from a range of backgrounds. In *The Truth About Stories*, King identifies Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday's Pulitzer-prizewinning *House Made of Dawn* (1968) as the "advent of the modern period in Native written literature" (102), one which does not supplant oral storytelling but which, through the power of the printed word, commands a far larger audience than oral storytellers could. King defines Native novels as those texts which

> creat[ed] a Native universe. For N. Scott Momaday, the answer, in part, was to write a novel in which the aspects of an unfamiliar [Native] universe stood close enough to parts of a known world so that the non-Native reader, knowing the one, might recognize the other. (108)

Momaday's novel, King posits, and the many Native novels that followed its publication,

> suggest that there are other ways of imagining the world, ways that do not depend so much on oppositions as they do on cooperations, and they raise the tantalizing question of what else one might do if confronted with the appearance of evil. (110)

The Native novels King discusses include works by Leslie Marmon Silko, Gerald Vizenor, James Welch, Tomson Highway, Louise Erdrich, Simon Ortiz, Lee Maracle, and Jeannette Armstrong, and these writers form part of King's own genealogy as an author.

Oral stories have shaped King as well, and they exist in dialogue with written stories:

> [T]he advent of Native written literature did not, in any way, mark the passing of Native oral literature. In fact, they occupy the same space, the same time. And, if you know where to stand, you can hear the two of them talking to each other. (101-102)

Throughout his discussion of his creative forebears, King reminds the reader that oral stories still exist and maintain their power; thus, King stands "in a circle of storytellers, most of whom will never be published, who have only their imaginations and their voices" (101). As King suggests, oral stories heard from his Cherokee relatives and from friends and elders among First Nations people have influenced him as much as any written literature.

The diverse influences King describes indicate a background that is pantribal, international, and resolutely Indigenous. The fact that his own work participates in a dialogue with both the varied texts that form his creative roots and the varied places that shape his personal roots shows the importance of viewing King from an Indigenous internationalist perspective.

Alienation and Belonging

In *Green Grass Running Water* Thomas King suggests that the narrative of the alienated urban Indian exists as a corollary to the stereptypical narrative of the vanishing Indian.[7] One of the main characters, Eli Stands Alone, is a Professor emeritus from the University of Toronto who had published on Shakespeare and Francis Bacon; he returns to the reservation almost by accident, coming back for a visit, as he initially told his sister Norma:

> "I just came back to see the place."
>
> "Of course, being as you're the oldest, you can stay as long as you like."
>
> "It's just a visit."
>
> "Everyone should have a home." …
>
> Looking back, Eli could see that he had never made a conscious decision to stay. And looking back, he knew it was the only decision he could have made. (263)

Eli has been successful in the world outside of the reservation, even winning Teacher of the Year twice (262); he has also maintained his connections to his home. As he explains to Sifton, who is both his friend and his nemesis (he is employed by the corporation seeking to flood the land Eli's cabin is on), he speaks Blackfoot as well as he speaks English, as do his niece and nephew; he moves between the dominant white culture and

[7] For background on the "Vanishing Indian" stereotype, see Dippie, Brian W. *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*.

the Blackfoot culture of the reservation with ease (141-142). The ease with which he navigates cultural differences is, Eli recognizes, at odds with general perceptions of Indians who live away from their tribal reserves:

> The Indian who couldn't go home.
>
> It was a common enough theme in novels and movies. Indian leaves the traditional world of the reserve, goes to the city, and is destroyed. Indian leaves the traditional world of the reserve, is exposed to white culture, and becomes trapped between two worlds. Indian leaves the traditional world of the reserve, gets an education, and is shunned by his tribe.
>
> Indians. Indians. Indians.
>
> Ten little Indians…
>
> The Indian who couldn't go home. (286-287)

As the familiar nursery rhyme enters King's story, the alienated Indian becomes the vanishing Indian—both of which are stereotypical portrayals that King challenges and, through his novels, revises. Leaving home, here, does not automatically equal alienation; distance does not necessarily mean disappearance.

Alberta, one of the protagonists in *Green Grass Running Water*, serves to illustrate this ease of movement as well. Alberta enjoys travel as long as she is the one in control:

> Alberta liked to drive. She liked to drive her own car, and she liked to drive alone. She didn't like the idea of a trip, but once she was on her

> way…a feeling of calm always came over her… She rarely flew, hated planes, in fact. In a plane, she was helpless… (85)

Here we see the vital distinction between travel under one's own control and travel under the control of others; in order for movement to be empowering, it is absolutely vital that it be a product of choice, and be under the control of the traveler.

Cars play an important role in the novel; at some times compared to horses, at others to ships, they represent freedom for many of the characters, but also echo the origins of colonialism in North America in Columbus's ships, as a Nissan, a Pinto, and a Kharmann-Ghia float through the water at the novel's end. In an essay which King refers to in *The Truth About Stories*, mixedblood author Louis Owens muses on the omnipresence of cars in photos of his family:

> Something is going on in my grandmother's instability and this strange, vehicular, photographic iconography, and I think it has to do with the past, present, and present past of Indianness…Part of it, certainly, is purely American, for motion is the real American dream. To be on the road indefinitely, free of roots and responsibilities…is the oldest and most destructive of all American metanarratives…But something else is also going on…It has to do with what I will call indigenous motion. Tribal people have deep bonds with the earth, with sacred places that bear the bones and stories that tell them who they are… But of course almost all tribal people also have migration stories… Motion is genetically encoded in American Indian being…How in the world did tribal people survive all

> [of the forced removals] unless we know how to pick up and carry our selves, our histories, our stories, our self-knowledge? (*Mixedblood Messages* 162-164)

The cars in *Green Grass Running Water* have a similar symbolic value as the ones Owens describes; they represent both colonial destruction and Indigenous survival. The novel offers numerous reminders of colonial travel, including characters who assume the names of Robinson Crusoe, or, echoing Herman Melville, Sergeant Cereno and Ishmael. King is keenly aware that, like the cars, travel per se is neither positive or negative; it can reinforce colonialism just as much as it can provide Indigenous people with freedom.

King's Indians can move easily between tribal and non-tribal society, and many are at home in cities as well as on reserves; some, however, cannot negotiate the stereotypes and expectations of Aboriginal people. These characters—in particular, Portland Looking Bear, a former movie star—lack a strong sense of self that is underscored by travel. Rather than showing his independence, as Alberta's driving does for her, Portland travels to find himself and only loses himself further. As Portland becomes more and more well known and begins to net starring roles in Hollywood, he discovers that he is not "Indian" enough. As one of his co-stars points out, "Just because you are an Indian doesn't mean that you can act like an Indian for the movies" (185). Caught in a world where ideas about his identity are determined by stereotypes, Portland changes his name to Iron Eyes Screeching Eagle (an allusion to Iron Eyes Cody, the Italian actor who played the iconic Crying Indian in the 1971 environmental commercial), and also agrees to wear a rubber nose that makes him look Indian enough for the movies.

Portland is trapped within the story that the dominant society tells about Indians, and in spite of all of his travel, he cannot escape this story. Thus, travel is not necessarily liberatory; for Portland, travel reinforces his rootlessness, providing him with countless Indian stereotypes but few models of real tribal identity.

As Stephen L. Pevar notes in the legal handbook to U.S. Indian law, *The Rights of Indians and Tribes*,

> There is no single definition of the term *Indian*. Determining who is an Indian can be difficult, even controversial…. Each government—tribal, state, and federal—determines who is an Indian for purposes of that government's laws and programs. This can result in someone being an Indian under tribal law but not under federal law, under federal but not tribal law, under tribal but not state law, and so forth. (18)

As there are in the United States over 560 federally recognized Indian nations,[8] it is difficult to generalize about tribal definitions of membership; most tend to include either a required minimum blood quantum (that is, percentage of Indian "blood" or parentage, such as 1/4th, 1/8th, or 1/16th) or proof of lineal descent from an ancestor registered on tribal rolls; some recognize only matrilineal or patrilineal descent. Membership requirements may also include additional factors such as community recognition, residency on tribal lands, or expression of cultural belonging. Even United States federal

[8] Of these, Pevar notes, 226 are located in Alaska, the rest are distributed across 34 other states. Native Hawaiians are not included in this tally, as they have, under U.S. laws, a legal status that is distinct from that of continental Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

law, however, does not work from a single definition of "Indian"; that definition varies from program to program, as Pevar points out:

> [The U.S.] Congress has created many programs for Indians, using varying definitions of the word *Indian*; for some programs, anyone of Indian descent is eligible…; for other programs, the applicant must have a minimum blood quantum…; and still other programs allow all members of federally recognized Indian tribes to qualify, regardless of how these tribes have defined the term. (18)

Canadian law, like U.S. law, also offers different definitions of Aboriginal or First Nations people; as demographer Andrew J. Siggner notes,

> There are many different ways of defining the Aboriginal population, which can result in different estimates of its size. There is no single or "correct" definition of the Aboriginal population, and the choice of a definition depends on the purpose for which it is to be used. (20)

The Canadian Census in 2001 listed four possible official categories: "Aboriginal Origin" (having at least one Aboriginal ancestor; this group, with 1,319,890 respondents, is by far the largest); "Aboriginal Identity" ("identifying with at least one Aboriginal group," that is, American Indian, Inuit, or Métis; 976,305 respondents); "Registered Indian" (registered as an Indian with the Canadian government under the Indian Act; 558,175 respondents); and "First Nation/Band Member" (registered as a member with a tribal nation or band; 554,860 respondents) (Siggner 20-21). In a 1986 essay, Roger Gibbins and J. Rick Ponting offer another set of categories: Status Indians are the same as the

census's "Registered Indian," while non-status Indians are Indians who "have lost their registered status by marriage to a nonIndian or by a process…known as enfranchisement" (18), or are the children of such non-status Indians. Someone like King, whose ancestry is U.S. Indian, would not even be considered "a non-Status Indian" under Gibbins and Ponting's criteria, though he would qualify as having "Aboriginal Identity" according to Canadian Census forms.[9]

In his pseudonymously authored detective novel *DreadfulWater Shows Up,* King suggests that there are more possibilities for Indian identity than "traditional" and "modern"; again, he demonstrates that it is possible to be connected to tribal culture even when far away from one's tribal ground. When the protagonist, detective Thumps DreadfulWater, a Cherokee man who once lived in California but has moved to Canada, comes across a medicine bag, he is uncertain what exactly it is, but because he respects the power of tribal beliefs, he is unwilling to "fool around" with a potentially sacred object. Thumps takes the medicine bag to Moses Blood, "one of the more traditional men on the reserve" (205). As they flip through the channels on Moses's big-screen satellite television, Moses explains that the bag is not a medicine pouch. Thumps realizes he has made off with someone's offering, and Moses opens it to find a bundle of tobacco (which is a traditional offering) and four golden filter tips (which are not). The novel critiques Indian stereotypes in popular culture and media; for example, when DreadfulWater is

[9] There are separate categories for the Métis population, a mixed-race group originally descended from Indian women's relationships with French fur traders, and for the Inuit population, who are also treated as a separate group (much like Alaska Natives are in the United States).

trying to track a suspect, the supposed skill of Indians at tracking is heavy on his mind as he stumbles through the woods:

> The cliché of an Indian gliding through a forest, alive to the vagaries of turned stone, broken branches, and scents on the wind, only happened in movies… The more Thumps thought about what he was doing, the more he realized how crazy this expedition was… Wilderness might not be as wild as it once was, but it could still kill you if you took it for granted. (87)

However, in spite of the skepticism King displays toward any supposed "innate" connection of Indigenous people to nature, he is also very aware of the importance and necessity of land to Native communities.

> What [is] not readily apparent at first glance…[is] the intimate relationship that Native people had with the land. And here I am not talking about the romantic and spiritual clichés that have become so popular with advertisers, land developers, and well-meaning people with backpacks. While the relationship that Native people have to the land certainly has a spiritual aspect to it, it is also a practical matter than balances respect with survival. It is an ethic that can be seen in the decisions and actions of a community and that is contained in…the stories that they tell about the nature of the world and their place in it, about the webs of responsibilities that bind all things. Or, as the Mohawk writer Beth Brant put it, "We do not worship nature. We are part of it." (113-114)

In addition to critiquing cultural stereotypes, *DreadfulWater* takes on economic systems and issues of tribal political rights. The murder that sets the novel's action in motion takes place just prior to the opening of a tribal casino, and much of the novel deals with tribal economic sovereignty. King's tribal activist characters, some of whom oppose the casino, see tradition and modernity neither as opposites nor even necessarily as separate. The traditionalist characters in King's novel make sacred offerings along ancient paths in the forest and also develop computer viruses. Moses Blood explains the finer points of computer systems and database searching to Thumps DreadfulWater, which leads to the mystery's solution. Instead of an individual criminal, the three murders suggest a more complex systemic problem, indicting multinational corporate profiteering and suggesting that the government's interests lie with corporate entities rather than with tribal ones.

Both the Canadian and the U.S. governments share an interest in decreasing the number of recognized Indians, as the U.S. and Canada must fulfill treaty obligations to "registered" or "federally recognized" Indians individuals and tribes; these responsibilities include health care, some educational programs, and a range of other duties (which, again, vary from tribe to tribe). Fulfilling these obligations costs money, and, as a result, many government officials have acted to limit the number of recognized Indians. There are notable exceptions to this rule, times when the central governments have acted to preserve Native sovereignty and culture, but as Pevar points out, in general, official policies have acted as governmental extensions of the expectation that Indians would vanish.

In his seminal essay "Identity in Mashpee" (1988), anthropologist James Clifford shows the degree to which governmental recognition of Indian tribes is bound up in stereotypes. The essay chronicles the many stories and histories that were compressed into a 1977 trial in Boston Federal Court in which the Mashpee Wampanoag sued for federal recognition as a tribe. The Mashpee were attempting to reclaim land in the town of Mashpee, "Cape Cod's Indian Town" (277), and in order to sue for the land under the relevant statute, the tribe had to gain federal legal recognition as a tribe. Clifford describes the trial in his introduction to *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*: "Modern Indians, who spoke in New England-accented English about the Great Spirit, had to convince a white Boston jury of their authenticity" (8). At the beginning of "Identity in Mashpee," Clifford points to the power of the Vanishing Indian ideology:

> Indians had long filled a pathetic imaginative space for the dominant culture… Their cultures had been steadily eroding, at best hanging on in museumlike reservations. Native American societies could not by defnition [sic] be dynamic, inventive, or expansive. Indians were lovingly remembered in Edward Curtis' sepia photographs as proud, beautiful, and "vanishing." But Curtis…carried props, costumes, and wigs…The image he recorded was carefully staged. Could [an all-white jury] be made to believe in the persistent "Indian" existence of the Mashpee plaintiffs without costumes and props? (284)

The definitional issue at hand was twofold: whether the Mashpee were Indians, and whether they were a tribe; finally, the jury had to decide whether they had been a tribe continuously since 1790. The question of whether they were in fact a tribe was at issue because the defense held that the Indian town of Mashpee, whose existence had been documented since at least the 17th century, was comprised of Indians from various other tribes in the area and thus did not comprise a tribe in and of itself. However, as Clifford notes, "Aboriginally, the concept of tribe has little meaning. Cape Cod Indian groupings seem to have been flexible, with significant movement across territories. Communities formed and reformed" (302). The notion of tribal purity is not an Indigenous concept, though it was a key issue in the Mashpee trial. Indigenous tribes have often incorporated "outside" influences into their tribal knowledge or traditions without giving up their tribal identities.

The other major question in the trial, whether the Mashpee were Indian or not, was equally vexed. Racial purity, like tribal purity, is not an Indigenous concept, and like many Eastern Indians, the Mashpee have a long history of intermarriage with other communities, particularly with African Americans. Outsiders who married into the tribe, and their children, were recognized as Mashpee Indians by the tribe, regardless of how non-Mashpee saw these people. Here again the question of authenticity arises, as the federal government attempted to determine who was "authentically" Mashpee and who was not.

The efforts by those outside the tribe to determine Mashpee authenticity has not only led to problems with federal recognition, but occasionally with recognition by other

Indian people. In a now-infamous 2002 essay entitled "These Are Not Indians" which was published in *American Indian Quarterly,* Oglala Lakota writer Delphine Red Shirt argues that New England Indians are not really Indians because they do not *look* Indian:

> I am an Indian. I grew up Indian, look Indian, even speak Indian. So it offends me to come east and to see how "Indian" is defined in [Connecticut].
>
> What offends me? That on the outside (where it counts in America's racially conscious society), Indians in Connecticut do not appear Indian. In fact, the Indians in Connecticut look more like they come from European or African stock. When I see them, whether they are Pequot, Mohegan, Paugussett, Paucatuck, or Schaghticoke, I want to say, "These are not Indians." (643)

Many Native commentators rushed to defend the New England tribes and point out the many problems inherent in such a purely phenotypic definition of "Indian," albeit one that Red Shirt suggested was ultimately rooted in blood quantum. The editors of *Indian Country Today* described Red Shirt's commentary as "profound… myopia," and noted that "Indian commentators, from Navajo Nation to Oklahoma and Washington, have denounced Ms. Red Shirt's approach" ("Myopic Commentary: Bigoted Assertions Belong in the Past").[10] Nevertheless, her commentary shows the profound power of the colonial concepts of race and racial purity, a power to which Native people are not immune, and which certainly affected the 1977 trial for Mashpee recognition. Clifford

[10] The editorial went on to add that "a more proper question might be: who ultimately will have the right to define our grandchildren, whether they will belong to us or not, regardless of 'race?'"

notes that the Mashpee "were not helped by the fact that few of them looked strongly 'Indian'" (285). In the end, the case was decided against the Mashpee because the jury held that the Mashpee community of Indians had not been a tribe continuously since 1790, although it recognized, somewhat paradoxically, that they had been a tribe at least at certain points in the 19th century.[11]

Acknowledging that "looking Indian" or having a certain quantum of "Indian blood" does not necessarily coincide with cultural belonging, several recognized tribes in the U.S.[12] have opted not to require a particular blood quantum for tribal membership, including the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.[13] In order to enroll as a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, individuals must be able to trace their lineage to one of the Cherokee men and women listed on the Dawes (Allotment) Act rolls, which were taken between 1899 and 1906 and which list "Citizens and Freedmen residing in Indian Territory (now NE Oklahoma)" (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma Registration Page). As long as they can prove their relationship to a single Oklahoma Cherokee ancestor on these rolls, descendants are entitled to citizenship. This policy has made the Cherokee the butt of jokes in Indian country (one common joke asks, "What do you get when you have eight (or sixteen) Cherokee in a room? –One full-blood"), but it has also made the

[11] The Mashpee continued to pursue federal recognition through the Bureau of Indian Affairs rather than through a trial court; they were granted recognition by the BIA on March 31, 2006.
[12] These tribes generally have been recognized by the government in treaties prior to 1871, when a congressional resolution ended Indian treaty-making. Tribes like the Mashpee, which did not have treaty recognition and/or which ended their tribal status under the 1950s Termination legislation, have had to fight for decades for tribal recognition, in some cases unsuccessfully as yet.
[13] The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma is the largest of the three federally recognized Cherokee nations. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina and the United Keetoowah Band of Oklahoma are smaller Cherokee nations. The Eastern Band requires 1/16th Cherokee blood as well as lineal descent from a tribal member listed on the 1924 Baker rolls; the United Keetoowah requires 1/4 degree of Keetoowah or "Old Settler" blood for membership, "Old Settlers" being Cherokee who removed to Arkansas under treaty agreements in 1817 and 1819.

Cherokee Nation one of the largest and most politically powerful tribes, with 240,000 registered tribal members.[14] More importantly, this policy ensures not only the continued legal existence of the Cherokee, but allows the tribe to grow in numbers at a time when many tribes find their numbers steadily decreasing. Stephen L. Pevar notes that the "increase in mixed marriages has caused many tribes to reduce the tribe's blood quantum [requirement] for membership" (94); as Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice notes in *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History*, "Degree of blood quantum…shouldn't be read as a measure of commitment to Cherokee nationhood or identification as Cherokee" (6), something the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma membership policy recognizes implicitly, but which federal policies generally do not.

As King points out in his essay "You're Not The Indian I Had In Mind" from *The Truth About Stories* (2003) stereotypical ideas about Indianness and authenticity still play a significant role in the lives of Indigenous people today:

> [M]any Native people now live in cities, with only tenuous ties to a reserve or a nation. Many no longer speak their Native language, a gift of colonialism, and the question of identity has become as much a personal matter as it is a matter of blood… [L]anguage and narrow definitions of culture are not the only ways identity can be constructed. Yet, in the absence of visual confirmation, these "touchstones"—race, culture, language, blood—still form a kind of authenticity test, a racial-reality

[14] This policy is, of course, not without its own problems, particularly because a number of anti-assimilationist Cherokee refused to sign up for land under the Dawes Act regulations (an act designed to break up tribal land bases and make Indians individual owners of land parcels rather than holding tribal land in common) and therefore do not appear on the rolls, thereby, in many cases, eliminating the possibility of Cherokee citizenship for their descendants.

game that contemporary Native people are forced to play. And here are some of the questions.

Were you born on a reserve? Small, rural towns with high Native populations will do. Cities will not.

Do you speak your Native language? Not a few phrases here and there. Fluency is the key. No fluency, no Indian.

Do you participate in your tribe's ceremonies? Being a singer or a dancer is a plus, but not absolutely required.

Are you a full-blood?

Are you a status Indian?[15]

Are you enrolled? (55-56)

King's answer to these questions would in all cases be "no," and throughout his 2003 book of essays *The Truth About Stories*, he tells personal anecdotes about his life and heritage and insists that "Native" be defined on his terms rather than someone else's.

Thomas King's characters negotiate with all of the complexities of Indian identity; some, like Portland Looking Bear, can see the problems with governmental determinations and stereotypical representations, but when they are away from the reserve lack the groundedness of tribal experience that would allow them to counter these stereotypes. Others, like Alberta, are confident in their identity both within and away from their tribal community. Unlike Eli, Alberta does not decide to return to the reserve;

[15] A "status Indian" is one who is officially enrolled in a tribal nation that has a treaty relationship with the Canadian government, a variation on the U.S. question "are you enrolled?"

her connections to her family and tribe are clear, and do not require constant geographic proximity.

And then there are the tricksters, who narrate some of *Green Grass, Running Water*. They are Indian, although they can appear non-Indian to some observers; their gender varies from scene to scene; they seem to be moving back and forth in time; they are in constant motion. Although there are several attempts throughout the course of the novel to confine them, they stay only when they wish to stay, and escape when they need to. They are voluntary inmates at an asylum, from which they have a record of disappearing:

> [Dr. John Eliot said,] "It's just one of those mysteries, Joe."…
>
> So the Indians were gone again. Dr. [Joe] Hovaugh watched John gesturing and smiling. He envied the man his easy manner in the face of disaster.
>
> Eliot paused at the door. "What I can't understand is how they escape. And where do they go? Have you every thought about that, Joe? And why, in God's name, would they want to leave?" (48)

The tricksters' purpose is to turn the world on its head, to destabilize fixed notions of the world, what Gerald Vizenor might refer to as "terminal creeds." Their identities are fluid, allowing them to escape and challenge dominant expectations of Indians and Indianness. For these tribal storytellers, movement and flexibility is key to their Indigenous identity as well as to their power as storytellers. Mobility and movement are essential to their power.

“More to a Story Than Just The Words”: Place, Migration, and the Trail of Tears

In any discussion of Indigenous migration and mobility, the issue of forced migration looms large, nowhere more so than with the Cherokee. The splintering of the Cherokee nation into several different bodies originates in the Cherokees’ forced removal from their territory in Georgia in 1838. This removal, known as the Trail of Tears, is perhaps the most well-known episode in North American Indian history. A small, pro-removal faction of the Cherokee, who were not representatives of the Cherokee government, signed a treaty with the U.S. government at New Echota in 1835; in spite of massive Cherokee protests to Congress as well as the fact that the treaty signatories had no standing to speak for the Cherokee nation, Congress ratified the treaty by a margin of one vote. In 1838 the U.S. government sent federal troops to enforce the New Echota treaty’s terms, namely the removal of all Cherokees from the East to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). Some few Cherokees managed to evade the troops, and their descendants now form the Eastern Band of Cherokee, located in North Carolina. Additionally, about 5,000 Cherokee citizens moved to Oklahoma prior to 1838. The majority of the Cherokees, however, were forcibly removed from their homes in 1838 to walk what is now called the Trail of Tears; most estimates suggest that about 4,000 people—a quarter of the Cherokees on the Trail of Tears—perished, though demographer Russell Thornton, in his 1984 article “Cherokee Population Losses During the Trail of Tears: A New Perspective and a New Estimate,” argues that the number may in fact be twice as high.

Migration and movement are common and accepted elements in Indigenous cultures, as tribal stories, including those of the Cherokee, suggest, but forcible removal is a very different creature. Even the pro-removal faction of the Cherokee recognized that leaving the tribal homelands would be extraordinarily difficult, and most who spoke in favor of moving to Oklahoma did so only because they believed such a move to be inevitable: better that the Cherokee move on their own rather than be forced to do so at gunpoint. Elias Boudinot, editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix* and one of the signatories of the Treaty of New Echota, explained his views in an 1837 publication:

> "What is to be done?" was a natural enquiry, after we found that all our efforts to obtain redress from the General Government [of the United States], *on the land of our fathers*, had been of no avail. The first rupture among ourselves was the moment we presumed to answer that question. To a portion of the Cherokee people it early became evident that the interest of their countrymen, and the happiness of their posterity, depended upon an entire change of policy. Instead of contending uselessly, against superior power, the only course left was, to yield to circumstances over which they had no control. (4; emphasis in original)

Boudinot invokes and emphasizes "*the land of our fathers*" yet suggests that what is even more important is "the happiness of [our] posterity"; in Boudinot's view, the only way for the Cherokee nation to preserve its future is to give up the land of its ancestors.

Boudinot's primary opponent, John Ross, principal chief of the Cherokee nation, rarely emphasized the traditional importance of the land in published statements, nor did

he focus on the potential trauma of such a move for the Cherokee people. Instead, Ross's published statements tended to use the discourse of rights and justice, emphasizing both the illegality of United States actions as well as the "civilized" state of the Cherokees.[16] Ross's choice of the discourse of law is a contextual one: the audience for most of his statements was U.S. officials who were not generally sympathetic to the Cherokees, although they were nonetheless supposed to enforce the laws of the United States—laws which, in this case, were on the side of the Cherokees resisting removal.[17] Thus, rather than explaining the damaging impact that forced removal would have on the Cherokees, Ross focused on the legal and moral aspects of the case. Similarly, the absence of Indigenous traditions in his statements should not be taken to mean that Ross viewed them as unimportant. Instead, he did not see them as an effective means of appealing to his intended audience. One of the few mentions he did make of the ancestral importance of the land was in a speech made in 1834 (published in 1985) to a Seneca delegation, whom he addressed as "Brothers":

> [T]his charming country was once ours; and over these fields and through these forests our beloved Fathers once, in careless gaiety, pursued their sports and hunted their game…And amidst of all this innocence, simplicity and bliss -- the whiteman came; and lo! the animated chase, the

[16] John Ross's written statements on the issue of Removal were published by Ross in 1835 under the title *Memorial of John Ross and Others: On Behalf of the Cherokee Nation of Indians*…; Boudinot's 1837 publication is in response to Ross's *Memorial*. Ross's publication consists primarily of letters exchanged with the Secretary of War (Indian Affairs was under the Department of War's purview at the time) and other U.S. officials, which emphasize the legal aspects of the debate.

[17] In two 1832 cases on the legality of forcible removal, *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* and *Wooster v. Georgia*, the Supreme Court of the United States under Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that the state of Georgia had no right to expel the Cherokee, and that the removal laws were unconstitutional. However, both the State of Georgia and President Andrew Jackson ignored this ruling; Jackson is supposed to have commented, "John Marshall has made his decision. Let him enforce it now if he can."

> feast, the dance, the song of fearless, thoughtless joy were over. And ever since, we have been made to drink of the bitter cup of humiliation; treated like dogs; our lives, our liberties, the sport of the whiteman; our country and the graves of our Fathers torn from us, in cruel succession: until driven from river to river, from forest to forest…we find ourselves fugitives, vagrants and strangers in our own country… (285)

Ross was well aware of the cruelty of removal, and maintaining the connection of his people to their ancestral land was one of the major concerns of his chieftaincy.

In spite of the protests of the Cherokee government and the vast majority of Cherokees, the U.S. government considered the Treaty of New Echota to be binding and in 1838 forcibly removed the Cherokees westward to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). This move is a central trauma in Cherokee history, as Cherokee literary scholar Jace Weaver points out:

> The Cherokee *can* never forget the Trail of Tears—not because of some genetic determinism but because its importance to heritage and identity are passed down through story from generation to generation. (7)

The Trail of Tears figures importantly, though subtly, in King's 1999 novel *Truth and Bright Water*. The novel is set in two towns on either side of the 49th parallel—Truth, a "railroad town," lies on the U.S. side, while Bright Water, "the reserve," is in Canada (1). The novel tells the story of two cousins, the narrator Tecumseh and his cousin Lum, living in Truth and in Bright Water, over the course of a summer. An enigmatic young Cherokee girl named Rebecca Neugin, whose family is traveling from Georgia to

Oklahoma, befriends the narrator Tecumseh and his family. The family's presence in Canada—which is certainly not on the way between Georgia and Oklahoma—raises questions for the reader, questions that might lead the reader to understand that this family's journey has something to do with the Trail of Tears. As Daniel Heath Justice points out, Rebecca's "name is that of [an actual] Cherokee survivor of the Trail of Tears…[who] stands as the representative survivor of Removal" (218):

> King repeatedly draws on Cherokee history to inform the novel's emotional landscape; although Tecumseh doesn't understand the true nature of [Rebecca's] oddness, her arrival heralds a meaningful shift in the narrative toward the storied burdens of history. (220)

Rebecca represents the Cherokee survivors of the Trail of Tears, and she is a somber presence in the book, searching for her lost duck—a duck who echoes both a story told by a Trail of Tears survivor who walked to Oklahoma with her goose, and also the duck in the Cherokee creation story who creates the world.

> Rebecca is the storyteller, the one who carries the sorrow of the Trail in her heart… That she's a spirit is made clear by her association with the skull [that Lum and Tecumseh find] (she wears the same red ribbon in her hair that is threaded through the eye sockets)… She's a spirit of the Cherokee past who walks in the present. (223-224)

The skull, a recurrent image throughout the book, is that of an Indian child which one of the novel's protagonists, Monroe Swimmer, has taken from a museum in order to rebury it. Its exact provenance is unclear, but when Tecumseh's shows it to his grandmother, she

tells him is of a girl who "had a short life…and died hard," and who is "a long ways from home." As a survivor, Justice notes, Rebecca stands for the Cherokee "who weren't destroyed by the events of the Trail of Tears"; the skull reminds readers of those who were.

Because she is a survivor, Rebecca is, in spite of her ghostly presence, a hopeful figure. At the Indian Days festival, Rebecca enters the lodge of Tecumseh's grandmother, which she is sharing with Teresa and Lucille Rain, and they invite Rebecca in for a bowl of stew.

> My grandmother takes her plate and fills it again.
>
> "Now the rules are," says Lucille, "if you're a guest, we have to feed you, and you have to tell us all about the Cherokee."
>
> Rebecca tries to smile but she looks like she's going to cry, too. (219)

Instead of telling the story of Removal—which readers may expect since Rebecca looks as if she will cry—Rebecca tells a creation story. Her voice becomes stronger as she does so, showing that, as Justice says, "hope inhabits young Rebecca to the core as much as grief and loss" (224). Moreover, upon their urging, she tells the story in Cherokee, even though her listeners are not Cherokee and do not speak the language.

> "Do you speak your language?" says Teresa.
>
> "Yes, ma'am," says Rebecca.
>
> "Good," says Lucille. "Then you can tell your story in Cherokee."
>
> "You guys don't speak Cherokee," I say.

> "More to a story than just the words," says my grandmother. …
>
> "Gha! Sge!" says Rebecca, and now her voice sounds better, too. "Hila hiyuhi u':sgwanighsdi ge:sv:'i…"
>
> "Ah," I hear my grandmother say. "A creation story. Those ones are my favourite." (219-220)

Rebecca's story is rooted in tribal particularities, including the Cherokee language, and yet Tecumseh's Indian (but non-Cherokee) grandmother can understand it. Tecumseh himself cannot yet understand it, though he says it "sounds pretty nice" (220). Tecumseh's grandmother is aware of the shared histories and stories that connect her people and the Cherokee and which allow her to hear the story as "more…than just the words." She understands the systems of thought and the systems of oppression that mark Rebecca's experience, and she sees the parallels not only between her past and the burdens of Rebecca's history but also between Rebecca's creation story and her own.

In *Muting White Noise: Native American and European American Novel Traditions* (2006), James Cox writes,

> Sacred stories define the basic structures and values of a community, and when two communities or nations come into conflict, so do their storytelling traditions. In a colonial context, an invader's storytelling traditions are the foundation of "the law, order, and good government" that dominates Native people, while Native storytelling traditions are the foundation of a social equality, balance, harmony, and co-operation that resist domination. (62)

The telling of stories, and of creation stories in particular, is central aspect of much of King's work. In *The Truth About Stories* (2003), King argues that Native creation stories portray "the world…at peace, and the pivotal concern is not with the ascendancy of good over evil but with the issue of balance" (24). As Rebecca tells the Cherokee creation story, she not only offers hope while honoring past losses but also begins to weave a pantribal community into being, a community that can heal while remembering the past. Through her, Tecumseh begins to understand the histories of oppression and histories of resistance of which he is a part, and thus begins to see that there is far more to a story than just words.

Stories are powerful means of making contact between Indigenous nations and peoples, according to Daniel Heath Justice:

> Distance is arbitrary; geography is less binding than its perception. The Indian Nations continue. Through the Cherokees—living and dead—who populate *Truth & Bright Water*, King breaks down the illusory boundaries between nations, between times, and between the ancestors and their descendants—without…ignoring the contextualized particularities of each. (226)

Without downplaying the tragedy of the Trail of Tears and, through the unnamed bones that Monroe Swimmer has collected, the suffering of other Native peoples, King's story suggests both the immense losses suffered by Indigenous communities and the rebirth of those communities. The losses continue on into the present, as Lum, who is fascinated with death, runs off the half-finished bridge into oblivion. Rebirth, however, is also

constant: though he mourns his friend, the novel's narrator Tecumseh survives his friend's death and begins to understand the stories he has been told as a means of continuing with life without denying Lum's suffering or his death.

The young narrator's name, Tecumseh, which is mentioned only once in the story, also suggests that, beyond merely surviving, he has the potential to link Indigenous people together. The historical Tecumseh, a Shawnee political and military leader (his father was Shawnee, his mother Creek), was an early advocate of intertribal alliance and unity. In 1811 he visited many tribes in the southern United States to raise support for a multitribal Indian confederacy that could politically and militarily resist further incursions of Euroamerican settlers into Indian land. Cherokee historian Robert J. Conley notes that the Cherokee nation was among those Tecumseh hoped would join him; the conservatives among the Cherokee pushed for the alliance, but the faction known as the progressives favored a more conciliatory stance toward the U.S. government and white settlers (89-90).[18] The progressives won the argument, and the Cherokee did not join Tecumseh's confederacy, which went to war against the U.S. in 1812. Though his alliance did not long outlast him—Tecumseh was killed at the Battle of the Thames in Ontario, Canada, in 1813—he is remembered as an early advocate of pantribalism. The character Tecumseh's name thus represents the pantribal approach that King often takes in his fiction, a pantribalism that exists side by side with tribal specificity.

[18] The progressive faction, led by Major John Ridge, was also the faction which, in the 1820s and 1830s, argued in favor of Cherokee removal. Tecumseh's visit occasioned similar disagreements among the Cherokee's neighbors, the Creeks, and led to the Creek civil war, also known as the Red Stick War; the Cherokee progressives' intervention in that war led to the progressives' victory over the conservative Red Sticks.

In an interview with Jeffrey Canton conducted while King was working on *Truth and Bright Water*, Canton remarked, "You're a Canadian citizen and define yourself as a Canadian writer, but your most recent fiction seems to be pan-Indian in its scope" (3). King replied,

> Consciously so, too. … There are issues—not universal—that are important to look at. Authenticity is one, for me. Identity…is one. And the issue of borders. I hold Canadian citizenship and think of myself as a Canadian writer…At the same time, I hold U.S. citizenship, too. I can flop back and forth across the border like a big fish.
>
> The novel that I'm working on now is set on the border….It should be interesting to see how I play that one out, and how I make it work. (4)

Aside from being set on the U.S.-Canadian border, *Truth and Bright Water* also offers many characters who have physically left their communities, but who are still present in the life of the community through told stories and gossip. These include Tecumseh's grandfather, "who had gone to Italy for a war and had come home with a taste for operas and musicals" (16); Tecumseh's aunt Cassie, who, Tecumseh explains, "has travelled all over the world, and whenever she gets to a new place, she sends us a postcard. We have postcards from places like New Zealand and Mexico, France and Japan" (117); and Monroe Swimmer, a "famous Indian artist" who has spent the last years living in Toronto and exhibiting "everywhere. Paris, Berlin, New York, London, Moscow, Madrid, Rome" (129). These characters have spent much of their lives away from Truth and Bright Water,

but are still considered a part of the community; their mobility does not mean alienation from their Indian identity.

Monroe Swimmer demonstrates that mobility can be not only a part of an individual's Indigenous identity, but also a benefit for the home community. Though he has gained renown as a painter, Monroe tells Tecumseh that painting is not his true talent:

> "But you're not a painter?"
>
> "Oh, I did that for a while." Monroe goes to a wall and straightens a small painting. "Made a bunch of money. Problem was, I was lousy. Stinko. Reactionary. Predictable."
>
> Monroe is on the move again, and I figure it'll be safer if I stop asking questions and just let him talk.
>
> "What I was really good at was restoration." (129)

Monroe's form of restoration involves restoring (or, as his detractors suggest when they have him fired, adding) Indian figures to early American landscape paintings; in his travels he has surreptitiously recovered the bones of Indian children from museum storehouses in order to bury them properly. Upon his return to Truth and Bright Water, he makes a church disappear from the actual, physical landscape, dismantles the U.S.-Canadian border, and returns the buffalo to the prairies by means of his art. He is also in constant motion, as in the scene above; Tecumseh, who helps Monroe with his various projects, often cannot find him because he is always in a different place on the prairie. Moreover, Monroe is painting the old church in which he is living in such a way that it disappears, adding to the difficulty of finding him even when he is at home. While

Monroe suggests that, when he was younger, he was "always running away" (194), it is clear that by the time the book's events take place, he is not running away from anything, but instead is constantly in motion because he is constantly creating. Thus, in *Truth and Bright Water*, motion is figured as a creative force, a central element in the creation of an Indigenous world.

Mobility, Motion, and Home

Home is an important place in King's work, and yet there is no single, central home space which he creates. Instead, home is wherever Indians are. King, whose Cherokee ancestors came from what is now the southeastern United States and who grew up in California, has adopted Canada as his home; similarly, his characters show an ability to feel at home in a range of places. Rather than envisioning the world as a series of contrasts between home and alienation, King envisions a world in which Indigenous people, in spite of tribal differences, can be at home with other Indigenous people, people who share their world view, whose specific stories may differ but whose perspectives and experiences are parallel.

What Thomas King's biography and works reveal is the mobility and resilience of Indigenous people and communities, and the connections that remain strong even as community members move away and perhaps join other communities. Indians who move away do not vanish, nor does absence from their original community connote a loss of

authenticity. Scholars must continue to recognize the central importance of land to Native American cultures while moving toward an understanding of Indigenous cultures that acknowledges their simultaneous mobility. What King's biography and his cross-genre works suggest, Indigenous traditions and stories bear out: rootedness and migration can and do coexist, and even in the face of traumatic removal, motion can be a force for creation.

CHAPTER TWO

"*We* are internationalists!":

Rootedness, Migration, and Indigenous Internationalism

in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*

> A journey to Paguate from Laguna…retraces the original journey from the Emergence Place…The eight miles, marked with boulders, mesas, springs, and river crossings, are actually a ritual circuit, or path, that marks the interior journey the Laguna people made: a journey of awareness and imagination in which they emerged from being within the earth and all-included in the earth to be the culture and people they became, differentiating themselves for the first time from all that had surrounded them, always aware that interior distances cannot be reckoned in physical miles or calendar years.
>
> Leslie Marmon Silko[1]

In the front matter of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* readers discover a map of the Americas with several boxes that contain keys not for interpreting the map, but for understanding the book. The boxed text includes the following:

> When Europeans arrived, the Maya, Azteca, Inca cultures had already built great cities and vast networks of roads. Ancient prophecies foretold the arrival of the Europeans in the Americas. The ancient prophecies also foretell the disappearance of all things European. (14)

In this text, the European presence in the Americas, though destructive, is not permanent. What Silko is suggesting with "the disappearance of all things European" is not that people and things with European roots will disappear but instead that their Europeanness

[1] "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories" 36-37.

will cease to exist. The Indigenous nature of the Americas is powerful enough to absorb new technologies and new people without losing any of its Indigenousness. America is not hybrid; it is, will be, and always has been Indigenous. *Almanac of the Dead* describes an Indigeneity that can be both locally grounded in the land and international at once.

The characters in *Almanac of the Dead* reflect the importance of movement: everyone is in motion, and even the map at the book's beginning seems composed as much of vectors as of fixed locations—the connections between places as important as the places themselves. The map's locations are connected with lines tracing the journeys of characters or materials, with labels like "Sterling accidentally goes to Tucson" or "cocaine to finance arms" (14-15). Tucson, the locale of much of the book's action, is at the center, but the map extends as far as Haiti (marked as "The First Black Indians") and Cuba; Alaska is indicated as well. These connections establish the book's intertribal, international orientation, and the examples of Haiti and Cuba in particular detail both the possibilities and problems Indigenous peoples face in an international struggle. The map is not made to geographic scale; instead, the distances correspond to an interior scale—a "journey of awareness and imagination" (37) much like the migration story Silko describes in her essay "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories" (1996) and which is quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

The map also suggests the importance of travel and mobility in this novel. Anishinaabe author Gerald Vizenor considers maps an important element of Indigenous stories: "Maps are pictures, and some native pictures are stories, visual memories, the source of directions, and a virtual sense of presence" (*Fugitive Poses* 170). The

Indigenous communities Silko describes here are firmly rooted in place, connected to the land and their ancestors. This rootedness exists alongside the mobility of Indigenous individuals who are fighting for their communities' survival. Those people who physically move away from their community—whether by choice, coercion, or some combination of the two—are still members of the community; physical absence does not translate into isolation, and is in fact sometimes necessary to ensure the survival of the rooted community.

Almanac's contemporary setting emphasizes the continuity of Native people in the Americas at the same time that the story addresses their dispossession and oppression. Issues associated with globalization, militarization, or drug and gun smuggling surface here, and the novel's harsh critique of international corporations draws consciously on Marx. In this context, Silko's novel does not represent a departure from, much less a disavowal of, Indigenous traditions. Instead, it invokes ancient traditions and shows their flexibility and continuing power in this globalized world of multinational capitalism. The Indigenous armies use computers, high-tech weaponry, computer networks, and television to aid in bringing about the ancient prophecies. These tools and technologies become part of their Indigenous environment; they are assimilated, part of a continually Indigenous world. Like the almanac at the novel's center, the America envisioned here is the combination of many cultures but still remains resolutely Indigenous.

Almanac of the Dead

The novel sprawls; at 763 pages and over fifty characters, it eschews linear structures and often flows into what appear to be tangential narratives.[2] Silko has said that she "could not think of the story of the *Almanac* as a single line moving from point A to point B to point C" ("Notes on *Almanac of the Dead*" 140) and as a result, the novel's structure is more like a spiderweb than a straight line. At the spiderweb's center is an ancient almanac of prophecies that has been handed down through generations of Indigenous people; from here, stories radiate outward. Lecha, an old Yaqui woman, is the almanac's current keeper, a job passed to her by her grandmother Yoeme, whose name in Yaqui means "person," "human," or generally "the Yaqui language," and is synonymous with "Yaqui" as a tribal name (Shaul 181). Lecha has hired a young white woman, Seese, to help her with the almanac. Seese, meanwhile, is hoping for news about her abducted baby. Lecha's twin sister Zeta, living on a ranch near Tucson, is engaged in cross-border smuggling activities. Sterling, a man recently exiled from Laguna Pueblo, helps Zeta with the ranch work. Both sisters have connections with Indigenous peoples in Mexico, among them the Mayan Indian twins Tacho and El Feo. These male twins are leading a people's army, the Army of Justice and Redistribution, northward toward the border; they are aided by the Indigenous Marxist Angelita La Escapía, who has procured guns and financial support from the Cuban government and others. The Army of Justice and

[2] As Silko explains in her essay "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Perspective," such divergent narratives are an essential part of the story, and a sign of traditional Laguna storytelling. However, to readers unaccustomed to this storytelling style, they would appear peripheral and perhaps even distracting.

Redistribution is mirrored in the U.S. by the Army of the Homeless, a group of the disenfranchised organized by Clinton, an African American Vietnam veteran, and Root, a disabled white man. All of these characters, though they are at times unsympathetic to the reader, are nevertheless allied with the forces working for the liberation of the Americas from colonial and corporate domination.

Another group of characters is referred to in the novel as the Destroyers, likely an allusion to a legendary Laguna "secret Destroyer clan, which worships destruction and death," to which Silko refers in her 1994 essay "Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit" (70). The Destroyers in *Almanac* represent the forces of colonialism and of multinational corporate capitalism. Generally part of government, high finance, or the real estate industry (or all three), these characters include Menardo, a Mexican businessman selling insurance to large corporations against any kind of disaster, whose secret shame is that his grandfather was one of "the Indians" (258). On the U.S. side of the border we find Max and Leah Blue, a pair of real-estate developers trying to usurp the land and water rights of Indigenous peoples in order to squander the valuable resources on desert golf courses. There are also a number of gay men, most of whom pathologically link sex and death, like Beaufrey and Serlo, two aristocrats whose only pleasure comes from the destruction of others.[3] In addition, the Destroyers include an assortment of military officers, weapons and organ dealers, and pornographers, to whom sex, death, and commerce have become inextricably intertwined.

[3] Silko's lamentable use of homosexuality as a metaphor for misogynistic Western society and her connected, very problematic invocation of anti-gay stereotypes is discussed in detail in Janet St. Clair, "Cannibal Queers: The Problematics of Metaphor in *Almanac of the Dead*." Louise K. Barnett and James L. Thorson. *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999. 207-221.

As the novel progresses, the forces of liberation and oppression come into increasing conflict, and an all-out battle for the future of the Americas begins—a battle the ancient almanac predicts will be won by Indigenous peoples and the disenfranchised, those who have already rejected the European ideas of capitalism and state-based nationalism in favor of Indigenous worldviews. Like the map at the beginning, the novel's scope stretches from Mexico to Alaska, Arizona to Haiti, and across more than five hundred years of history. It combines history, legend, storytelling, almanac fragments, prophecy, Marxist political theory, Mayan codices, talk shows, novelistic discourse, and more, as it chronicles a revolutionary uprising of tribal peoples across the Americas against five hundred years of colonization.

Almanac was published in 1991, one year before the quincentennial of Columbus's voyage to the Americas; as the five-hundred year domination of Europe over the Americas plays a central role in the novel, Denise K. Cummings suggests that the publication date of Silko's novel "[positions] it as a sort of pre-emptive strike against the anticipated excesses of the quincentenary" (83). In 1990, Spain had blocked the proposal to establish 1992 as the United Nations' Year of Indigenous People, insisting that a focus on Indigenous concerns would detract from the planned celebrations of Columbus's voyage. Indigenous peoples had to wait a year for their official recognition, as 1993 became the UN Year of Indigenous People. Even the name of the year was a source of controversy, as the singular "people," rather than "peoples" (which Indigenous groups pushed for), indicates nonsovereign minority status rather than sovereignty in international law. Indigenous peoples, however, refused to acquiesce to this deferral and

held conferences and commemorations of their own in 1992. The Nobel Prize committee also recognized the struggles of Indigenous peoples in awarding the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize to Guatemalan Indigenous activist Rigoberta Menchú. Several North American Indigenous writers commemorated the five-hundred-year anniversary of Columbus in their works, "writing back" against the beginnings of empire. Among the many who invoked Columbus were the novelists Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), Thomas King (Cherokee), Sherman Alexie (Spokane-Coeur d'Alene), and Louise Erdrich (Anishinaabe) and Michael Dorris (Modoc).[4] The stories these authors tell of Columbus and the colonization of the Americas differ radically from the Columbus hagiography generally practiced in Europe and the Americas, and even differ from much of the criticism of Columbus. The difference is not a mere reversal of Eurowestern values—Columbus now figured as bad instead of good, a harbinger of death and destruction rather than a grand adventurer. Instead, the entire value system shifts, and Columbus and colonization are placed within an Indigenous framework. The European colonizers are foreigners and strangers, sometimes rude, often incomprehensible, and even, in Vizenor's and King's trickster narratives, the offspring of earlier Native American travelers to Europe or the products of Coyote's imagination. In these retellings of the story of colonization, the colonizers are contained within a Native American world view where the Native is normative and the European foreign and strange.

[4] Gerald Vizenor, *Heirs of Columbus*; Thomas King, *A Coyote Columbus Trickster Story* and *Green Grass, Running Water*; Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues*; Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris, *Crown of Columbus*;

A similar perspective is reflected in *Almanac of the Dead*, even though Columbus himself does not appear as a character. Silko presents Columbus's voyage and the subsequent conquest of Mexico not merely from an Indian perspective, but as events foretold by Indigenous prophecies and, in fact, emanating from the Americas rather than Europe.

> [T]he old story came back to Sterling as he walked along. The appearance of the Europeans [in America] had been no accident; the Gunadeeyahs [the Destroyer clan] had called for their white brethren to join them…No wonder Cortés and Montezuma had hit it off together when they met; both had been members of the same secret clan. (760)

In *Almanac*'s version of the Conquest, Europeans have been instruments, not actors.[5] Thus, even colonization itself emanates from the power of Native people—albeit from the evil Destroyer clan, those who "caused the old-time people to flee to Pueblo country in Arizona and New Mexico, thousands of years before" (760). But just as the almanac foretells the Europeans' arrival, so does it predict the "disappearance of all things European," as the book's front matter notes. Even at the very beginning of the colonial enterprise, its destruction—which the novel chronicles—is already assured.

[5] This common theme in Silko's work is further elaborated in *Ceremony*, where white people are the product of a contest between evil Indigenous sorcerers, akin to the Destroyers in *Almanac*. "Long time ago/in the beginning/there were no white people in this world/...This world was already complete…/Then it happened./These witch people got together./…for a contest…/in dark things./…Finally there was only one/ … This one just told them to listen:/"What I have is a story"/…this witch said/…*as I tell the story/it will begin to happen. /…white skin people/like the belly of a fish/covered with hair./Then they grow away from the earth…/The wind will blow them across the ocean…/They will kill the things the fear/all the animals/the people will starve.*" 132-136.

Almanac of the Dead also refigures the colonization of the Americas in terms of the colonizers' abandonment of their homelands. Because the connection of people with the land is primary and sacred, to leave one's land without intention of return and without honoring the place of origin is a form of betrayal—one the European emigrants practiced on their own land. In an early section of *Almanac*, Menardo reflects on what his Indian grandfather had told him about the Europeans:

> He thought their stories accounting for the sun and the planets were interesting only because their stories of explosions and flying fragments were consistent with everything else he had seen: from their flimsy attachments to one another and their children to their abandonment of the land where they had been born….their God had created them but soon was furious with them, throwing them out of their birthplace, driving them away. The ancestors had called Europeans "the orphan people" and had noted that…few Europeans had remained whole. They failed to recognize the Earth was their mother. (258)

As Adam Sol notes in his article "The Story as It's Told: Prodigious Revisions in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," the "colonization of the Americas in general is seen as the 'abandonment of the land where they had been born,' rather than the daring adventures or flights from persecution familiar to us" (38). This "abandonment" is figured in the novel as a casting-out as the gods of Europe turning their backs on the people. This interpretation of the story again places agency somewhere other than with

the colonizers, who in failing to recognize the earth as their mother also fail to see that land, and connection to the land, is sacred.

In spite of a number of negative reviews the novel initially received in the popular press, literary scholars are on the whole positively disposed toward the novel. Recent scholarship tends to view *Almanac* as a monumental achievement and an important moment in Native American letters. The publication of *Studies in American Indian Literature*'s special issue on *Almanac* in Fall 1998, and of Louise K. Barnett and James L. Thorson's book *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Collection of Critical Essays* in 1999, have rectified the relative lack of criticism. In fact, Creek critic Craig Womack suggests in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (1999) that the novel is "one of the most important books of this century" (252):

> [Silko's] argument in *Almanac* seems to go that either way, voluntarily or by force, the land will regain its indigenous integrity. Unfortunately, the importance of Silko's novel is so glaringly obvious that no one can see it, and whether American consciousness is voluntarily altered by choice rather than involuntarily by disaster is a frightening question that no one wishes to face. (256)

Almanac raises uncomfortable questions about land rights, class, and dispossession. Silko does not hesitate to point an accusatory finger at the European-based ideology of the Destroyers, who destroy because they do not see the sacredness of the land. Womack writes,

> One of the reasons Silko's novel was so unpopular in comparison to her earlier works was because she refused to divest ancestral memory from the responsibility that such memory implies. If one has racial memory, then one of the primary recollections has to be the fact of genocide and land theft, and the ancestors may have more in mind than quick spiritual highs; perhaps a call to action is being elicited. (233-234)

Almanac connects Native traditions to the realities of oppression—a connection Womack suggests many readers are more comfortable ignoring: "America loves Indian culture," he writes; "America is much less enthusiastic about Indian land title" (11).

Almanac of the Dead is not just fiction; it can be read as a guide to global events, a work of political theory, and a handbook of the revolution. The book's engagement with contemporary political and economic realities, its extensive debates about Marxism, and its positing of transnational actions against international corporations and capital all place it well within the realm of the political as well as the fictional, a mixing of genres that Joni Adamson, in *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place*, shows is characteristic of almanacs.

Adamson takes *Almanac of the Dead* at its word and reads the text as an almanac. She points out that there is a long almanac tradition in the Americas, and refers to the pre-Columbian Mayan almanacs as "the most ancient 'American' literature" (133).

> Almanacs have a long history of challenging those who claim the privilege and authority to represent "reality" from only one perspective. In early colonial America, for example, almanacs were compiled by colonial elites,

> but authors of both genders and different races participated in their production…Although colonists might not dare dispute [or add to the biblical Scriptures]…they often felt free to record the events of their daily lives on blank pages of their almanacs or to scribble in the margins any objections they had to what they were reading. So, although authoritative texts attempt to maintain hegemony over representational space, almanacs challenge the very notion of authoritative discourse. As Silko observes, almanacs are "designed so that you don't have control when you confront [them]." (134)

Because almanacs represent the work of more than one author—the one in Silko's novel has had countless authors, some of whom wrote in languages no longer comprehensible to the almanac's current guardians—they are non-authoritative, reflecting precisely the kind of "production of multiple meaning" that Silko has identified as "in keeping with Pueblo cosmology in general." As Adamson suggests, the anti-authoritative nature of the almanac form renders it an ideal method for describing the violent fragmentation that colonization imposed upon colonized cultures (139). In her 1989 essay "Fifth World: The Return of Ma ah shra true ee, the Giant Serpent," Silko explains the multivocality of her work as part of ancient Pueblo beliefs.

> There have been attempts to confine the meaning of the [great stone] snake [which inspired *Almanac of the Dead*] to an official story suitable for general consumption. But the Laguna Pueblos go on producing their own rich and continuously developing body of oral and occasionally

> written stories that reject any decisive conclusion in favor of ever-increasing possibilities. This production of multiple meaning is in keeping with Pueblo cosmology in general. (133)

At the same time that the almanac shows fragmentation, it is also a powerful image of unity, as disparate authors and texts are collected into one volume. Silko's invocation of the almanac connects her novel with a pre-Conquest, written Native American tradition, countering the idea that written Native American stories are a product of European domination.

Laguna Pueblo has a connection to written Native traditions in its history. Describing the life of a Laguna leader, Kwime, who led the Pueblo in the 1870s and 1880s, historian Florence Hawley Ellis explains,

> During [the Laguna leader] Kwime's youth he had studied for seven years with the priests in Durango, Mexico, and upon his return he carried a large book which he said set forth a way of life for his people. As almost no other Lagunas could read or write at the time…the actual contents and title of the book—which eventually disappeared—are unknown. (334)

Ellis suggests that this book may have been a Bible, but the book's exact nature is, for this study, not as important as the fact that it existed at all. Although many Lagunas at the time of Kwime's return were not literate, the book was considered important even by those who could not read it. Not only did this book set forth a way of life for the people, but it—and the memory of it today—also serves to further connect Laguna to the people of the south, some of whom had already been absorbed into Laguna. And in a further

suggestion of written traditions in Laguna history, Ellis relates that some storytellers include a manuscript in the list of items carried by the original leaders of the Pueblo:

> According to the origin legend, Hatramuni Kaiuk (Broken Prayer Stick), who led the people in their migration from the north and thereafter directed them, was the original *hocheni* or main leader. Working directly with him was Kamakashia (White Hands). They carried the basket representing the important ceremonial items provided by Mother Nature. This basket, the sacred *toocheni*, contained prayer plumes, seeds, the image of a man and of a woman (Our Mother Nature), and—some add—a written manuscript indicating how the people should live! (335)

Whether the manuscript component of the origin story was added after Kwime's return or before, the fact remains that in Ellis's time, and presumably afterward, Laguna stories told of written traditions, connecting the Pueblo people to books that spoke of the way of life for the people. Silko continues this work in *Almanac of the Dead*, which connects not only its characters but also the novel itself to pre-Columbian written tradition. Even writing, which Arnold Krupat in the case of Native American autobiography has located as a marker *par* excellence of European influence (220), has a long, pre-colonial tradition among the Indigenous peoples of what is now the U.S. Southwest and Mexico, and Silko's novel evokes this written Indigenous tradition in the ancient almanac that Zeta and Lecha keep. This almanac represents the continuity between pre- and post-colonization written traditions that are continued, albeit changed, in the present day, as

Lecha and Zeta add their stories and interpretations to the almanac in pages of typewritten English

Among the disparate texts that form the book's basis are the works of Karl Marx, and the interpretations of Marx's work by others. Silko's preoccupation with Marx throughout the novel has also been a source of irritation for some critics. This critical response may in part be due to knee-jerk anti-Communist sentiment but it also suggests that such a theoretical debate is somehow inauthentic (for Indians should not engage with European theory) or inappropriate. Such a response is nothing new, as Homi Bhabha noted in *The Location of Culture* (1994) in the chapter entitled "The Commitment to Theory":

> There is a damaging and self-defeating assumption that theory is necessarily the elite language of the socially and culturally privileged…. The Olympian realms of what is mistakenly labeled "pure theory" are assumed to be eternally insulated from the historical exigencies and tragedies of the wretched of the earth. (19)

Silko's novel rejects the distinction between theory and politics, as well as that between theory and creativity.

Too Familiar or Not Familiar Enough: Internationalism, War, and Alienation

Leslie Marmon Silko's best-known novel is her first: *Ceremony* (1977), which tells the story of Tayo, a man from Laguna Pueblo who leaves to fight in World War II and returns scarred by his experiences and the alienation they cause. The novel's basic plot is quite similar to N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, and it too hinges on a ceremony to complete the main character's return to the Pueblo. However, Silko deals with Tayo's war experiences far more explicitly than is the case for Abel's experiences in *House Made of Dawn*, and draws particular attention to the similarities between the Japanese soldiers Tayo is fighting and the Pueblo people who are his family.

In *Ceremony*, Tayo's visions blur the boundaries between the enemy and the community. During his WWII service, Tayo served in the Pacific, and was assigned to shoot a number of Japanese prisoners, a scene he returns to again and again. The trauma of that experience lies not merely in the fact of killing, but also in the fact that the dead looked so familiar:

> That had become the worst thing for Tayo: they looked too familiar even when they were alive. When the sergeant told them to kill all the Japanese soldiers lined up in front of the cave with their hands on their heads, Tayo could not pull the trigger… [I]n that instant he saw [his uncle] Josiah standing there; the face was dark from the sun, and the eyes were squinting as though he were about to smile at Tayo. So Tayo stood there, stiff with nausea, while they fired at the soldiers, and he watched his uncle fall, and he *knew* it was Josiah. (7-8)

The Japanese soldiers look "too familiar," and because the prisoners look like his uncle, Tayo is convinced that he is responsible for Josiah's death. Tayo's international travel and his identification with other people of color are sources of trauma. However, the root cause of the trauma is neither his travel nor his identification with the Japanese prisoners, but the war itself.

Tayo's war experiences represent a very limited and largely involuntary kind of mobility. His presence in Japan has been determined by the U.S. Army, and even his enlistment in the army is not entirely his own choice. His cousin Rocky is the one who makes the decision to sign up, and Tayo simply follows his lead, remembering too late that he is the one who should be staying home and helping the family.

Opportunities for international travel have often been limited by the economic means of Indigenous travelers. Historically, many travelers served either as sailors (and, especially in Polynesia, as sealers or whalers) or as soldiers in the armed forces of the colonizing power. Service in colonial armies became one of the major means of travel abroad for Indigenous peoples. Indigenous people have frequently served in the armed forces of the United States, New Zealand, and Canada, and have often enlisted at relatively high rates. In the United States, for example, Rudi Williams notes in a 1998 article for the American Forces Press Service, "Historically, Native Americans have the highest record of military service per capita when compared to other ethnic groups" ("Marine Creates" par. 13). A number of Native Americans served in Vietnam, the war in which the titular uncle of *The Uncle's Story* also fights, and experiences of Indigenous Americans in twentieth-century wars have had great impact on literature as well as lives.

Two Native memoirs of service in Vietnam point out the strangeness of fighting an enemy who looks more like you than most of your fellow enlistees. Leroy TeCube, a member of the Jicarilla Apache Tribe and author of the autobiography *Year in Nam: A Native American Soldier's Story* (1999), observed a group of Vietnamese children near his platoon in Vietnam.

> I noticed for the first time that they could pass for some kindergarten kids back home. The resemblance was strong. Some kids came over to me, and one said, "You same-same Vietnam." This was the first of many times that expression would be directed at me. For the rest of my tour of duty these people considered me a lot like them. (32)

Similar, Blackfeet writer Woody Kipp, in his 2004 memoir, *Viet Cong at Wounded Knee: The Trail of a Blackfeet Activist*, also found more than a passing resemblance between American Indians and Vietnamese during his tour of duty there for the U.S. Army; indeed, he even recounts a parallel turn of phrase, "*You same same Viet Cong*" (126, emphasis in original). After seeing a fellow soldier throw a concrete block at an aged Vietnamese civilian, injuring and possibly killing him, Kipp writes that

> I eventually realized that what I had seen had in fact taken place over and over as the Europeans stormed into a so-called New World…Other old men—my grandfathers—had suffered similar treatment at the hands of American soldiers. (44)

Kipp's memoir shows that while he was aware of some of the similarities between Indians and Vietnamese during his tour of duty, it took him some time to thoroughly understand what connected these two peoples:

> Many years later, after digesting what had happened to the Native American peoples after the coming of the Europeans, I began to understand my connection to the Vietnamese through their understanding of nature and family, animist beliefs, and Buddhism. (41)

Though his mention of Buddhism is intriguing in light of the role that Buddhism plays in *The Uncle's Story* (which I discuss in Chapter Three), Kipp does not elaborate on it further.

Though its setting is in WWII, not Vietnam, *Ceremony* addresses the traumatic effect when the enemy looks uncannily like your family back home. Although he knows it is impossible, Tayo remains convinced that his target was actually Josiah:

> My uncle Josiah was there that day. Yet I knew he couldn't have been there. He was thousands of miles away…But I've got this feeling and it won't go away even though I know he wasn't there. (124)

Tayo's story makes explicit his sense of kinship with the Japanese soldiers he was supposed to view as his enemy. As in the Vietnam memoirs discussed above, such a sense of kinship complicates his participation in the war and adds to the trauma of his experiences as a soldier fighting for the United States.

Unlike the members of Army of Justice and Redistribution and the Army of the Homeless in *Almanac of the Dead*, Tayo is not fighting on his own land. In fact, the novel

suggests that Tayo's presence on foreign soil to some degree echoes colonial occupations, as the Japanese colonization of Korea and occupation of China find no place in this novel.[6] The exclusion of Japanese colonialism as an issue is intriguing, as it hints at one of the weaknesses in Silko's internationalism both here and in *Almanac of the Dead*. When looking outside of the Americas, Silko tends to portray countries and continents in broad, sweeping strokes—in *Ceremony*, the Japanese, fighting off U.S. forces, correlate too easily with Native Americans; in *Almanac of the Dead*, Africa is treated as a unitary cultural entity, with one set of gods common to the whole continent and a single history.

What keeps these generalizations about non-American cultures from being a fatal weakness is Silko's understanding of global economic forces, in particular as they relate to imperialism. In particular in her later work, like *Almanac of the Dead* and *Gardens in the Dunes*, she foregrounds economic issues as the connective tissue in the oppression of diverse oppressed groups. *Almanac of the Dead* in particular offers multiple ways of opposing the contemporary corporate colonialism she critiques. The story of Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought Woman, who imagines the world and therefore calls it into being, suggests that Silko's novel can be understood as a form of prophecy which invokes the change it seeks. Silko retells the Ts'its'tsi'nako story at the beginning of *Ceremony*:

Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought Woman,

is sitting in her room

and whatever she thinks about

[6] I in no way mean to suggest that the U.S. Army's purpose in the Pacific during WWII was to oppose colonialism, as the U.S., too, had clear colonial goals and interests in the Pacific. However, I wish to underscore the fact that it is overly simplistic and ahistorical to ignore the role of Japanese colonialism when talking about WWII in the Pacific.

appears.

She thought of her sisters…

and together they created the Universe…

Thought-Woman, the spider,

named things and

as she named them

they appeared. (1)

In Laguna stories like this one, words have the power to create the world, to call the subjects of stories into being. As things are named, they appear; words have the power to create. The emergence of the Zapatistas two years after the publication of Silko's novel, blurring the lines between the novel and reality, underscores this element of Pueblo tradition.

In her 1996 essay "Books: Notes on Mixtec and Maya Screenfolds, Picture Books of Preconquest Mexico," Silko connects the Zapatista uprising with Zeta and Lecha's almanac, which includes not merely recordings of events that had happened, but predictions of events yet to come.

> There are three known surviving Maya screenfold books… Of course, those two old Yaqui women in my novel *Almanac of the Dead* possess large portions of a fourth Maya book, which survived the five-hundred-year war for the Americas. Recently this old almanac of theirs correctly predicted the Zapatista uprising. (158)

The "old almanac" has not only survived the European conquest but also remained in Indigenous possession. The three other codices, in European museums far removed from their native context, have through this removal become mere artifacts, ancient but dead—or at least in suspended animation. Silko's almanac has remained among Indigenous peoples and has been added to by each generation of caretakers and as a result is no artifact, but a living, changing text. Its predictions—like calling forth the Zapatistas—are not curiosities but show the power of words to bring change. (Though the visionary nature of *Almanac of the Dead* is perhaps most obvious in the parallels between the Army of Justice and Redistribution and the EZLN, it is also worth noting that the book anticipates the Internet, which was a niche phenomenon at most when the book was published in 1991.[7]) Whether the Zapatistas read the book or not, they were imagined in the book, long before their real presence could have been felt. As Daria Donelly points out,

> When the book was published in 1991, despite the extreme inequalities of land distribution and the brutality of land bosses in Chiapas (all well described by Silko), there were no indications that organized resistance would erupt there…The prophetic tenor of *Almanac* and its handling of contemporary events breeches the boundary between the world of the book and the world in which the reader lives so successfully that the novel

[7] Although e-mail was beginning to be more widely used in the early 1990s (I recall frequently needing to explain what e-mail was when I began using it in early 1991), hypertext (HTML), the basis for what we know as the World Wide Web, was first developed for network use in 1991, and the first widely used Web browsers, ViolaWWW and Mosaic 1.0, were not released until 1992.

> becomes a credible means by which to interpret ongoing global events. (246-247).

The Zapatista revolution began a good two years after the novel's publication, on New Year's Day, 1994, when Indigenous people from Chiapas burst into that state's capital city, San Cristobal de las Casas, took over public buildings, and reclaimed the land for the Indigenous people. Responding to historical injustices and corrupt government authority, the revolutionaries, who took their name from Mexican revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata, fought for Indigenous rights. They were also remarkably attuned to the possibilities of technology; one of their leaders, Subcommandante Marcos (himself not of Mayan ancestry), and other fighters struck romantic revolutionary poses in photos, while news and manifestos were distributed via the Internet. Their technological savvy undoubtedly played a substantial role in garnering both international attention and support. But in the eyes of the Mexican government, among others, the Zapatistas' approach, combining the traditional with the modern, made the Indigenous activists "inauthentic." As Adamson notes, this dismissal echoes responses like that by Alan Ryan, described above, to Silko's novel:

> There are some notable similarities between the Mexican government's disdain for an indigenous movement because its most prominent leader is non-Mayan and Ryan's dismissal of *Almanac of the Dead* because its author seems to him to be speaking inauthentically. Ryan's criticism of Silko is based, in part, on the fact that *Storyteller* and *Ceremony* placed Silko among the ranks of nationally recognized American Indian writers

> because they mirrored and helped to construct the expectations many readers bring to their reading of works by American Indian writers…. [including,] in Ryan's words, some kind of "insight" into the "lives and minds" of American Indians (read: some kind of insight into the ancient traditions and sacred ceremonies of tribal people). (132-133)

I would suggest that, in addition to Subcommandante Marcos's non-Mayan ancestry, the Mexican government initially rejected the Zapatistas as not sufficiently Indigenous because of their able command of modern technologies, which was not in keeping with the stereotype of Mayans as nature-bound farmers. Similarly, critical rejection of Silko's novel focused the presence of graphic violence and on her use of Marxist theory, two elements that seemed to be at odds with a Pueblo culture stereotyped as ever-peaceful and pure.[8]

"Movement Must Be Emulated By The People": Traditions and Travel

As she has noted many times in interviews and essays, Pueblo traditions are central to Leslie Marmon Silko's writing. Like many of the Southwestern Pueblos, although it has lost some of its land base Laguna is still located in its ancestral area in central New Mexico. The Pueblo peoples underwent displacement and destruction as a result of

[8] I am not disputing that peace has a high value among the Pueblos, as does balance; however, peace and balance are not always the same thing, and the stories collected in *Hopi Tales of Destruction* certainly show that at times, violence may be necessary to preserve or restore balance.

colonization (notably in the aftermath of the 1680-92 Pueblo Revolt, when the Spanish made a concerted and violent effort to destroy existing Pueblo social and political structures), but the Pueblos' history of travel and migration is a different one than the often more familiar history of Southeastern tribal removals like the Cherokee Trail of Tears. In "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective," Silko discusses the relation of the land to story:

> One of the…advantages that we Pueblos have enjoyed is that we have always been able to stay with the land. Our stories cannot be separated from their geographical locations, from actual physical places on the land. We were not relocated like so many other Native American groups who were torn away from their ancestral land. And our stories are so much a part of these places that it is almost impossible for future generations to lose them. (58)

In large part as a result of this history, the Pueblo Indians tend to be viewed as sedentary—their very name, Pueblo, which in Spanish means a village[9] (and which is a linguistic legacy of the Spanish conquest), speaks to the permanence of their cities and villages and the perception that the Pueblos, unlike other Indians, are anchored in place. Moreover, as discussed earlier in this chapter, public perception of Pueblo Indians like Silko is that they should be "paragons of peace." The apocalyptic violence of *Almanac of the Dead* contradicts this peaceful image.

[9] Though "pueblo" can also mean "people," in the colonial context it referred to the towns and villages of the Pueblo Indians.

However, as the tales of destruction in Ekkehart Malotki's book show,[10] both violence and excess are part of Pueblo stories; while balance is the ideal, the tales provide examples of when the world was out of balance and the restoration of balance was made possible only through violence. The villages in the stories are destroyed by forces of nature or by force of arms, all of which are brought about by the people themselves, usually in response to evil or excessive behavior. The violence in these stories, though it may destroy entire villages, is cleansing in the end and restores balance to the world. Silko's own familiarity with Hopi culture emerges in the character of the Barefoot Hopi, a leader who plays an important role near the end of *Almanac of the Dead*:

> The message [of liberation] had arrived. The Barefoot Hopi was the messenger.
>
> The Hopi had no permanent location but kept moving… The Hopi traveled the world to raise political and financial support for the return of the land to indigenous Americans… (616)

Given the key role that a Hopi character plays in Silko's novel, and also given the cultural ties between the various Pueblo peoples, it is reasonable to suggest that the Hopi stories of destruction collected by Malotki may provide another key to Silko's novel. These traditional tales of violence, destruction, and cleansing offer a reading that places the novel's graphic violence within, rather than outside of, a Pueblo framework.[11]

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[10] The tales were collected from Hopi storytellers Michael Lomatuway'ma, Lorena Lomatuway'ma, Sidney Namingha Jr., and an anonymous man from Second Mesa.

[11] Charles F. Lummis recounts a similar tale of the destruction of Pecos Pueblo, which was related to him by two Pecos men living in Jemez Pueblo ("The Drowning of Pecos," 139-146), and Elsie Clewes Parsons alludes to a destruction story in "Puyé and Pecos" (*Taos Tales* 171), so it is likely that such stories of destruction and restoration of balance are common to other Pueblos as well.

The statement that the Barefoot Hopi "had no permanent location but kept moving" also shows the importance of motion in a Pueblo context. Place and land are of vital importance in Pueblo culture; the Pueblos are deeply rooted in their ancestral lands. As Silko says, "our stories cannot be separated from their geographical location" (58) However, it is equally important to recognize that this rootedness does not preclude travel and migration, both individual and communal. Moreover, such mobility does not make anyone less than Pueblo, removing them from the community, but rather is in keeping with the traditions and stories of the Pueblos.

In her essay "Thoughts on Migration by Santa Clara Pueblo" (1995), Santa Clara author Tessie Naranjo suggests that migration is a central element of Pueblo thought.

> In terms of migration stories the essential thing is that movement happened. Santa Clara people acknowledge that the old people moved continuously – and that was the way it was…Movement is one of the big ideological concepts of Pueblo thought because it is necessary for the perpetuation of life. Movement, clouds, wind, and rain are one. Movement must be emulated by the people. (248)

Movement thus is not only important but necessary for life to continue. It is also important not because of the distance traveled but simply because it happened; the *movement* of migration, not the final destination of the migration, is the essential element.

The stories related by Silko in her essay "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories" show the value of such movement in a Laguna context. The stories describe places that are still visited by the people today: "Laguna people continue

to follow the same route that, according to the Migration story, the ancestors followed south from the Emergence Place" (35), an eight-mile journey between Laguna and Paguate Pueblo. Here is a relationship similar to that described by Naranjo: the key to the story is not in the relatively short distance traveled but in the journey's symbolic importance, describing "an interior journey the Laguna people made: a journey of awareness and imagination in which they emerged…always aware that interior distances cannot be reckoned in physical miles or calendar years" (37). The length of the journey is less important than the fact that it was made.

The Kochininako/Yellow Woman stories, which frequently appear in Silko's work (in *Storyteller*, several short stories, and her book of essays *Yellow Woman and the Beauty of the Spirit*), provide another illustration of the importance of movement. The movement in this case is not the migration of an entire Pueblo but one individual's travel and contact with others (non-Laguna people and also animals). In one Kochininako story that Silko retells, Laguna Pueblo is suffering from a great famine.

> Each day, Kochininako has to walk farther and farther from the village to find fresh water for her husband and children. One day she travels far, far to the east, to the plains, and she finally locates a freshwater spring… Just as she fills her water jar and turns to hurry away, a strong, sexy man in buffalo-skin leggings appears by the pool… Able to transform himself from human to buffalo in the wink of an eye, Buffalo Man gallops away with her on his back. Kochininako falls in love with Buffalo Man, and because of this liaison, the Buffalo People agree to give their bodies to the

> hunters to feed the starving Pueblo. ("Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit" 70-71)

Kochininako's willingness to move, to travel "far, far to the east," and her liaison there with Buffalo Man, are the factors that allow her people to survive the drought. Without such mobility on the part of individuals, the community could not have stayed in place, on the same land where their ancestors lived. Movement is indeed "necessary for the perpetuation of life." Kochininako's mobility, while individual, is very much in service to the community.

It is equally important to note that never in her travels is Kochininako removed from the community. As Maori author Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Indigenous concepts of space and place often do not translate well into Western concepts of space and distance. In particular, Smith suggests that the Western notion of distance is not shared by Indigenous cultures.

> One of the concepts through which Western ideas about the individual and community, about time and space, knowledge and research, imperialism and colonialism can be drawn together is the concept of distance. [In the Western view, the] individual can be distanced, or separated, from the physical environment, the community. (55)

Smith's reading of the differing concepts of distance illuminates the fact that Kochininako's physical location away from the center of her community need not—and does not—translate into a distance from the community itself. However far she may have traveled, she is still an integral member of her community. Though she may be with the

Buffalo Man at a freshwater spring far, far to the east, Yellow Woman is also still with her community, and her community is also with her. Other Pueblo stories bear this notion out; while protagonists are often physically removed from the community either by space or transformation, they never cease being part of the community. Even as they become coyotes or eagles, are stolen away into the sky or onto unreachable ledges, and stay gone for years at a time, they are still at heart Pueblo people, and are always, in the end, recognized by the community.[12] Travel, and even transformation, thus do not equal distance from the community; physical distance does not translate into spiritual or communal distance.[13] And just as the community contains all individuals, each individual also contains the community.

That community, too, is more diverse than popular perceptions would have it. A common misconception about the Pueblos (and Indian tribes in general) is that they are homogeneous. Unlike Arnold Krupat, who in *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature* claims cosmopolitanism as a relatively modern social trait, suggesting also that it is a luxury that minority communities cannot always allow themselves (246), Pueblo historians have noted that the cosmopolitan makeup of Pueblo societies is the norm rather than the exception. As historian Florence Hawley Ellis notes in her essay "An Outline of

[12] See, for example, "The Ants that Pushed on the Sky" (Lummis 147-160), "The Sobbing Pine" (Lummis 194-199), "The Taos Boy Captured By Cheyennes: The Bear Doctor" (Parsons, *Tewa Tales*, 43-45), "The Sacred Hunter" (Hardin 355-363), and "The King's Son Becomes a Deer: The Stolen Mirror" (Parsons, *Taos Tales*, 151-153), as well as two stories that Silko retells in *Ceremony*: the boy who turns into a bear (128-130) and the man who turns into a coyote (139-141).

[13] A similar lesson might be drawn from the experiences of Native American voyagers to Aotearoa New Zealand, where some of their descendants still preserve the knowledge of the Indian travelers' tribal affiliations, indicating that, though spatially distant, these voyagers still preserved their communal attachments and viewed them as important elements of their identity, as their descendants still do today.

Pueblo History and Social Organization," the population at Laguna Pueblo included migrants from other Southwestern tribes:

> The cosmopolitan make-up of population in Laguna [included] a few Hopis, a Zuni family or two, and a sprinkling of Navajos as well as of Zias, Santa Anas, Jemez, Cochitis, and Domingos from the Rebellion period [1680-1692], plus some Acoma additions through accretion and intermarriage – all grafted onto the original small tribe of Lagunas. (329)

The Pueblos also traded with other Indigenous nations; as Joe S. Sando, Director of Archives at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center and a member of Jemez Pueblo, notes in his book *Pueblo Nations: Eight Centuries of Pueblo Indian History*,

> Trading expeditions [prior to the Spanish Conquest]…also furnished new articles and ideas, enriching their lives….Exactly how far a distance away such trade extended is not precisely known, but evidence exists that sea shells from the Pacific Coast were in use by the Pueblos….Macaw or parrot feathers have also been used in the social and ceremonial dances of the Pueblos for centuries. These were traded with tribes to the south, and it is believed they came from Mexico. (37)

Thus, it is evident that the Pueblos consistently encountered and absorbed new people, articles, and beliefs. What migrants from other tribal nations brought to the community was anything but marginal, and Laguna people recognized that such intertribal, international relationships were a valuable resource for the tribe. Ellis, for example, shows that beliefs imported from Zuni Pueblo are central to Laguna worship practices.

Similarly, Silko's engagement with apparently "non-Laguna" beliefs like Marxism does not represent a departure from her tribal roots, but instead can be seen within the context of a tribal culture that constantly absorbs new peoples and new ideas and comes out of the process not hybrid, but still firmly Laguna.

Tribalism and Internationalism in *Almanac of the Dead*

Almanac of the Dead's characters can be divided roughly between the forces of liberation, which include Indigenous people, the Army of the Homeless, and a number of others,[14] and the forces of the Destroyers, which include governmental officials, arms contractors, and real estate agents. One of the major characters in the forces of liberation is Clinton, a homeless African American Vietnam veteran whose first appearance comes in a chapter entitled "First Black Indian" (404). Clinton, who has his own radio show, has a strong interest in the history and traditions of Africa, and an equally strong interest in Haiti, which functions as a syncretic location where the cultures of Africa and the Americas mix. Black Haitian culture and people include elements of the native Arawaks, who aided early runaway slaves before their communities were largely destroyed, and Clinton plans to dedicate his first radio broadcast after the revolution "to the children born to escaped African slaves who married Carib Indian survivors… the first African-Native Americans" (410). The presence of descendents of African slaves in the narrative suggests yet another history of migration, a forced migration based on colonialism and the drive for profit as Africans were taken from their communities and sold as slaves far from home. The novel posits that, much like the lost community members in Pueblo stories, the descendants of slaves are still recognized as part of an Indigenous community. Through the character of Clinton, who is reclaiming ancient African traditions, Silko suggests that for African

[14] These others include a Korean computer specialist, Vietnam veterans, a disabled white man, and eco-warriors, among whom is a gay man with AIDS who gives his life to blow up the Glen Canyon Dam; the inclusion of the latter among the liberators to some degree complicates the book's otherwise relatively simplistic portrayal of gay men.

Americans, a homecoming is possible—a return to the spiritual, if not physical, community of Africa. In her effort to make connections between Africa and the Americas, Silko tends to oversimplify the diversity of African cultures, as I mention above. She often treats the continent as if it were one culture rather than many—suggesting, for example, that all African peoples share the same deities. Nevertheless, the novel's belief that African and Native American peoples share a spiritual kinship forms the basis for an internationalist movement that acknowledges the power of rootedness while at the same time reaching out to other peoples and continents, although it reduces the complexity of other cultures and regions.

In Silko's view, Africans and Native Americans are both tribal people, and the syncretism of Haiti shows the spiritual kinship between Africa and America.

> From the beginning, Africans had escaped and hid in the mountains [of Haiti] where they met up with survivors of indigenous tribes hiding in remote strongholds. In the mountains the Africans had discovered a wonderful thing: certain of the African gods had located themselves in the Americas as well as in Africa… Right then the magic had happened: great American and great African tribal cultures had come together to create a powerful consciousness within all people. (416)

Silko's tribalism entails a worldview that acknowledges the sacredness of the land and of the physical world, what Ami M. Regier, in "Material Meeting Points of Self and Other: Fetish Discourses and Leslie Marmon Silko's Evolving Conception of Cross-Cultural Narrative," calls the "collapsed distinction between subject and object" (188). The land

and objects are characters in their own right, not merely passive, but active, a fact Clinton recognizes in both Native American and African religions.

Haiti is the location of the first successful[15] anticolonial revolution, in 1791. In a novel whose central concern is decolonization, the history of Haiti is instructive both as example and as warning, as important for its successes as for its challenges. The forces the Western world arrayed against the island as it moved from colonialism to independence were immense, showing that political independence won by one small country did not necessarily mean the end of imperial, economic domination. In the novel, the Haitian experience shows that alliances like those between the Afro-Caribbean population and the Caribbean Arawaks are important, but such alliances on a small scale are not enough. Silko demonstrates that while the unity of Africans and Indigenous Americans on one small island is worth celebrating, it is only through the larger unity of all tribal peoples throughout the continents of America and Africa that imperialism in its modern form of globalization can be effectively countered.

The history of Haiti can also be read as a testament to the power of stories. Haiti faced not only colonialism but also colonial epistemologies and responses, which materially affected the young revolutionary democracy's ability to succeed and support its people. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot shows in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Haiti's accomplishments were initially not even recognized in

[15] The term "successful" is, clearly, not without its problems; I use it here to indicate that Haiti is the earliest country to revolt against colonialism and prevent further political colonialism. That Haiti still suffers the effects of not merely political but economic imperialism is, of course, without question.

Europe, as the colonial mentality did not allow for the possibility that Black people had successfully resisted whites and set up a functional government.

> When the news of the massive uprising of August 1791 first hit France, the most common reaction…was disbelief: the facts were too unlikely; the news had to be false….Confirmation did not change the dominant views… A serious long-term danger coming from the blacks was still unthinkable. (90-91)

The imperialist worldview was incapable of imagining, let alone recognizing, Africans and Afro-Carib peoples as agents, as subjects rather than objects—even in the face of clear evidence. This lack of recognition led to political and economic troubles for Haiti, and illustrates clearly the power of stories. Imperialist narratives left no space for Black agency, and so Haiti was isolated, attacked with economic force when it could not be taken militarily. And because Western Europe was largely in control of global economic systems, Haiti's economy, which had become dependent on trade after colonization, served as a means of imperial control and domination. Haiti's history shows that independence must be not merely political, not merely the decolonization of the mind, but the decolonization of the economy as well—ideal and material at once.

Given the prominence of Haiti's role in Silko's book, the reader might reasonably expect that Cuba would play the part, so familiar from leftist discourse, of a country which has achieved both ideal and material liberation. However, Silko's take on Cuba is determined by the Cuban erasure of Indigenous history, the one-sidedness of the Cuban Revolution's historiography, and Cuba's failure to acknowledge the contribution of

Indigenous peoples to its decolonization struggles. As such, for Silko the Cubans have become merely a variation on a European theme; they are still the colonizers, because like Menardo, the insurance man who is ashamed of his Indian heritage, they do not understand their own Indigeneity.

On the book's map, Cuba is identified only with the character of Bartolomeo, a resolutely dogmatic Marxist sent to help train the Indians to use Cuban arms and achieve their revolution. Thus Bartolomeo and his political backers stand not for internationalism but for paternalism, particularly leftist paternalism and the attempt to assimilate Indigenist political struggles into a pre-existing leftist worldview. Bartolomeo represents a Leninist interpretation of Marx's work which posits the necessity of a vanguard party, an elite group of intellectuals who will prepare the way to a communist utopia. This is the primary type of Marxism discussed in the novel, and Marxism-Leninism lends itself quite easily to the paternalism that Bartolomeo displays. Angelita La Escapía, one of the leaders of the Indigenous Army of Justice and Redistribution, accuses Bartolomeo of precisely the same kind of colonial attitude Trouillot identifies in European responses to the Haitian revolution. Angelita considers that

> Indigenous American uprisings had been far more plentiful than any Europeans wanted to admit, not even the Marxists, who were jealous of African and Native American slave workers who had risen up successfully against colonial masters without the leadership of the white man. (*Almanac* 527)

The Leninist vanguard is here cast in racial rather than class terms, linking Bartolomeo's Marxism directly with colonialism. Bartolomeo's insistence on his privileged place as a vanguard fighter and his concomitant refusal to acknowledge Indigenous history are what finally kill him. He stands in for "all Europeans" (527) as he is put on trial in an Indigenous Mayan village and convicted of "crimes against history" (531). At his trial, Angelita La Escapía reads a list of "a few of the *big* uprisings and revolutions" in the Americas, a list which goes on for about three pages and spans the time from 1510 (Hateuy's rebellion against European slave hunters in Cuba[16]) to 1945 (the formation of the National Federation of Peasants in Bolivia). Whereas Haiti is liberation on an ideal level but without material power, Cuba is material liberation without the ideal. Cubans like Bartolomeo are still in thrall to colonialist views of Indigenous people. Neither the ideal nor the material can be ignored in a successful uprising, and this is why so many of Silko's characters keep notebooks and almanacs of stories unrecognized in the dominant narratives, and why they fight simultaneously on political and economic levels, engaging with multinational capitalism and Marxist theory while battling to restore Indigenous land rights.

Bartolomeo's trial is the clearest representation of the relationship between Silko's tribal traditionalism and Marxism. While Angelita La Escapía loves Marx, she does not consider herself a Marxist, making a distinction between Marxism (and its many interpreters) and Marx the man. Marx, she says, understood a great deal, and was inspired by his awareness of colonized peoples. Silko treats Marx with sympathy but is aware of

[16] Ironically, Hateuy is today a well-known name in Cuba, even if his contributions have largely been erased; one of the major Cuban brands of beer is named for him.

his limitations when applied to an Indigenous context. Marx is a storyteller, and like all storytellers, his words have immense power. But Marxism, which helped inspire numerous anticolonial revolutions, not to mention texts like Frantz Fanon's seminal *Wretched of the Earth* (1963), has no place for the sacred—the land, animals and objects are present primarily in terms of their utility. As Vine Deloria, Jr., notes in his essay on Native Americans and Marxism, "Circling the Same Old Rock" (1983),

> Rejecting the [Marxist] idea that there is a human world distinct from the rest of existence, American Indians would include experiences of wholly religious content within the scope of their inquiry… Marxist exclusion of some kinds of experiences, particularly those which seem to motivate human beings, appears wholly unnecessary and weakens the explanation that Marxists would expect us to accept. (120)

The recognition of the sacred is part of what distinguishes Indigenous internationalism from the proletarian International. Ancestral lands are the center of the struggle, and at issue are not the fruits of or profits from those lands, but the lands in and of themselves. According to *Almanac of the Dead*, only those who recognize the centrality of the land for its own sake can take part in the struggle for true liberation.

The roots of Silko's liberatory Indigenous internationalism lie in a world without nation-states and borders. "Native Americans acknowledge no borders," the map at the beginning of *Almanac of the Dead* states. While this might suggest that Silko is romanticizing the pre-Conquest Indigenous past—which was by no means devoid of territorial conflict—Bernie Harder, in his article "The Power of Borders in Native

American Literature: Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," offers another possible interpretation. Harder makes the distinction between cultural or political boundaries and borders as sites of state violence and control:

> State borders continue to be the locus of conflict between Native people and dominant societies internationally. The fragmentation that the nation-state imposes on indigenous nations and peoples is a result of conflicting constructions of space, culture, and identity….*Almanac of the Dead*… [challenges] the legitimacy of the dominant ideology [of the nation-state] with alternative views grounded in an older historical reality of the First Nations in North and Central America….Power, as practiced by the state, is weak in comparison to the nature of power that protects the sovereignty of tribal people… The novel demonstrates that the state's right to exist in America is based on force, not legitimate power. The problem of the border shifts radically from the illegitimacy of particular borders to the illegitimacy of the state itself as the instrument of colonial oppression against historically valid nations, such as the many First Nations on Turtle Island—America. (95-96)

The distinction Harder makes here, between European nation-states and sovereign Native nations, is, in the novel's terminology, the distinction between tribalism and nationalism. Silko's tribalists insist on cultural sovereignty while organizing internationalist opposition to state and corporate power. This tribalism is also one of the sources of the novel's critique of Marxism:

> The Cubans had received unconfirmed reports that these mountain villages were hotbeds of tribalism and native religion. Marxism did *not* tolerate these primitive bugaboos!
>
> "*Us? Not us!* Their spies are *liars! We* are internationalists! *We* are not just tribal!" Angelita [La Escapía] argued vehemently….They were internationalists all right! Tribal internationalists! (515)

In her 2002 essay "Envisioning a 'Network of Tribal Coalitions': Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," Channette Romero suggests that Silko hopes

> …that contemporary manifestations of these [ancient] alliances can be used to resist injustice. These people are connected not through their national affiliation or location on either side of the [U.S.-Mexico] border but through their relationships to land and the spirits of the land. (628)

The tribal relationship to the land and its spirits is vital; without it, even characters with Indigenous ancestry are doomed, as in the case of Menardo, a Mexican entrepreneur who sells "insurance of all kinds" (260), running a company protecting the wealthy and their property from everything from earthquakes to civil war. Through his grandfather, Menardo has heard Indian stories, but he has disavowed both their power and his own Indian heritage.

> Menardo had loved [his grandfather's] stories right up until the sixth grade when one of the teaching Brothers had given them a long lecture about pagan people and pagan stories… Around the time the [other children] had called him Flat Nose [a slang name the Indians were called]…Menardo

> had made a horrible discovery. His grandfather's nose had been much shorter and wider than his was; the people the old man called "our ancestors," "our family," were in fact Indians. All along, Menardo had been listening to the one who was responsible for the taunts of the others. Without the family nose, Menardo might have passed for one of *sangre limpia* [clean blood]. (258-259)

Menardo immediately abandons his grandfather, and when the old man dies shortly thereafter, Menardo is relieved, for with him disappears the evidence of his own "dirty blood." He begins to claim that his nose was flattened by an opponent in a boxing match, and that he is not mestizo or mixedblood, but as white as the other members of the upper classes whose business and approval he wants and needs. He marries Iliana, a woman whose family is "among the oldest in Tuxtla Gutiérrez—her great-grandfather on her mother's side had in fact been part of the original Gutiérrez family that had settled the area" (260)—ironically, of course, the oldest families in that area would be Indigenous rather than Spanish, but it is a sign of Menardo's commitment to dominant histories that he does not recognize this fact. Even with the help of this marriage, Menardo is only grudgingly accepted by the white upper-class society, but his money opens the necessary doors. Not only can he do business and play golf with the elites, but Iliana's family accepts him as a suitable husband for her. But Menardo's Indian heritage is more easily expunged from his social life than from his own memory, as is evident in Menardo's relationship with his Mayan chauffeur Tacho.

Tacho is well versed in ancient Mayan traditions and beliefs. He keeps sacred macaws and a sacred opal, and unbeknownst to Menardo, Tacho and his twin brother El Feo are the leaders of the Army of Justice and Redistribution. Though Menardo scorns Tacho's traditions as mere superstitions, he is also intrigued by their possible power. As he and Tacho wait for the arrival of Alegría Martinez-Soto, the architect who is to design Menardo's new house, he watches Tacho play an "old Indian game" that he can recall his grandfather playing.

> Menardo had known it was a gambler's game, but today Tacho told him it was a fortune-telling device too. Menardo…[made] a guttural sound expressing his impatience with Indian superstition.
>
> "The pebbles can't tell you any more than I already know," Menardo said crossly. "The plane is two hours late…and my guest will…regret she ever heard the name of Tuxtla Gutiérrez." Tacho was…rolling the pebbles while Menardo made his dismissive remarks. "Oh, I wouldn't worry, boss," Tacho said without raising his head. "I asked the pebbles. They say she will like it here, sir." Menardo said nothing to this. He hated the way Indians tried to please you, telling you whatever they thought you wanted to hear so you would be tricked and believe their stupid superstitions or at least be manipulated to give them a bonus on payday. (277)

Menardo sees traditional beliefs either as markers of ignorance or signs of trickery, a tool used by Indian servants for their own financial profit. Always aware of his precarious

social standing, Menardo is intent on not falling victim to such trickery, as it might lead not only to economic loss, but also to social loss, as it might serve as evidence of his own Mayan heritage. Still, he cannot help but wonder about Tacho's powers, because "Menardo had heard the cook and the downstairs maid quarreling over hot [lottery] tips they had purchased from Tacho… Tacho had given the [maid] only one winning number while the cook…had won with five numbers" (276-277). In spite of his suspicions about the power of traditional culture, Menardo remains firm in his decision to throw in his lot with the forces of capitalism and colonialism. These forces, the Destroyers, are the negative image of the Indigenous internationalists Tacho is allied with; connected to each other by ties of money, they form a transnational alliance dedicated solely to their own profits.

Both Iliana, Menardo's first wife, and Alegría, whom he marries after Iliana's death, refer to Tacho as "the sullen Indian chauffeur" (269, 277). The women are unable to see beyond their prejudices, and unwilling to acknowledge Tacho as a subject. Menardo, on the other hand, comes to appreciate and rely on Tacho's abilities, even as he underestimates Tacho's intelligence and sophistication. At the funeral of a bombing victim, Menardo is possessed of a strong urge to touch the body, and wants Tacho's blessing to do so. However, before formulating the question he wishes to ask Tacho, he stops himself. "Menardo could not say it. Not even to this Indian who had no sense of propriety, of which questions might be asked and which could not" (304). Secure in his assumption that Tacho has no sense of what is proper, Menardo believes that he is free to

say almost anything to his chauffeur. As Menardo's life spins increasingly out of control, he finds himself trusting no one but Tacho.

> [Menardo] told no one his dreams except Tacho, his driver, who came from a village near a Mayan temple ruin. In Tacho's village they were all trained to decipher dreams. Menardo paid Tacho twice the going rate to ensure strict confidentiality. Enemies could use your dreams to destroy you, that's what Tacho had told Menardo in the beginning. Right then Menardo knew he must double the Indian's salary or tell Tacho nothing about his dreams. (321)

Menardo, who gave up his family and heritage in order to pursue greater profits, is incapable of imagining that Tacho's loyalty cannot be bought, no matter how much salary he is paid. Moreover, because he sees Indians only as servants (albeit potentially trusted and powerful servants), Menardo does not realize that Tacho might not merely be the tool of one of his enemies, but might actually *be* one of his enemies. These mistaken assumptions about Tacho lead Menardo to trust him completely—he trusts Tacho far more than he trusts either of his wives or any of his business associates—even as Menardo continues his awkward balancing act between believing and scorning Tacho's traditions and knowledge.

This disregard for Indian beliefs finally leads Menardo to misjudge his relationship with Tacho, in part because Menardo fails to see that Tacho is still rooted in his community. To Menardo's eyes, Tacho's physical distance from his community means that he has lost his tribal connection, and therefore means that his primary

allegiance is to his employer. Believing that his servant is utterly loyal, Menardo comes to depend on Tacho's dream interpretations. However, Tacho's dream interpretations are given only to soothe Menardo; Tacho keeps their true interpretations to himself, understanding how they fit within the ancient prophesies about which Menardo knows nothing.

Menardo, whose life speaks of the alliances, or at least tolerances and silences, that money can buy, also fails to understand that Tacho's loyalty cannot be bought. Whether he doubles his pay or not, Tacho remains Menardo's enemy—but this is a truth Menardo cannot see. The fact that Menardo eventually dies—apparently accidentally—at Tacho's hand again underscores the misrecognized power of the chauffeur and the spirits with whom Tacho is allied. Menardo's failure to believe in the power of spirits—and his concomitant belief in the power of money to overcome anything—is what leads to his death. Having purchased the best bulletproof vest money can buy, Menardo orders his Indian chauffeur to fire a gun at him so as to prove the efficacy of the vest in front of potential customers.

> Menardo wanted perfect timing—he wanted Tacho to wait until the cars had pulled up, then he would greet his fellow shooting-club members, then Tacho must shoot. Snap! Snap! Snap! One two three! Before the others could even open their mouths! What an exhibition they would see! Here was a man to be reckoned with—a man invincible with the magic of high technology. (503)

What Menardo does not recognize is that even "the magic of high technology" can be indigenized, and can be mobilized against him and his fellow capitalists. As Ami M. Regier notes,

> [E]ven high technology can participate in the animation often associated only with sacred objects in an indigenous tradition. It is this charged and changing relationship between sacred objects and "impure," nonsacred objects now affected by tribal belief systems, whose politics of transmission occur through infection, that most defines a politically operative fetishism offered in *Almanac of the Dead*. (191)

Regier shows that fetishism in Silko's novel works as a means of drawing initially non-tribal objects into tribal systems, thereby indigenizing them. Menardo's own thoughts suggest that he too is not immune, as he refers to "the magic of high technology." There is indeed more than merely high technology at work, and it is the union between magic and high technology that kills him. Tacho fires the gun at Menardo only once, and Menardo is undone by "microscopic imperfections in the fabric's quilting; a bare millimeter's difference and the bullet would have been safely stopped" (509); instead, it strikes his heart, killing him almost instantly. Tacho later reflects that the vest had a spirit of its own, that technology too was beginning its revolt against the forces of oppression.

> Blood: even the bulletproof vest wanted a little blood. Knives, guns, even automobiles, possessed "energies" that craved blood from time to time. …Airplanes, jets, and rockets were already malfunctioning, crashing and exploding. Electricity no longer obeyed the white man. The macaw

> spirits said the great serpent was in charge of electricity. The macaws were in charge of fire. (512)

The bulletproof vest is merely one link in a chain of objects and events showing that technology has its own spirit, a spirit which is no longer controlled by white men but by ancient gods and spirits. The vest serves to illustrate the power of the Indigenous world to absorb what was once foreign; as people from outside Laguna settled there and slowly became part of the Laguna people, so this technology has gradually been indigenized, no longer obeying the Eurowestern world from which it once came. Menardo lacks the faith and commitment to Indigenous ways of knowing which he would need to accept and possibly change his fate. But instead of seeking aid from traditional powers, he puts his trust in his bulletproof vest, which he believes to be a triumph of technology wholly within his control. The vest betrays him, turning on him and becoming a tribal fetish from which nothing can save him. Nothing in this novel exists outside of tribal belief systems; modern technologies like the bulletproof vest and, elsewhere in the novel, airliners, televisions, and computers, are easily assimilated.

Menardo's fatal mistake is thus his insistence that technology and tribal beliefs exist in two separate worlds—his subscription to the colonialist idea that Indian traditions are things irrevocably linked to the past, at odds with contemporary life. Unable to transcend the prejudices he subscribes to, and unwilling to give up his comfort and his capital, Menardo's allegiance lies with capitalism rather than tribalism. In the end, photos of his death are circulated on a flyer above the words "This is how capitalists die" (510). Capitalists are the Destroyers, and like the tribal witches who call white men into

existence in *Ceremony*, Destroyers may, like Menardo, have Indian blood, but they do not share the sense that everything is interconnected which would prevent them from trying to destroy the world.

This sense of connectedness is not only of paramount importance in the novel, but also forms a central component in Indigenous internationalism. As Silko explains in her 1996 essay "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories,"

> Pueblo potters, the creators of petroglyphs and oral narratives, never conceived of removing themselves from the earth and sky. So long as the human consciousness remains *within* the hills, canyons, cliffs, and the plants, clouds, and sky, the term *landscape*, as it has entered the English language, is misleading. "A portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view" does not correctly describe the relationship between the human being and his or her surroundings. This assumes the viewer is somehow *outside* or *separate from* the territory she or he surveys. Viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on. (27, emphasis in original)

Rather than conceiving of themselves as distant from the earth or the animals, Silko's tribal activists are within the landscape, and intimately connected to the land. They are aware of the land as not merely landscape, and understand that its worth cannot be measured in monetary terms. As Tacho's twin El Feo recognizes, true liberationists recognize the importance of land in the struggle against the Destroyers.

> El Feo had devised a simple and clear test to reveal whether so-called "leaders of the people" were true or only imposters sent by the vampires and werewolves of greed. The test was easy: true leaders of the people made return of the land the first priority. No excuses, no postponements, not even for one day, must be tolerated by the people… First the land. (524)

True tribal leaders cannot be bought off with the promise of money or rewards, as the U.S. government has attempted to do most prominently with the Sioux, who have consistently refused the government's monetary compensation for the theft of the Black Hills. Thus, even as the novel looks to a global, transnational Indigenous movement, it nevertheless serves as a reminder that Indigenous internationalism must remain firmly rooted in the land and the local.

The liberatory alliance includes Native people from North and South America, African Americans, white environmentalists, an Asian American computer scientist, Chicanos, a disabled white man, and the "army of the homeless," which includes many veterans. It is a broad coalition, almost as broad as the group it is fighting against, the international capitalists, who count among their number women as well as men, gays and straights, and, in Menardo, at least one man who denies his own Indigenous background. The liberatory alliance is referred to as the tribal army, and it initially appears to have a great deal in common with the international Indigenous movement that Richard J. Perry describes in *From Time Immemorial: Indigenous Peoples and State Systems*.

> One of these externally imagined, then internalized identities is the very notion of an international underclass or "underethnicity" known as "indigenous peoples." It is a category of human society first invented through human rights reforms, then adapted, internalized, personalized, and collectively transformed by "indigenous peoples" themselves, with conviction and occasionally strident passion. (11)

The salient point of Perry's definition is the notion of the international underclass, an alliance of the dispossessed; and dispossession appears, at first glance, to be at the root of the alliance in *Almanac of the Dead* as well. However, "Indigenous" is not the same as "international underclass," for as Silko's character El Feo recognizes, Indigeneity is not primarily a factor of dispossession, but of a felt connection to the land and its spirits:

> Politics didn't add up. In the end only the Earth remained, and they'd all return to her as dust. El Feo left books and politics to Angelita [La Escapía]… El Feo himself did not worry. History was unstoppable. The days, years, and centuries were spirit beings who traveled the universe, returning endlessly. The Spirits of the Night and the Spirits of the Day would take care of the people…
>
> El Feo focused all his energy into one desire: to retake the land. (523)

Indigeneity is more a set of beliefs than a blood inheritance, an understanding of the central importance of land. This definition would seem to suggest that anyone can become Indigenous, a notion that many critics would find troubling given the long history

of dominant appropriations of Indigenous culture. However, it is worth returning here to Womack's reading of the book: Silko refuses "to divest ancestral memory from the responsibility that such memory implies" and insists that "the ancestors may have more in mind than quick spiritual highs" (233-234). Moreover, while the novel seems to leave the door open for an eventual indigenization of those Euroamericans who do not have Indigenous ancestry, it also makes clear that this will not happen in the near future. Thinking about white environmentalists, computer programmer Awa Gee muses that "it took two or three thousand years before migrant humans were once again comfortable on a continent" (688)

Nor is Indigeneity available for piecemeal appropriation à la New Age spiritualism, as Silko makes clear in her final section, which begins with several chapters set at the International Holistic Healers Convention. Unlike the international Indigenous conferences organized in 1992, this is a convention organized and attended primarily by whites, including New Age shamans and others who are trying to co-opt Indigenous cultures. Lecha attends the conference because she knows that some of her allies will be there, among them Wilson Weasel Tail, a Lakota poet who, at the conference, bills himself as "a Lakota healer and visionary."

> [A]s far as Lecha knew, Weasel Tail had no training of any kind in healing, Lakota or otherwise. Weasel Tail had sworn to take back stolen tribal land; he was a political animal, not a healer. Lecha wondered what new angle, what new scheme, Wilson Weasel Tail had up his sleeve. (716)

Weasel Tail is at the conference to drum up support for the tribal armies marching northward from Mexico. Like the other Indigenous people Lecha recognizes, he is also there to make money from the many white New Age spiritualists at the conference, who "[line] up obediently to buy whatever" Indigenous people have to sell them (720).

> Lecha saw a hotel conference room full of women chanting…In the next room…it looked as if tree worship was making a comeback in northern Europe. In the corridors there were white-haired old hippies selling cheap crystals and little plastic bags of homegrown chamomile. There were white men…in expensive new buckskins, beads, and feathers who had called themselves "Thunder-roll" and "Buffalo Horn." African medicine men...[and] Incas and Mayas [were] selling dry stalks of weeds wrapped in strips of dirty rag. …Money was changing hands rapidly; fifties and hundreds seemed to drop effortlessly from the white hands into the brown and the black hands. (719)

The outer trappings of Indigenous culture do not make these conference attendees Indigenous; Indigeneity cannot be bought or sold, and no amount of expensive buckskin will change that fact.

Indigeneity is also a quality of the land itself—material and spiritual, the land and the ancestors are together, and therefore the land is Indigenous; Indigeneity is a belief and a power, not a fixed group. Thus, Silko's text posits a critical, activist Indigeneity that requires a connection with the land and the ancestors, belief in the old traditions, and understanding of the global links between struggles.

The leaders of Silko's transnational Indigenous movements share an international orientation and a clear willingness to adopt new technologies and ideas and absorb them into their own cultures. Silko's Indigenous warriors know their way around computers and guns, often speak multiple languages, and understand the connection between other peoples' struggles and their own. In fact, other peoples' struggles *are* their own, for all the tribal armies are fighting a common enemy, multinational corporate capitalism, and a blow against the enemy in Africa weakens it in America.

It is El Feo's task to "remind the people never to lose sight of their precious land" (524), to ensure the return of the land "to the people whose ancestors had lived on the land for twenty thousand years continuously" (524). The spirits of the ancestors are a part of the land, and they are what allow the tribal army to succeed. This, then, is the paradox of Silko's Indigeneity: Indigenous people are disempowered, but through their connection to the land, they have great power. Indigenous internationalism thus exists at the nexus of dispossession and power, and both are intimately connected to the land. Indigeneity is, at its heart, about the continuing presence of the ancient in a modern world, and the understanding that ancient and modern, rooted and international, local and global, fixed and traveling, are not oppositional pairs, and need not be in contradiction with, but are instead complementary to each other.

CHAPTER THREE

"A Maori Destination":

Travel, Transnationalism, and Cultural Survival in

Witi Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story*

> I think I am…a modern Ulysses—though I prefer a comparison with a hero from my own history, like Maui—trying to locate or fix a Maori destination for all Maori who negotiate their lives through the postcolonial constructs of a universal reality and a hybridised world. My advantage is that I know who I am and where I am because I was an inhabitant of an essential Maori world. I am not trying to find my way back but, rather forward, to where Maori could be.
>
> Witi Ihimaera[1]

In Maori writer Witi Ihimaera's 2000 novel *The Uncle's Story*, international travel provides a solution to a seemingly intractable local problem. The novel describes a situation in which the homophobia of traditional Maori culture and the racism of Pakeha[2] gay communities means that gay Maoris must choose between being gay and being Maori.[3] At the novel's outset, there is no space for being both gay and Maori; one either remains closeted or assimilates into Pakeha society. In the end, however, the novel posits a possible solution to this dilemma, one which challenges Maori traditions without invoking the dominant Pakeha culture. The inspiration for change comes from Indigenous

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[1] Meklin and Meklin 362-3.

[2] *Pakeha*: Originally, "foreigner"; now used to mean white New Zealanders.

[3] Throughout his novel, Ihimaera uses the term "gay" to describe his characters' identification, when he uses a term at all. As David A. B. Murray writes in "*Takatāpui*, Gay, or just HO-MO-SEXUAL, Darling? Māori Language, Sexual Terminology, and Identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand" (2004), "'gay' is the most commonly used term for 'homosexual identity' in public institutions…as well as in more informal day-to-day conversations [in Aotearoa/New Zealand]" (163). In talking about Ihimaera's characters, then, I defer to the terminology of the novel itself and refer to them as gay rather than as takatapui or queer.

Canadian First Nations peoples at an international conference, thereby avoiding the specter of colonial domination and assimilation so familiar to Indigenous peoples. The experiences of other colonized peoples offer new ways of looking at the situation of the gay Maori characters and ultimately allow the protagonist to lead the way "forward, to where Maori could be," using Maori origin stories to develop a narrative that allows for the inclusion of gay Maoris.

The Uncle's Story focuses on the lives of two main characters: Michael Mahana, a young gay Maori man in 1990s Aotearoa New Zealand, and his uncle, Sam Mahana, who in the 1960s fought for the Australia and New Zealand Allied Command (ANZAC) forces in Vietnam alongside the U.S. forces. Sam survived the fighting in Vietnam but died shortly after returning home and being cast out of the family for loving another man. The novel is divided into five parts, interspersing Michael's story with that of his uncle. Sam's story is told via diaries that Sam's sister Pat passes on to Michael, diaries that she secretly saved from the fire in which her father attempted to burn any and all trace of Sam. The Mahana family has thoroughly erased Sam's story; at the outset of the novel, Michael is unaware that his uncle even existed. In the process of coming out to his family, Michael discovers not only the existence of this previously unknown uncle, but also the reason Sam has been expunged from the family's memory: Sam's love affair with Cliff, an American soldier. As the novel progresses, Sam's story becomes a counterpoint to Michael's; as Michael gradually discovers his uncle's story, he comes to terms with and develops a fuller understanding of his own identity. Only after Michael

attends a Canadian Indigenous arts conference does he begin to envision the possibilities for acceptance of gay Maoris within his own Maori community.

The novel demonstrates how international contacts among Indigenous peoples can offer inspiration for cultural changes in other Indigenous cultures. These contacts provide an alternative to the hierarchical relationship between colonizer and colonized that has often been a source of forced, rather than voluntary, change. As Ronald Niezen documents in *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (2003), the experience of seeing their culture under siege by the dominant settler culture often makes Indigenous communities wary of change when the impetus for change appears to come from the colonizers (91-93). (This may be particularly true when it comes to issues of sexuality, as I discuss later in the chapter.) Contacts among Indigenous peoples—that is, lateral rather than hierarchical relationships—may thus be perceived as "safe" motivators for change within Indigenous communities, as they allay the fear of one culture dominating the other. *The Uncle's Story* shows that such contacts, and the travel that facilitates them, are important elements in not merely maintaining but promoting the cultural flexibility that has allowed the survival of Indigenous cultures.

"…To Where Maori Could Be": Traditions of Travel and Transformation

Traditional Maori life has always included travel. Like all Polynesians, Maoris made ocean voyages both before and after European colonization of their lands. As historian David Chappell points out in his book *Double Ghosts: Oceanian Voyagers on*

Euroamerican Ships (1997), "Oceanians knew that the sea was a road map, not a barrier, and that sailing routes, like highways, connected worlds" (173).

In his work, Witi Ihimaera often discusses the importance of travel in both contemporary and traditional settings. In the 1993 study *Witi Ihimaera: A Changing Vision*, Umelo Ojinmah notes the importance of myth in Ihimaera's first novel, *Tangi* (1973):

> Ihimaera's use of Maori mythology, both in the thematic structure of *Tangi* and to carry the narrative, is also an affirmation of Maoritanga [Maori culture]. In using Maori myths, Ihimaera claims … that he is trying "to make the past live in the present." 23

At the outset of Ihimaera's 1986 novel *The Matriarch*, the family matriarch tells her grandson their tribal origin story. In the beginning, she explains, there was nothing—Te Kore, the Void. Out of this void came Te Po, the night, the world of darkness, and, through many changes, eventually Te Ao Marama, the world of light, emerged. From the Void also came the first gods, the Earth Mother, Papatuanuku, and the Sky Father, Rangi awatea (elsewhere referred to as Ranginui), who were clasped in tight embrace—so tight that no light could reach the world. Their children lived in the darkness and were unsuccessful in bringing light to the world until their son Tane Mahuta pushed the sky and earth apart against their will, separating his parents and letting in the light. When light finally reached the world, creation was resumed. As Ihimaera points out, this story also is "the first setting apart of the roles of male and female": "The sky is high, sacred and male while the Earth is low but fruitful, profane and female" (3).

Among the offspring of the gods, the matriarch explains, was the demigod Maui, who not only brought death into the world but also created the islands of Aotearoa New Zealand on a fishing voyage. He pulled a fish out of the ocean, Te Ika a Maui, the fish of Maui, which became the North Island; the South Island was formed around his ship, Te Waka a Maui. The matriarch then describes the origin of the Maori people on these islands:

> The fish of Maui became the land of the Maori, and we call it Aotearoa. We are the tangata whenua, the people of the land. How we came to be here, nobody knows. Perhaps we have always been here—Ancients descended from the Time of Gods. But at the same time, later Maori voyagers came here also, like Kupe around 700 A.D. … Then, in tribal histories, we are told of the arrival of legendary canoes from Hawaiki. (4)

These legendary canoes, or waka, colonized the land of Aotearoa, and most Maori iwi[4] trace their lines of descent back to ancestors who arrived on one of these waka. Though the term *waka* is often translated as *canoe*, Maori historian Ranginui Walker, in *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End*, points out that this very translation is part of the colonial legacy of New Zealand:

[4] *Iwi* means tribe or clan, though its meaning is not exactly the same as the term "tribe" when used in a North American context. Unlike the North American context, in which most Native American tribes or nations did not share a single common indigenous language or culture, Maori language and culture has been far more standard across the various iwi, although there are still significant differences in certain areas such as women's leadership. Makereti Papakura describes the kinship hierarchy as follows: "[The] families [who originally settled Aotearoa] began as a man with his wife and children. When their children married and had children, they would call themselves a whanau, or family group… As these families increased to a great extent, say about one hundred and fifty to two hundred or more, they formed themselves into a hapu … and the different hapu made up the Iwi (tribe), who would all be descended from the common ancestor [who arrived in the original] canoe" (35).

> Because waka were unlike their own vessels, early European explorers designated them canoes. The image conjured up by the word canoe—a dugout propelled by paddles—is hardly an accurate rendering of waka… These vessels stocked with provisions, laden with cargo, and carrying up to a hundred passengers were ships in their own right, capable of blue-water passages of a thousand miles or more. But because they were different, they were not ships and were therefore consigned to the more primitive status of canoe. (25)

Although there is some disagreement among scholars and storytellers as to the timing and coordination of the different waves of Polynesian settlement,[5] both Maori genealogy and archaeological evidence suggest that this first major phase of colonization occurred around one thousand years ago.

Besides Aotearoa, another homeland—the fabled Hawaiki—plays an important role in Maori tradition. Hawaiki is the place to which the souls of the dead return: the souls depart from the very tip of the North Island and journey across the ocean to Hawaiki. Ranginui Walker explains the concept of Hawaiki as follows:

> The tribal traditions refer to Hawaiki as the place of origin of Maori people. The word Hawaiki is simply the generic term for homeland, and in their seafaring history of migration across the Great Ocean of Kiwa [the Pacific], there are for the Maori many Hawaiki along the route all the way

[5] Many scholars (Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa) and Percy Smith, among others) espouse the popular theory that Polynesian settlers arrived in a fleet of five, seven, or more canoes. However, in 1990 Ranginui Walker suggested that this "fleet" theory represents "the expropriation and transformation of knowledge by the coloniser. Nowhere in the [Maori] traditions is the claim made of a large number of canoes arriving in New Zealand at the same time" (39). See Walker, 28-39, for more details on these disagreements.

> back to Samoa and Tonga. But the word Hawaiki is used to refer only to the last homeland and not a specific island. (37)

In Ihimaera's novel *Whale Rider* (1987), which features a group of sentient whales who follow the same stories and traditions as Maori communities, the whales have a place they call Hawaiki, "*The Place of the Gods. The Home of the Ancients*" (57) The whales are migratory, and have a strong sense of home and place, mirroring the voyages and home places of the Maoris.

The Maoris thus have a very clear connection to a homeplace other than where they live now, yet they are also the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand. This seeming paradox calls into question the notion that to be called "Indigenous," people must have lived on their land from time immemorial.

Modes of Maori Travel: Warfare, Conferences, and Urbanization

Travel is often a force for cultural change, as varied cultures come into contact with each other. There are few records of how these contacts might have happened for the Maori people during pre-colonial times, but one of the earliest Maori voyages after European contact indicates that the cultural changes wrought by travel (in this case, under colonial auspices) can threaten the home community. Early in the history of Maori-British

contact,[6] in 1820, Hongi Hika, a Maori chief, visited England and Australia and returned with a substantial number of muskets (Harrison Wright suggests three hundred, Michael King one thousand), laying waste to his enemies and establishing his iwi's dominance over the North Island (Wright 92-94, King 29).

Hongi Hika's story illustrates that a voyager's return home could spell danger not only for the voyager but also for those who had stayed behind; perhaps for this reason, returnees sometimes became objects of violence. Chappell cites one of the earliest reported returns, in 1529, of a New Guinean native who had been forcibly abducted by a Spanish ship some years earlier and who, over time, learned the Spanish language and became a Christian. Explorer Alvaro de Saavedra narrated the man's attempted return to his native New Guinea:

> "We landed him on the same island whence we had taken him. He had become a Christian and acquired our language. He had been taught that he might tell the natives what people we were… [A]s he was ready to swim, the Captain let him swim of his own accord. But the natives of the island killed him in the water, and he cried out to us, but nevertheless they killed him. So we made sail…"
>
> It was a clumsy, tragic homecoming, the only attempt of its kind in the Spanish records until the early eighteenth century. (24)

[6] The first contact between Maoris and Europeans occurred in 1769 on one of James Cook's voyages. European settlement in the country began in the 1790s, and Britain proclaimed sovereignty over the islands in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi.

Thus even from the early days of colonial migration or travel—most of it lying somewhere between voluntary and forced—the return home was fraught with difficulty and potential dangers. Chappell does point out that not all such returns ended in violence, although many returnees endured an initial period of threats and distrust.

Maori soldiers have served the New Zealand government in a number of wars, the earliest examples being those who fought for the colonial government in campaigns against other Maoris. During the First World War, Maoris fought in the New Zealand Native Contingent and Pioneer Battalion; in a 1926 history of these Maori units published by the Maori Regimental Committee, James Cowan describes—with some poetic exaggeration—the extensive participation in these units:

> With the exception of the Waikato, Taranaki and Urewera districts, the Maori tribes were denuded of their young men during the war. As in the Highland glens, the English shires and on the New Zealand farms, the native villages were deserted by the able-bodied: it was a matter of shame to be found lagging behind.…In Rotorua there were scarcely any but the older people, the women and the children; every Arawa who could pass the doctor and look fit to carry rifle and swag went into camp to train for the great adventure. (3-4)

Only a few decades earlier, many Maori soldiers had been fighting against the British colonial forces in New Zealand during the Land Wars (1845-1872, and the subject of Ihimaera's historical epic *The Matriarch*), although some Maori iwi also fought on the side of the Pakeha.

The Land Wars and the associated Maori resistance were behind the relative lack of WWI volunteers from Taranaki, the Waikato, and Urewera; even the 1900s saw widespread and tenacious resistance to the colonial government in those areas. The invasion of the Waikato had been one of the biggest battles of the Land Wars, and the colonial government had confiscated vast swaths of land. Iwi in those areas not only resisted the Pakeha and their Maori allies during the Land Wars, but also harbored a number of anti-colonial Maori religious and political leaders like the prophets Te Kooti (one of the subjects of Ihimaera's *The Matriarch*) and Te Ua Haumene, and the Maori King Matutaera Tawhiao. According to Cowan, at least 2,227 Maori soldiers participated in the First World War (out of a Maori population estimated at about 50,000); in WWII, over 3,500 Maoris volunteered for service with the armed forces (out of a population of about 75,000), and the Maori Battalion of World War II is probably the most well-known instance of Maori people fighting for the government of New Zealand.

Maoris also fought in the ANZAC forces in Korea, and one of these soldiers provided the inspiration for Uncle Sam Mahana's character in *The Uncle's Story*, as journalist John McCrystal recounts:

> In the 1970s, Ihimaera learned of a Maori soldier who had formed a relationship with a U.S. chopper pilot during the Korean War; the relationship continued in New Zealand after the war until the soldier died in a car accident….Because he wanted Michael to be young and contemporary, he had to place Sam in the Vietnam War rather than the Korean conflict. (32)

Perhaps because New Zealand's contingent in Vietnam was small—just under 4,000 troops during the time from 1962 to 1973—there was no separate Maori contingent in Vietnam. It is difficult to determine exactly how many of the troops were Maori, though in a 2006 speech to Parliament, Te Ururoa Flavell stated that 60% of NZ Vietnam veterans were Maori. Assuming this statistic is accurate, it suggests that Maori, like Native Americans, had a proportionately high enlistment rate.

One of the other significant opportunities Indigenous travel also addressed in *The Uncle's Story* is the international conference. Unlike warfare, where Indigenous soldiers are as likely to be fighting against each other as alongside each other, conferences have great potential for developing inter-Indigenous contacts. Since the creation of the United Nations in 1945, and in particular after the formation of the World Council of Indigenous Nations in 1975 and the U.N. Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982, there have been a steadily increasing number of conferences focused on issues relating to Indigenous communities. The U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which was created in 2002 in response to concerns from Indigenous representatives and recommendations from the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, is one of the largest Indigenous organizations and holds annual sessions.[7] Other groups, such as the International Indigenous Librarians' Forum, also convene regularly and include members from a wide range of Indigenous peoples.

[7] The UNPFII website states, "Indigenous peoples and others in the Working Group on Indigenous Populations felt that the structures of the United Nations were not well-suited to consider issues of concern to indigenous peoples comprehensively. In addition, they felt that the participation of indigenous representatives in the United Nations was limited. In light of these concerns, indigenous peoples and others proposed establishing a new body that would focus on global issues related to indigenous peoples and that would offer the opportunity for indigenous peoples to participate effectively.

One-time or irregular conferences are also common, and Ihimaera himself points to the 1993 "Beyond Survival" conference, held in Ottawa, as the inspiration for the conference in *The Uncle's Story* (e-mail exchange with author, 2003); according to the organizers of the "Beyond Survival" conference, participants for that conference were invited "from the Americas, the Circumpolar region, Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, Japan, the Asian Pacific region, the Caribbean, and Africa" ("RE: Beyond Survival Conference"). "Beyond Survival," in turn, was inspired by the 1990 International Indigenous Education Conference, which was held in Aotearoa New Zealand. Conferences like these provide the opportunity for Indigenous people to exchange ideas and experiences and, as Ihimaera points out in *The Uncle's Story*, may also offer financial assistance to enable attendees to travel.

Another form of travel, the migration of Maori people from rural villages to the cities, is a recurrent theme in Ihimaera's novels. As Umelo Ojinmah points out in his 1993 book *Witi Ihimaera: A Changing Vision*,

> What Ihimaera observed was a migration of Maori from their rural and agriculturally based communities to the urban areas: an inversion in the ratio of rural to urban Maori, and an attendant cultural discontinuity. (2-3)

In Ihimaera's early works, including *Whanau* (1974), *The New Net Goes Fishing* (1977), and *The Matriarch* (1986), which are the subject of Ojinhmah's study, this "cultural discontinuity" is ultimately negative, and the protagonist's only choice for wholeness is

to return home.[8] However, some of his later work, in particular *The Uncle's Story*, complicates this view. The distance between the rural home and the city becomes productive and potentially positive, a space of possibility as well as loss. Like many of Thomas King's characters, Ihimaera's protagonists still maintain strong ties to their home communities, and they remain firmly Indigenous as they build lives elsewhere and become parts of other communities.

While he is fiercely protective of Maori culture, Ihimaera also believes that it can—and should—change. As he says in the interview with Andrew and Margaret Meklin quoted at the beginning of this chapter, "I am not trying to find my way back but, rather forward, to where Maori could be" (363); later in the same interview, Ihimaera says, "I am a believer in cultural transformation, one that accepts differences and creates alternatives and options" (364). It is important to see Ihimaera's critiques of Maori society in light of these comments; he is seeking Maori ways of addressing the problems he sees and attempting to locate "a Maori destination" (362). What is Maori is determined by a cultural journey rather than by static definitions.

[8] This pattern of urban alienation and rural renewal is also a theme in works by other Indigenous authors, like Kiowa novelist N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1969) or Salish & Kootenai author D'Arcy McNickle's *Wind From an Enemy Sky* (1977).

Gender and Sexuality and the Possibilities of Mobility

In his fiction and in interviews, Ihimaera has often criticized what he sees as the patriarchal nature of traditional Maori culture and the strictures of its gender roles. Ihimaera's most well-known work is the novel *Whale Rider* (1987), which was made into a movie in 2003. The film received international acclaim and, like the novel, drew attention to the role of gender in Maori culture. The novel tells the story of a young girl, Kahu, who is drawn not only to her Maori culture but to leadership roles that, at least in her iwi, have been occupied exclusively by men. The role of women in leadership varies considerably by iwi, as the novel itself makes clear: While Kahu's grandfather is resolutely opposed to women in leadership positions, his wife Nanny Flowers—Kahu's grandmother—comes from an iwi where women have held positions of power. This background is one of the reasons that Nanny Flowers is supportive of Kahu, and she serves as a reminder that not all Maori traditions are as patriarchal as the one Ihimaera critiques in the novel. Kahu's grandfather, Koro Apirana, leads their community at Whangara and does not believe women should have the right to community leadership. For him, Kahu's birth upsets the rightful order of things.

> Koro Apirana could not reconcile his traditional beliefs about Maori leadership and rights with Kahu's birth. By Maori custom, leadership was hereditary, and normally the mantle of prestige fell from the eldest son to the eldest son. Except that in this case, there was an eldest daughter. (16)

Though Koro Apirana holds the leadership position, his family often opposes him, especially when it comes to Kahu. Named after her ancestor Kahutia Te Rangi, the Whale Rider, Kahu is clearly destined for greatness. Recognizing her potential, Nanny Flowers and the narrator, Kahu's uncle Rawiri, subvert and circumvent Koro Apirana's rules as much as they can. Kahu, meanwhile, becomes extraordinarily attached to her grandfather even as he ignores her existence. Her attachment to Koro Apirana represents her strong connection to the traditions and place of her iwi; as the narrator observes, she is firmly rooted not only by her emotional and familial ties but by the burial of her birth cord at Whangara and by her name, which "[joins] her to our lands" (29).

Unlike Kahu, the narrator Rawiri does not feel the same strong connection to place, which he suggests is because his "birth cord must not have been put in the ground at Whangara" (61). He initially moves to Sydney, Australia, where he meets a lot of fellow Maori expats, all of whom he calls "cous," or cousin. While there, he gets to know Jeff, a young white man from Papua New Guinea, who invites Rawiri to come visit his family's plantation in Papua New Guinea. Rawiri accepts the invitation, tellingly comparing himself to a cowboy as he does so:

> "Say," [Jeff said,] "you wouldn't like to come with me?"
>
> I hesitated. Ever since speaking to [my family at home], I had actually been thinking of going back to New Zealand. Instead, I said, "Sure, I've been a cowboy all my life. Let's saddle up, partner." (66)

The fact that he describes himself as a cowboy underscores that, in this visit to Papua New Guinea, Rawiri identifies with the colonizers—with the cowboys rather than

the Indians. (Only a page earlier, Jeff's mother complains to him that "the natives…are always drinking" (65), so the fact that Jeff's family is among the colonizers is already vividly clear.) Like Hongi Hika over 170 years earlier, Rawiri is traveling as the guest of colonizers to a foreign country, and for Rawiri this means spending his visiting in a liminal space wherein he is both a colonizer and a native. Jeff's mother finds Rawiri "too dark" (68), while Jeff's father warmly accepts Rawiri as part of the family, and so it is up to Rawiri to determine where he thinks he belongs. Jeff's parents have made a living by building a plantation on the New Guinean soil—a difficult living, as Rawiri notes.

> Putting the plantation back on its feet was a challenge the countryside really threw at us; I have never known a country that has fought back as hard as Papua New Guinea. I doubt if it can ever be tamed of its soaring temperatures, its terrain…and its tribalism. But we tried… (69),

Interestingly, at this point Rawiri is clearly identifying with the colonizers against the "tribalism" of Papua New Guinea. He sees himself as part of the "we" that is trying to tame the country and its people. But over the course of his two years in Papua New Guinea (which take up less than ten pages of the text) he comes to change his mind about who his allies are.

Prior to traveling abroad, Rawiri never spends much time thinking about what it means to him to be Maori, but the more time he spends away from home, the more he realizes what home means to him. In Papua New Guinea, his position somewhere between colonizer and colonized puts issues of culture and imperialism into sharp relief, and the two years there bring him to articulate a sense of connection between Maoris and

the native peoples of Papua New Guinea, noting that "[i]n many respects, the parallels with the Maori in New Zealand were very close" (70).

The moment at which Rawiri finally decides that his kinship is with the Indigenous Papua New Guinean peoples rather than with Jeff and his family and, by extension, the white colonizers comes when the family is driving home one night and their car hits a pedestrian. When Jeff's mother insists that they drive on, because "it's only a native" (73) and they might be subject to retaliation, Rawiri refuses to continue on with them. He recognizes the man they have hit as Bernard, one of the workers on the plantation, but this makes no difference. Even Jeff, whom Rawiri has previously viewed as at least somewhat at odds with his family, seems to fear possible retaliation more than he cares about Bernard's well-being. Disillusioned with his friend and angry with the family's callous disregard for Bernard, Rawiri gets out of the car. Explaining why he could not continue on with Jeff, Rawiri explains, "a cous is a cous" (74)—although he is not Maori, Bernard is a cousin, kin to Rawiri in a way Jeff will never be. Rawiri has a new confidence in his identity as an Indigenous person as well as a new understanding of the need for resistance to colonialism, even when colonialism wears a face as friendly as Jeff's. The confidence he has gained allows him not only to return to Whangara, but to help Nanny Flowers and Kahu as they struggle against ingrained patriarchal traditions. His experiences in Papua New Guinea are vital to Rawiri's willingness to challenge the sexism of his home community, because it provides him with a sense of Indigenous identity that is changing rather than static.

While the sexism of some traditional Maori iwi has been a preoccupation in Ihimaera's work for some time, until 1995 his work dealt primarily with interactions and relationships among heterosexual men and women. Less conventional characters, like the drag queens who help the protagonist's family win a soccer game in Ihimaera's 1994's *Bulibasha: King of the Gypsies*, or the drag queen Rawiri meets, in passing, in Sydney in *Whale Rider*, exist only on the stories' peripheries. *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* (1995) is Ihimaera's first novel centered on gay characters, though it focuses almost exclusively on the Pakeha protagonist David. The only gay Maori in the novel is a marginal character who is never referred to by name, only as "The Noble Savage." Since the narrative reflects David's point of view, this stylized and stereotypical rendering of a gay Maori man is evidence of the gulf that separates the Pakeha and Maori gay communities. Describing his rationale for focusing a novel on Pakeha characters for the first time in his career, Ihimaera explains,

> [The novel] is about David's journey as a Pakeha man. The story could have been about David's journey as a Maori man, but because I wanted this book to have a universality about it, I decided David should be someone who was an 'everyman' kind of character. As well, if he had been Maori that would have changed the politics. (Amery 14)

The supposed "everyman" quality of the novel did not extend to include the Maori population. Usually an astute critic of white normativity, Ihimaera seems to have fallen prey to it himself in describing this novel as "universal" while at the same time acknowledging that it would have been different if his "everyman" were Maori.

Nights in the Gardens of Spain does not imagine a world in which it is possible to live as an openly gay Maori man. In a passage near the end of the novel, The Noble Savage leaves Wellington to return to his hometown and marry a woman. His wife-to-be knows of his sexual orientation and accepts it; she merely wants a child, and The Noble Savage explains to David why he has agreed:

> "The choice is not to be selfish, as your society is, David. If I was to choose between being Maori or being gay I would have to choose to be Maori. That is how I was born and that is how my people will bury me. Not as a gay person. But as one of the iwi. I guess, when it comes to the crunch, my cultural registration is more important than my sexual orientation after all." (234-235)

Like his character The Noble Savage, for years Ihimaera perceived a contradiction between being Maori and being gay. As he told interviewer Anna Dunbar in 2000, he was unable to reconcile his Maori identity with his life as a gay man until he wrote *The Uncle's Story*.[9]

> The question that Michael is asked [in *The Uncle's Story*], what is more important[,] being gay or being Maori, is at the very, very heart of the book. I was asked the same thing in the 1980s and I am ashamed to say that I was totally flabbergasted and I couldn't answer. Michael is stronger and he says that one shouldn't need to choose. It has taken me 20 years to come up with that answer.

[9] In this context, it would be interesting to compare *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* to James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*.

Like Michael, who asserts that "My people are among the most homophobic in the world" (22), Ihimaera believes that Maori traditions reject not just gay identity but any same-sex sexual relationship. The one exception, Ihimaera explained in an interview with John McCrystal, are drag queens like the marginal characters in *Bulibasha* or *Whale Rider*:

> Traditional Maori thought has constructed Maori gay men as being feminine rather than masculine, so they're not spoken about…[and] treated as if they're not there. Unless they wear a dress. If you wear a dress, you're fine.
>
> But if you want to be just an ordinary guy who plays rugby, who goes surfing, who has a few drinks and is gay too? Give me a break. It doesn't fit into the masculine image in Maori or New Zealand society. (32)

This perception of gay men as feminine is part of Ihimaera's motivation for focusing *The Uncle's Story* on gay characters who are not just "ordinary guys," but, in Sam's and Cliff's cases, also soldiers.

Dieter Riemenschneider's 2000 article "Contemporary Maori Cultural Practice—From Biculturalism towards a Glocal Culture" discusses *The Uncle's Story* alongside two other books by Maori authors, Robert Sullivan's *Star Waka* and Alan Duff's *Both Sides of the Moon*, in order to examine the intersection of global and local cultures in those texts. Riemenschneider cogently argues that Ihimaera's novel, "located at the intersection of ethnicity and gender and quite generally of the global and the local" (149), represents

the author's commitment to Maori culture—a dynamic, changing Maori culture—in an age of globalizing influences.

> For the narrator as much as for Ihimaera the challenge posed to the essentializing homophobia of his own people is to modify the internal or local by a revised reading of its own cultural framework, which does not have to be replaced; however, its revision is instigated by a global discourse. (151-152)

The "global discourse" of gay rights, in Ihimaera's novel, is incorporated into the Maori worldview, offering a new way of being both Maori and gay. The "revised reading" of the cultural framework is not merely a result of international gay rights discourse but comes about partly in opposition to a normative discourse of gayness which emphasizes individual fulfillment rather than community responsibility. The model of gay living suggested in *The Uncle's Story* (which I discuss at length later in this chapter) is quite unlike that described in the Pakeha world of *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*. Established in dialogue with both gay rights discourse and international Indigenous movements, Ihimaera's model is, in the end, uniquely Maori, relying heavily on Maori history and tradition. As Ihimaera explained to interviewer Mark Amery in 1995,

> As a Maori I have always fought against the European definitions of Maori and the forcing of Maori people into European structures. I have

tried to subvert those definitions. In terms of gay culture the kaupapa[10] is the same.

> My concern is about coming to an appropriate definition for Maori men which takes account of their sexuality…Most of the gay Maori men I know have had relationships with women and most have had children or would like to have children. So I think we have to start talking of a Maori definition for Maori, that is more inclusive of options than exclusive.
>
> But part of the problem for us is that just as on the wider scale Maori are becoming identified by Pakeha, so too is Maori sexual identity. Gay culture often means…performing in a certain way and adopting the same codes that that particular culture has already established for itself. I don't believe those codes are necessarily the same for Maori. (15)

While it appears that Ihimaera sees Western gay culture as far more monolithic than it is, his effort to find a self-definition that emanates from Maori rather than Western culture suggests that traditional culture contains the seeds for its own change.

It is worth noting that there is some disagreement on Ihimaera's interpretation of traditional Maori culture as homophobic.[11] In *Male Call/Waea Mai, Tane Ma Report No.3: Maori Men Who Have Sex with Men*, an in-depth 1998 report for the New Zealand AIDS Commission, Aspin et al. find that Maori society traditionally accepted a range of

[10] In his article "'To Be True One Must Find One's *Kaupapa*': Moments of Agency in Maori Fiction" (1997), Otto Heim defines *kaupapa* as "a set of cultural rules and policies associated with public administration…In a very broad sense the word *kaupapa*…denotes an enabling relational and performative situation or condition" (2).

[11] There is similar disagreement on whether traditional Maori culture is as sexist and patriarchal as Ihimaera often suggests in his writing.

sexual behaviors and suggest that it is only due to European (and, in particular, Christian) influences that homosexuality is no longer considered acceptable in Maori communities:

> Evidence from both oral and written accounts of early Māori society confirm that a range of different forms of sexual expression was a fundamental feature of Māori society. Ngāhuia Te Awekotuku (1996) writes that "sexuality was enjoyed in many forms. People chose partners of either sex for pleasure, and same-sex love was not condemned or vilified." …Traditionally, Māori society was known for its sexual diversity…The data from this survey indicates that the sexual practices and relationships of Māori [men who have sex with men] are as diverse in the 1990s as they were in the past. This is despite almost 160 years of attempts by Church and State to regulate the sexual behaviour of both Māori and tauiwi [non-Maori inhabitants of Aotearoa]. (8-11)

It is possible that some of the different interpretations of tradition arise from differences among various regions and iwi (Ihimaera's family is from the Gisborne area in the East of the North Island and is affiliated with Te Whanau A Kai, Te Aitanga A Mahaki, Ngati Porou, and Rongowhakaata). Ihimaera's observations, in *Whale Rider* and *The Matriarch*, on the different attitudes in various iwi toward women's leadership at least suggest the possibility that attitudes toward sexual diversity might also vary across iwi. In any case, Ihimaera's view of traditional culture as inherently homophobic is by no means the only possible interpretation. However, regardless of whether Ihimaera's book is the most accurate representation of overall Maori traditions, it is clear from many interviews

that Ihimaera writes from his own experiences as a gay Maori man. *The Uncle's Story* is thus at the very least an accurate representation of his own experience of Maori traditions.

Ihimaera's criticism of Maori homophobia does not lead him to valorize Western culture. Rather, he also critiques the gay Pakeha community for its pervasive racism and intolerance toward Maoris and Maori culture. Of his own decision to come out in print in 1995, Ihimaera says,

> Insofar as my coming out was concerned, it was not facilitated by [W]estern values, but rather compelled by the need to be in opposition to those values. Māori gay men were doubly discriminated against, both by race and by sexual practice. I am not trying to establish a western framework for Māori gay men, but rather a framework that evolves from a Polynesian and Māori tribal perspective. (Meklin & Meklin 364)

While *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* (1995) still imagines an opposition between being Maori and being gay, *The Uncle's Story*, published five years after *Nights*, insists that being gay and being Maori should not be mutually exclusive. When, in *The Uncle's Story*, Michael's aunt asks him, "What matters more to you, Michael? Being Maori, or being gay?," he replies, "I don't believe any of us should be made to choose, Auntie" (28-29). Thus *The Uncle's Story* attempts not merely to come to terms with homophobia but to challenge it—and to challenge it from a resolutely Maori perspective.

The Uncle's Story

The Uncle's Story deals centrally not only with gay Maori characters, but also with the complex relationship gay Maoris have with what Ihimaera sees as the homophobic traditions of Maori culture on the one hand and the colonialism of Pakeha gay culture on the other hand. Whether volunteering to fight with the Americans in Vietnam or deciding to date a Pakeha man, most of the characters' life choices are cast in both personal and political terms and, more specifically, are connected to histories of oppression and imperialism. Occasionally, the novel veers into preachiness; in particular, the character of Roimata, a Maori lesbian political activist and Michael's best friend, is prone to making sermons. However, for the most part, discussions of colonial legacies serve to flesh out the novel's characters as they struggle to find their own place in the world. Sam must come to terms both with his engagement in the Vietnam War and with his love for a U.S. soldier, and the relationship between the two. Michael, in turn, must work through his relationship with his Pakeha lover Jason, who is both unwilling and unable to understand the importance of Maori culture and family. In fact, it is his lover's disregard for Michael's cultural background and family that force Michael to realize that the life models that exist for white gays are not sufficient for him.

For Sam, travel places him in the eye of the imperial storm in the jungles of Vietnam.[12] It is not merely his travel but also his homecoming that is fraught with difficulty. His experiences have changed him while his home has not changed; as a result,

[12] I am using the term "colonial" to describe the political domination of one country by another, as distinguished from "imperialism," the economic domination of one country by another country, by corporations, or by other economic entities. This distinction, however, is difficult to maintain in the context of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and thus both terms are in use here.

Sam cannot see how or where his life might fit into a Maori framework, and dreams not of changing the world but of running away with his lover and living on a small American farm far away from society. His experiences abroad, marked as they are by imperialist war and trauma, have not shown him possibilities for change at home; unlike Rawiri in *The Whale Rider*, Sam cannot envision any way that he might return to Maori society while being fully himself.

In contrast to his uncle's travel to Vietnam, Michael's travel to Canada, two and a half decades later, is a very different experience. He is traveling not as a representative of an imperial power, but as a spokesperson for Maori arts and a guest of the First Nations people hosting the conference. Where Sam's connections abroad are almost exclusively with people on the imperialist side of the equation,[13] Michael is primarily in contact with Indigenous people whose experiences parallel his own. Michael's relationship with his hosts is a nonhierarchical one which opens up new possibilities for sharing and learning, particularly about ways of being both gay and Indigenous. Once he sees the possibility for the inclusion of Two-Spirit[14] people by the First Nations representatives at the conference, Michael returns to Aotearoa committed to fight for acceptance for gay Maoris by Maori communities. Rather than distancing himself from his Maori heritage or denying his homosexuality—the only options he saw prior to his trip—Michael recognizes that culture is constantly in the process of changing, and that he himself can facilitate a cultural change without making the culture any less Maori. While Sam's travel

[13] There is one exception, which I discuss later in this chapter.
[14] "Two Spirit" or "Two Spirited" is currently used as a self-designation by many GLBT Native Americans.

changes only him and, as a result, endangers him upon his return to his home community, Michael's travel changes both Michael and the community to which he returns.

For both of Ihimaera's major characters, Michael and Sam, travel opens up possibilities for existence as gay Indigenous people where such existence seems foreclosed and forbidden at home. In order to live as an openly gay Maori man, Michael decides he must move away from his home in Waituhi (on the eastern coast of the North Island, near Gisborne) to the city of Wellington, a distance of about 540 kilometers, half the length of the North Island. This move away from home is also, to some degree, a move away from Maori traditions, as Michael no longer takes part in most of the ceremonies that take place on his home marae.[15]

Both Michael's connection to and distance from home are emphasized in the novel's opening scenes, in which Michael returns from Wellington to Waituhi to attend his twin sister's wedding. As he leaves Wellington, he debates with his Pakeha lover Jason about whether to come out to his family. Initially, Michael argues that there is no way he can come out at home and be accepted. Being both gay and Maori necessitates a double life, and so he has no choice but to remain in the closet if he wishes to remain part of his family. Jason, Michael's boyfriend, rails against Michael's suggestion that being closeted at home is simply how it must be and demands that Michael stand up for their relationship by coming out. Jason's lack of understanding about the source of Michael's reluctance is largely conditioned by his complete lack of awareness of and interest in Maori culture. At the same time, however, some part of Jason's desire for Michael to

[15] *Marae*: Here, central meeting area of a Maori community. For a more complex and complete analysis of this term in contemporary Maori culture, see Chadwick Allen, *Blood Narrative* (2002), 47.

come out lies in his genuine sympathy for and frustration with a situation that limits Michael's ability to be honest with his family:

> [Jason said,] "You don't recognise me for the person I am, Michael. You don't recognise us for the couple we're supposed to be. Until you come out to your people, we'll never work."
>
> I had not expected that my being Maori and him being Pakeha would ever be an issue. I tried to make him understand.
>
> "My people are among the most homophobic in the world," I told him. "I'm not supposed to exist."
>
> "But you do, and *I* do too. It's all a matter of recognition for me. Either you choose to recognise me or you don't. It's up to you."
>
> "I'm afraid. I'm afraid of the consequences." (22)

In addition to fear of losing his family, Michael's own internalized homophobia also prevents him from imagining ways he might be able to exist as an openly gay Maori man. After he comes out, his aunt asks him, "What matters to you most, Michael? Being Maori, or being gay?" Michael's thoughts betray his discomfort and sense of shame:

> I didn't know how to answer. All my life I had been Maori. Who knows? All my life I had probably been gay as well. One was affirmative, something to be proud about. The other was negative, something to be ashamed of. (29)

Michael's journeys, both actual and symbolic, eventually give him the means to transform this shame into pride, but at the novel's outset, he cannot imagine a positive

gay Maori identity—or any gay Maori identity at all. As Michael flies between Wellington and Waituhi, half the length of New Zealand's North Island, for his sister's wedding, he thinks to himself:

> On [the first day I left Waituhi] the plane flew through a rainbow, the symbol of our tribe's protective deity, Kahukura. On the other side was Wellington, a place wrapped around with squalls and a strange luminosity compounded out of sleet and wintry light. In those days I saw Wellington as a place in another land. I saw Waituhi as some country left behind in the past.
>
> Since that time I had flown backwards and forwards countless times… Although I grew up in Waituhi I became a man in Wellington… The longer I stayed, the more I exulted in the freedom. And Wellington offered other infinite possibilities.
>
> Like my life. (199)

This passage suggests that the distance between Waituhi and Wellington is not merely a physical journey. To use Leslie Marmon Silko's words, it is an "interior journey" which enables Michael to become a man and claim his life and his freedom. Michael lives—and thrives—in the city of Wellington, while in his home village of Waituhi he feels alienated and alone. At the beginning of the novel, returning to Waituhi for his twin sister's wedding, Michael observes,

> Nothing is worse for a single man or woman than to go home for a family celebration at which all the conversations, all the codes, are involved with family. You have failed, have not conformed. You are isolated. (16)

Although Michael is not single as his family assumes, his relationship is the source of an even deeper sense of isolation because Michael is dating a man. Waituhi is portrayed as an extremely homophobic place where homosexuality is considered an insult to family honor, and, as a result, Michael cannot be comfortable there. Wellington, on the other hand, with its flourishing urban gay community, allows him the freedom to live his life openly in a community that accepts his relationship with another man.

Returning from Waituhi after the wedding, Michael describes Wellington as "picture perfect" (21); however, the city is not quite as perfect as it appears, for Michael tires of having to explain his Maori culture to his Pakeha boyfriend Jason and his non-Maori friends. Though he is able to embrace being gay, in Wellington he cannot live fully as a Maori, surrounded as he is by people who do not consider Maori culture important.

Unable to give up either identity, Michael travels "backwards and forwards" (199) between the rural Maori world and the urban gay community, carefully keeping them separate. "Backwards" and "forwards" are without a doubt value-laden terms, and at first glance it appears that Ihimaera is describing the traditional rural Maori community as "backwards" in contrast to the "forward" modernity of the non-Maori urban community. However, if we revisit Ihimaera's statement, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that "I am not trying to find my way back but, rather forward, to where Maori could be" (Meklin 363), it is possible that these terms instead reflect a sense that while the rural

Maori village is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, Maoris themselves will continue on into the future, changing their society as they go.

When Michael comes out to his family, their initial response is exactly what he expected. His parents are horrified and his twin sister is hurt, though she is hurt more by his having kept this secret from her only to announce it the day before her wedding than by the fact that he is gay. Appalled at his son's revelation, Michael's domineering father Arapeta denounces and disowns him, casting him out of not only the family but the community. Arapeta tells Michael,

> "People like you are outcasts. They do not belong. If you are a Maori, one of the privileges is that when you die your iwi will honour you by coming for you and bringing you home to be buried. No matter what you've done—murdered somebody even—they will honour their obligation." (27)

The clear, though unspoken, message is that while even murderers may come home, Michael cannot; his iwi will refuse to bury him for the transgression of being gay.

His father's disavowal marks not the end but the beginning of Michael's journey toward reconciling his identities—a journey that, as his uncle Sam's fate shows, is one fraught with danger, for Sam's very existence in the family has been erased. Unlike his uncle, however, Michael has a strong ally in his family, a member of his father's generation: his Auntie Pat, Sam's sister. Through her, Michael first discovers Sam, who died before Michael was born and about whom he was never told, and begins to reclaim a history of gay Maori life.

The first time the separation between Michael's Maori and gay selves is lifted, he is far from home, at an Indigenous Arts conference in Canada. There, at the end of the conference, he speaks up for the acceptance of Two-Spirit people within Canadian First Nations, exhorting his listeners not to forget the contribution that Two-Spirit artists have made to Indigenous arts:

> "The issue here is that for too long all of you who come from traditional cultures have profited by the efforts of those gay men and women who, for the love of their nations, developed the songs, the poems, the dances, the arts of all of us. You need only to look in your hearts to know that what I say is true. You need only to look into each others' eyes to know that all our genealogies are intertwined with people of two spirits. But they are people who, to do their work, had to pretend they did not exist. They had to deny themselves the right to walk proud among us." (344)

After his speech to the conference, Michael begins to understand that it might be possible to create a Maori community where he feels fully at home as a gay man. His understanding comes both through his newfound awareness of Sam's story and through his conversations with Two-Spirit Indigenous people about their tribal histories. Michael now understands that gay Maoris have always been there, and have been erased. He returns home with the understanding that he must reclaim their history in order to find a new, complete way of being a gay Maori man. Thus it is ultimately through travel that Michael discovers the possibility of a home space where both his identities are accepted and customary. The novel's solution to Michael's dilemma reflects the importance of

movement, for it relies both on ideas encountered while traveling and on Maori traditions.

Sam's story, which takes place a generation earlier in the Vietnam era, is one of isolation. Whereas Michael finds a gay community (even if it is not a Maori one) in Wellington and meets gay Indigenous people at an international conference in Canada, Michael's uncle Sam Mahana has far fewer options. While the novel does not give the precise dates of Sam's life, New Zealand's involvement in Vietnam lasted from 1962 to 1973, so the bulk of Sam's story must take place sometime before the mid-1970s. As David A. B. Murray notes, "gay and lesbian activism throughout New Zealand (although particularly in urban centers) began to gather momentum during the late 1970s and early 1980s" (171), which is after the time period of Sam's story, but well before Michael's.

Like Michael, Sam travels, but his travel abroad is occasioned by an imperialist war. Sam's father, a veteran of the Maori Brigade of the First World War, insists that Sam must volunteer to fight for the ANZAC forces in Vietnam. The Vietnam War was among the twentieth century's most visible and bloody imperial conflicts, and the chapters on Vietnam do not shy away from the horrors of warfare.

In Vietnam Sam first discovers his attraction to another man—Cliff Harper, a white American serviceman—which suggests that Sam had to leave home to even imagine the possibility of loving another man. Sam's shock at and resistance to his own attraction runs deep. The day after he and Cliff Harper share their first kiss, Sam flees to a nearby Buddhist monastery to meditate and pray for guidance:

> [Sam] closed his eyes [in the temple] and a feeling of vertigo overwhelmed him, sweeping him off his feet and, before he knew it, he was tumbling through Te Po, the Night. Down, down, down he plummeted. Was this his punishment? He felt Harper's kiss, and his heart was pounding with fear. He saw Harper's face above him, heard himself whimpering, caught between desire and self-loathing. He saw that they were both tumbling through darkness, sending ripples that disturbed the entire universe…
>
> A black hole was opening below them and stars were cascading into it: the entrance to Te Kore, The Void. Once through its gateway there would be no return…[W]ith one quick surge of strength Sam kicked at Harper and sent him spinning away…
>
> Alone, Sam fell through the black hole. Punishment was for him alone to take… The sin was his and his alone. (159-160)

Sam's resistance to his desire for Cliff Harper stems from the teachings of his Maori traditions, his sense of the place of gay men within Maori cosmology. Their transgression disturbs the universe, and they will be punished by being relegated to Te Kore, The Void, which is emptiness or nothingness. While there is often a sense of potential about Te Kore—because this world, Te Ao Marama, the World of Light, arises out of Te Kore, Te Kore is sometimes called a womb—it is used here as an exclusively negative concept. However, this scene's setting at a Buddhist temple also suggests a different and less negative connotation for emptiness and nothingness. The heart sutra, which religious

scholar Cuong Tu Nguyen points out is "probably the most frequently chanted scripture in East Asian Buddhism" (63), revolves around the concept of emptiness (it is the source of the well-known lines "form is emptiness, emptiness is form"); the realization of emptiness, in turn, changes the nature of aloneness, as Jefferson Humphries shows in his book *Reading Emptiness: Buddhism and Literature* (1999):

> The synonymic concept of *sabi* refers to an aesthetic sense that results from the realization of Buddhist "emptiness": "A person awakened to the essential mutability of life does not dread physical waning or loneliness; rather, he or she accepts these facts with quiet resignation and even finds in them a source of enjoyment." (8)

The scene in the Buddhist temple serves to underscore that Sam's resistance to Harper is conditioned by his Maori traditions and also suggests that these traditions have a range of interpretations. Thus not everything traditional must be valorized and preserved unquestioningly, and there is room for reinterpretation and change within these traditions. Ihimaera's reference to Buddhism in this scene is not incidental, for he revisits the topic again later, as Sam's nephew Michael becomes involved with a Maori Buddhist (289-290).[16]

Sam's flight to the Buddhist temple also suggests the role that non-colonizing cultures might play in reinterpreting traditions. Surrounded quite literally by the forces of

[16] It is worth noting that Buddhism is not a proselytizing religion, and its presence in this text likely serves as a contrast with missionary Christianity. Missionary work, particularly in New Zealand, was an equal partner with colonialism, and thus Christianity (and missionary religion in general) is intimately associated with colonialism, as Ihimaera explores in greater detail in *The Matriarch*. Buddhism lacks this missionary aspect, meaning that engagement with its ideas happens freely and without force, much like the engagement with the ideas and cultures of other indigenous peoples Michael encounters in Canada.

colonialism but unwilling to seek answers there, Sam instead seeks out those who are Indigenous and who are fighting against imperialism. Sam flees to a Vietnamese Buddhist monastery even though he does not understand Vietnamese and none of the monks know English. While Sam discovers his love—and lust—for another man through imperialist warfare, it is ultimately his meditation at a Buddhist monastery that allows him to come to terms with and accept his feelings. As he leaves the monastery, Sam sees the world in a new light:

> The world seemed to stop, to glow, to find serenity. With a sigh, a deep exhalation, the world began to renew itself…[Sam's] life had reached a point of perfection. A kind of understanding. A moment of revelation… It was going to be *okay*. When he next saw Harper he would explain, and maybe Harper would understand and, if there was a God of second chances—… He heard the universe singing. (162)

Thus, while some of his impetus for change comes from experiences under colonialism, Sam chooses to turn to a different and non-colonizing culture for guidance on how to reconcile the new experiences with the old traditions.

While there is significant irony in the fact that Sam's discovery of his homosexuality comes through imperialism in its bloodiest form, his transformation is not a historically inaccurate characterization of the role that travel under the auspices of colonialism played in the lives of Indigenous peoples. Colonial travel, whether forced or voluntary—or as in Sam Mahana's case, in "varying combinations of choice and coercion" (Chappell 158)—was often a factor in cultural change. The fact that Sam,

fighting on the U.S. side in Vietnam, falls for a blond Illinois farm boy who is the very image of the American heartland, illustrates the role imperialism plays in Sam's self-discovery.

In spite of the inescapable presence of colonialism and imperialism in the Vietnam War, colonialism is never discussed openly—in fact, is not even named—in the passages set in Vietnam. The issue is raised only subtly, as in the following scene, when Sam and his company have just marched into a village and encounter an old Vietnamese woman in front of her home:

> The old woman stood up and greeted Sam. Her voice reminded him of singing. Of an aged grand-aunt who lived long ago. He was taken to her once, to the place where she lived, a hut just like this—except that it was called a whare[17] –and she welcomed him and his mother in a similar singing language. Later that evening, after dinner, he had traced the moko[18] on her chin and listened as she sung him to sleep with oriori, [19] lullabies for children.
>
> Po! Po! E tangi ana kit e kai mana
>
> Waiho me tiki ake ki te Pou, a hou kai
>
> Hei a mai te pakake ki uta ra –
>
> The rain, the shivering trees and, when Sam blinked, he was back in Vietnam and an old lady was looking quizzically at him….

[17] *Whare*: Home. "Wh" is generally pronounced "f."
[18] *Moko*: Traditional Maori tattoo
[19] *Oriori*: In addition to being lullabies, oriori are often a child's lesson in genealogy and tribal traditions.

> Sam paused. He felt himself falling, as if her were going through the looking glass, and he remembered again the whare of his grand aunt. Like that house, this one also had mats on the floor, but instead of greenstone and feather cloaks it had an altar with a house God. Placated with offerings, the house God brought good fortune…
>
> As if that wasn't enough, the old woman looked at Lieutenant Haapu [another Maori soldier], Sam and the rest of the platoon and began to chastise them...
>
> "The old mother wants to remind us," Flanagan [the translator] said, smiling, "that she is still our enemy. When the French ruled the country she had no sympathy for them—they killed her father. Neither does she have any sympathy for us." (89-91)

The old woman here is simultaneously represented as kin and enemy—much like the Japanese prisoners Tayo is asked to execute in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*. The old woman's insistence that Sam and his platoon are as much enemies as the colonizing French is as clear a mention of imperialism as the Vietnam chapters offer. While the old woman encourages Sam's sense of kinship—she offers him food, because she says, "*You are a boy. You were hungry, like all boys, and all boys must eat*" (91, emphasis in original)—she also resists it because of the role he is playing as an ANZAC soldier. Sam, meanwhile, is torn between his presence as part of the occupying army and the kinship he feels with the Vietnamese people he meets. He identifies with Vietnamese villagers and sees similarities between the Viet Cong fighters and his own Maori

family—even the languages seem similar to him. The oriori he recalls upon seeing the old woman mentions new food sources to be found under the guidance of the ancestors, suggesting a time when change was necessary and was made with the help of tradition. Because the oriori serves to convey family and tribal history, its presence also suggests a strong feeling of family connection between Sam and the old Vietnamese woman.

This kinship, of course, is at odds with Sam's role as a member of an invading force. Even when faced with the old woman's disavowal of any sympathy for the Maori soldiers as she reminds them that she is "still [their] enemy," Sam cannot bring himself to question his own presence in Vietnam. He is unwilling to face the political consequences of his emotions, to question what his feelings of kinship with the old woman might mean for his participation in the war. Later, when he recognizes and acts on his attraction to a fellow soldier, Sam reacts in much the same way, unwilling to examine what these feelings might mean for the way he lives his life and how they might change his relationship to Maori society. Sam leaves his feelings of connection unarticulated, drawing no conclusions from the conflict between his sense of commonality with the old woman and his participation in the colonial war on her land.

Interaction among Indigenous peoples under the aegis of colonial powers was not uncommon, either historically or in the more recent past. David A. Chappell reminds us that "indigenous voyagers were not necessarily any more sympathetic or adept at interpreting local cultures than Euramericans were" (75), and that some Indigenous travelers were, in fact, active agents of colonial expansion. Sam, at least, feels some sympathy for the people he is supposed to be fighting, due to his connection with

Vietnamese people in general and the old woman in particular, a sympathy that weighs heavily on him as the fighting draws to a close.

In a coda to the scene with the "old mother," Sam comes upon her village the next day and discovers it has been razed by the Viet Cong in retaliation for the villagers' (unasked-for) contact with Sam's battalion. The old woman who had offered him food has been left to die in a field, brutally disemboweled but still painfully alive when Sam arrives. She has been singled out for such torture because she offered food to Sam—the enemy, as she herself labeled him. Seeing Sam again, she begs him to kill her and end her suffering, and he recognizes his own complicity in her fate:

> "I caused this," Sam said. "I caused this to happen. Your village to be destroyed. You and your husband to die –"
>
> "No, it was me," [Sam's Maori squadmate] Lieutenant Haapu said.
>
> The old woman looked at them both.
>
> *You must bear your pain. I must bear mine*.
>
> (102, emphasis in original)

Realizing that she faces only a slow and painful death, Sam accedes to the old woman's wish and kills both her and her husband. He immediately swears, "Utu. There must be revenge" (103), but it is unclear against whom he is swearing this revenge, as he reiterates in conversation with his lieutenant that "it was my fault" (104). This confusion about the appropriate target of revenge seems to clear up in the action that follows, as Sam's platoon becomes involved in a strike against a Viet Cong base. In a scene of firepower and destruction reminiscent of *Apocalypse Now*, the "Battle Hymn of the

Republic" plays in Sam's mind ("Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord"), offering him a sudden sense of moral clarity. Sam attacks five enemy fighters in a foxhole with a flamethrower, but what happens next catches him off guard and shows that his moral clarity was false and fleeting:

> Five screaming figures, human torches, spilled up and over the lip of the hole. Their bodies danced like candles. Sam saw his mother putting her hands to her eyes. She didn't want to look. And the tape was in front of him and –
>
> "You did it, Sam, you won!" (116)

In spite of his platoonmate's celebratory shout, Sam does not feel the elation, relief, or pride that should have come with *utu*, revenge. In fact, upon inspecting the field of battle later, Sam discovers that these five "human torches" were women, and one, in fact, might have been the daughter of the old woman who gave Sam food. Sam's mid-battle flashback to his own mother, covering her eyes, again suggests that his family is oddly present in this war, on both sides of the battle field. Caught in the contradictions of fighting in a war of liberation on the side of the colonizer, Sam finally recognizes the "sheer lunacy" of the war (116). The final line of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic"—"His truth is marching on"—echoes as the scene closes. There is no moral clarity here, and if there is a truth, Sam knows that it is not what he is fighting for.[20]

In spite of the irony and the indictment of the war in the above scene, only after the war is over does any character articulate a critique, and it is Cliff Harper, the

[20] The Battle Hymn of the Republic has its origins in the U.S. civil war, a connection that may be worth exploring further.

American soldier, not Sam, who does so. During Cliff's visit to New Zealand, Sam asks him, "Were we right, Cliff?...Or were we wrong to be there in Vietnam? I know when I went I thought God was on our side…Were we right, or were we wrong?" (226) Sam, in a flashback to the "old mother" who gave him food and was brutalized for it, suspects the answer, but remains unable or perhaps unwilling to express it as anything but a question. Instead, he looks to the American soldier for an answer, and Cliff is the one to offer the critical view of the war, telling him:

> "You know, when I was drafted I went to fight in something called the Vietnam War. But do you know what the Vietnamese called it? They called it the American War. So I guess your question depends on which side you were on….All I know is that war is war and those kind of questions about whether we were right or wrong get suspended when you're there, in the middle of it all…But, in my heart of hearts, I think we were wrong to be in Vietnam. Knowing it doesn't make it any better for my conscience to cope with. But pretending that those moral issues shouldn't be dealt with is condoning what happened."
>
> Sam sighed, and relaxed against Cliff.
>
> "Thank you for saying it wasn't right. And for telling me the truth." (226-7)

Unlike in the earlier scene in the Buddhist monastery where Sam also sought guidance on moral issues, he here does not try to discover the truth for himself but instead relies on a member of the imperial forces, albeit a very sympathetic one, for an answer. Although

Cliff's statement demands that the moral issues raised must also be dealt with, the conversation ends there, and is never revisited.

Later in the narrative, at the Canadian Indigenous arts conference that has been paid for and organized largely by (well-intentioned) white Canadians, the book offers a critique of such reliance on colonizers' explanations, however well-intentioned. Waiting for whites to provide answers suggests that the legacy of colonialism has not been overcome, and at the conference in question, Sam's nephew Michael leads a charge against the well-meaning but nonetheless controlling financial power that whites have over the Indigenous people in attendance. In contrast, Sam, a generation before Michael, does not yet see how his personal relationships, genuine though they are, are nevertheless influenced by colonial ideologies.

Although Cliff comes to visit Sam at home in Aotearoa and is ready to be open about the nature of their relationship, Sam prefers to remain discreet, fearing discovery by his family and in particular by his father, Arapeta. Cliff is more than willing to learn about and respect Sam's culture and, unlike Michael's Pakeha boyfriend Jason, makes no demands on Sam to come out to his family. Sam has been welcomed back to his community with ceremony and good will, and Cliff, too, is welcomed—until their intimate relationship is accidentally revealed. As a result, it becomes clear that while abroad Sam has changed in ways that present a serious challenge to his home community. Chappell suggests that at least throughout the nineteenth century, participation in warfare abroad rarely precluded a harmonious return home, for it did not challenge the structure of the home community. Actions that call into question the hierarchies and established

mores of communities, however, such as religious conversion, acting above one's station, or a romantic or social attachment to the wrong person, are likely to alienate and even endanger returnees (137). Sam, too, is initially welcomed home; he is even celebrated for his deeds in the war and honored as a soldier. It is not his participation in an imperialist war that damns him in the eyes of his family but rather his unacceptable desire for Cliff.

Sam's young sister, Michael's Aunt Pat, is the one who discovers the relationship between Sam and Cliff. Because she develops a crush on Cliff, she steals after them one day and comes across Sam and Cliff kissing in the barn. Shocked and jealous, she tells their father, who confronts Sam about his relationship with Cliff. Cliff challenges Arapeta's authority, telling him that he is a powerless old tyrant and even knocking him down before asking Sam to leave with him. To Cliff's dismay, however, when Arapeta orders his son to stay, Sam complies with his father's demand:

> [A]ll his life Sam had been obedient. All his life the one thing he had wanted was for his father to love him. No matter what his father was like, the template of his authority could not be broken. No matter what his people were like, he was, after all, Maori. And Cliff saw that he and Sam were in Te Po, tumbling through the darkness. He heard Sam cry out, *You must go back. Let go, damn you*. Ahead was the entrance to Te Kore, The Void. It was a black hole and stars were showering into it. And Sam was calling to any gods who were listening: *The price is mine alone to pay. If there is any sacrifice to be made, then I will make it*. With one quick surge

of strength he kicked at Cliff and sent him spinning away – and passed alone through the gateway.

And Cliff knew that he had lost. (254)

Powerless in the face of Sam's filial obedience, Cliff leaves for the airport alone, while Sam attempts to salvage his place in the family.

In spite of the fact that Sam has chosen his family over his lover, however, Arapeta casts Sam out of the family, calling upon Maori tradition in order to do so:

"You are an affront to your iwi. You are an affront to all that I and my Maori Battalion mates [in World War II] fought for."

His hurled accusations were like blows to Sam's head.

"Your ancestors are crying in their graves… You deny yourself the rights, the mana, the sacredness of man. I am ashamed of you… You say you love me when you have abused everything that I have given you? Your manhood, your tribe, your history? You disgust me, Son, you make me wish you had never been born." (257)

This scene of rejection is a prelude to Arapeta's brutal beating of Sam, in which he whips him in an attempt to force him to admit that his desire and his actions were wrong.

Paradoxically, it is only through his father's violent rejection of his homosexuality that Sam finally defends himself. In contrast to his earlier acceptance that he was being cast out into Te Kore, The Void, Sam now recognizes that the fault does not lie with him but rather with the mores of his family and culture. As his father beats him and the rest of the family watches, Sam recognizes he has made a mistake: he should, in fact, leave with

Cliff. This belated realization, however, does not save their relationship, nor does it save Sam; on his way to the airport, Sam stops to help a woman with car trouble and is unceremoniously killed by an oncoming car. After the passionate and violent nature of the previous scenes with Sam and his family, this sudden end to his life follows the narrative arc of rejection and destruction, although strangers, rather than Arapeta, deal the final blow. Because Sam is killed before he reaches Cliff, Cliff leaves without knowing that Sam was coming to join him after all and their connection appears to be severed.

When Sam's body is returned to his family, Arapeta refuses to bury Sam in the family plot, taking him instead to an unmarked grave. In a small but significant act of resistance, Sam's mother, Florence, tells her daughter Pat to follow Arapeta and memorize the location of Sam's grave, ensuring that Arapeta's attempt at erasure cannot be completely successful.

In his attack on Sam, Arapeta uses the homophobia and strict gender lines of traditional Maori society as a weapon, much as some anticolonial activists have asserted that homosexuality is a byproduct of the white man's ways. As such, there are no traditional roles for gay men and women, and they should not exist in a truly decolonized society. Such argumentation is familiar from Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, where in a footnote he suggests that homosexuality is present in the Antilles only due to colonialism (Fanon 180, note 44). Fanon is perhaps the most prominent, but certainly not the only, anticolonial author to assert that homosexuality is the result of colonization, as Arapeta suggests in his speech casting Sam out of the family. Most of the writing on the issue of tradition and homosexuality in decolonization struggles focuses on Africa, but

the issues are similar to those Ihimaera explores in his fiction and his interviews. In his book *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization*, Neville Hoad explains:

> Lesbian and gay human rights circulate transnationally and appear as an extremely unstable placeholder for a set of desires, anxieties, claims, and counterclaims around modernity and cultural authenticity in the discourses of postcolonial nationalisms, which are themselves transnational. Within these national discourses, they are frequently described as a threatening imperialist import. (69)

Arapeta's violent behavior indicates that he sees Sam's homosexuality not merely as anathema to Maori society but as a particularly "threatening imperialist import." Arapeta's insistence that gay Maoris do not exist and have no history also find their echoes in discourses of African homosexuality. Bill Stanford Pincheon points out in his 2000 article "An Ethnography of Silences: Race, (Homo)sexualities, and a Discourse of Africa" that "one of the oldest arguments [in Africa] is that black gay people lack a history traceable to indigenous African societies" (41). Similarly, in his article "The Unsaying of Indigenous Homosexualities in Zimbabwe: Mapping a Blindspot in an African Masculinity," Marc Epprecht begins with the statement that "Many black Zimbabweans believe that homosexuality was introduced to the country by white settlers and is now mainly propagated by 'the West'" (631). These are precisely the same issues that crop up in the argument between Sam and his father, and which are echoed throughout the book.

Perhaps in part because they believe that they do not have a cultural history, Sam and Cliff remain unable to define their relationship. Just as Sam is unable to articulate his commonality with Vietnamese villagers, Sam and Cliff have no name for their togetherness, referring to it as "whatever this is," or "this thing." Sam and Cliff exist in the absence of any kind of gay community and, unable to name their feelings, they cannot look for others who might be like them. They are alone together and content to be that way; their idyll is to live alone on an Illinois ranch, far from Sam's home and from any other people, in the middle of nowhere. Only by being alone together can they avoid the many issues raised not only by their relationship but also by their participation in the war in Vietnam. Life among family or friends, within a wider community, would raise too many awkward questions and would require them to put a name to their relationship.

In a further illustration of their isolation, Sam and Cliff share a language just between the two of them: the sign language that Cliff learned in order to communicate with his deaf brother and Sam to communicate with his deaf basketball coach:

> [Cliff explained,] "I got to know how to sign so well that in the end Mum and Dad gave up on it and whenever they wanted to talk to him they'd say to me, 'Cliff, tell your brother this"… [W]e loved talking together in our own way and it got so bad that it used to annoy the hell out of everyone… So how about you? How did you learn to sign?"…
>
> "Well, [my basketball coach] Elder Crowe was partially deaf and dumb…Because I was captain of the team, I learnt to sign and was able to pass on instructions." (68-9)

Aside from the rather implausible coincidence of such a shared sign language, this is nonetheless an interesting passage for what it tells us about Sam's and Cliff's potential communities. On the one hand, sign language connects them to deaf people, who are unable to make their voices heard in the larger society without the assistance of go-betweens like Sam and Cliff. In this context, their shared language is a symbol of disempowerment as well as of community. On the other hand, sign language allows them to form a secret community of two, unnoticed even by those seated next to them, enabling their relationship to develop even when they do not have private space. The separate language ensures that they are their own community and that they need not reach out to others.

Language, however, does not always create community. In the book, we encounter one other person who understands the Sam and Cliff's secret language—Sam's mother, Florence. At the same time that she reveals her understanding of sign language, Sam's mother also warns him that she will not stand up for them against her husband:

> "Your father lives for you and through you. He expects a lot of you, more than anybody can humanly be expected to fulfill. That's why he rides you so hard. He has never forgiven you any weakness, any failing in the past. So do not expect him to forgive you any weakness or failing now or in the future. If he discovers your secret, his rage will know no bounds."
>
> Sam's heart stopped. He looked at Florence. Behind her he could see a huge spider's web, shivering in the rain.
>
> "You know my secret?"

"Every woman knows her son's secrets and his desires…"

Florence began to cry.

"The reason why I am telling you this is because you must not expect me to help you." (222)

Because she is married to the abusive patriarch Arapeta, and because she has absorbed traditional teachings about the powerlessness and baseness of women, Florence has little sense of self. Thus, although she supports Sam, she cannot act on her support. Even though she shares their language—and hence their secret—Florence refuses to be a part of the small community that Sam and Cliff have created for themselves, a community characterized both by others' rejection of them and their rejection of others.

Michael's Story

Unlike his uncle Sam, Michael Mahana comes of age in the 1990s, a time when connections between the personal and political are becoming more and more of an issue, when Maoris are insisting on the cultural autonomy guaranteed in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand. Michael is active in a Maori arts organization working toward cultural self-determination for Maoris, which signals that he is intimately familiar with the impact of colonialism on his people. At the book's outset, however, he has not yet come to terms with colonialism's effects on his own personal life. Much like Sam, Michael is initially unwilling to politicize his life choices, preferring to see his relationship with his Pakeha lover Jason, for example, as transcending the issues that separate Maori and Pakeha cultures.

The division between the personal and political that Michael appears to desire proves impossible to maintain. As Michael delves deeper and deeper into Sam's story and considers his Maori community's exclusion of gay people more fully, he also comes to see the limitations of the predominantly Pakeha gay community of which he has considered himself a part. He lacks connections with other gay Maoris, particularly men, even though hints of their presence are given throughout the first part of the book. After Michael has begun to explore Sam's story and through it, his own history, Roimata, his best friend and a very politically savvy Maori lesbian, admonishes him for dating only white men:

> "I only wish, Michael, dear, that you would see that you've been colonised twice over. First, by the Pakeha. Second, by the *gay* Pakeha. Even in the gay world the White majority holds the power, the money, the decision making power—and it is their images which tell you what is desirable, what you should be like and what you shouldn't be like." (131)

Roimata often seems to act as the book's political conscience (so much so that one reviewer suggests that she "was invented for [the] purpose" of informing the reader "of the correct political interpretation of whatever is going on" (Connor)), and this passage is no exception. She challenges Michael's desire to see his personal life as divorced from larger sociopolitical issues. As Roimata explains, in order to be fully who he is, Michael must counter not only the homophobia of Maori culture but also the racism and stereotypes of the non-Maori gay community.

The Uncle's Story makes clear that what works for gay Pakehas may not work for gay Maoris, and that gay Maori men and women must find their own model rather than merely emulating the white gay world around them. Before Michael can synthesize the various parts of his identity, he must decolonize his mind by recognizing the effects that colonialism and homophobia have had on his own life and history. In order to do so, Michael needs to travel because, as he muses, traveling allows him to see his own life from a distance and to discover new ways of being:

> I have always loved long journeys. The act of leaving accustomed surroundings is a release from real time, real life. You can place that familiar life on hold, freeze it, secure in the awareness that it will be there waiting for you when you come back. The journey itself becomes an opportunity to explore parallel lives, those other optional lives which have always been there. (310)

Sam's story, a "parallel life," proves to be an essential component in Michael's decision to travel. When Michael and Roimata are invited to the Indigenous arts conference in Canada, Michael sees his chance to find Cliff Harper and explain to him that Sam was killed on his way to the airport. Cliff never knew that Sam was coming to join him after all—a mistaken impression that Michael wants to correct. Michael also wants to give Cliff a greenstone pendant that Sam had promised him years earlier. Although he is leaving his home, Michael is carrying his history with him—and he is traveling, in part, to continue discovering his uncle's story, a history he needs to save from erasure.

The past, throughout this novel, is omnipresent. In the beginning of the fourth section, just before he and Roimata leave for the conference, Michael meets Tane Mahuta, a gay Maori activist who lays the groundwork for Michael's later activism (and who plays a major role near the end of the novel, which I discuss in more detail later in this chapter). Michael also breaks up with his Pakeha boyfriend Jason, signifying a readiness to enter into a new realm of being. Echoing the Maori creation stories, the section begins,

> Tuia i runga, tuia i raro.
>
> The world was being constructed again.
>
> Tuia i roto, tuia i waho.
>
> The top and bottom bound together by the light.
>
> Tuia i here tangata ka rongo te Ao.
>
> Now the outer framework and the inner framework. Fixed firmly, the knots soldered by the shafts of the sun.
>
> The promise of life, the impulse of history, was reborn. (193)

This opening passage, with its mention of both history and rebirth, foreshadows the connection between tradition and innovation that eventually enables the emergence of a gay Maori community, the seeds of which are laid in this section's meeting between Michael and Tane.

In spite of Michael's gradual and growing understanding of the role of history—both national and personal—in his life, he cannot yet conceive of how gay Maoris might be included in the Maori community as a whole. Such an understanding comes only after

he travels to the Indigenous conference as a guest speaker to talk about Maori cultural renewal. In Canada, Michael meets several Canadian First Nations people who identify as gay or Two-Spirited. These Two-Spirit people discuss with Michael and Roimata the differences among their tribal traditions: some come from nations where Two-Spirit people were historically honored, and others from nations who erased their presence. As the conference draws to a close, the Two-Spirited First Nations acquaintances ask Michael to bring forward a resolution requesting that the conference recognize the contribution of Two-Spirit people to Indigenous cultures. They choose Michael because he as an outsider, he has a freedom at this conference that the First Nations people do not. Michael's travel thus provides an opportunity for his hosts as well, showing that travel is important not only for travelers and their home communities but also for the host communities.

In Canada, Michael can identify openly as gay without worrying about his community's reaction. Being away from home represents an opportunity to explore the "parallel life" of an openly gay Indigenous man, an opportunity that exists because he is on the other side of the world from his home. Even so, he is initially reluctant to come out to his fellow conference participants. While he is deciding whether to propose the resolution honoring Two-Spirit people, Michael takes the opportunity to travel to Illinois and find Cliff Harper, who has been avoiding Michael's phone calls. Unwilling to allow yet another silencing of his uncle's life, Michael makes the trip to Cliff's home only to find that he is out of town. Michael does, however, meet Cliff Harper, Junior, whose middle name—and what everyone calls him—is Sam. While Cliff Junior knows that

Michael's Uncle Sam was important to his father, he is not sure what their relationship was, though it becomes clear he suspects that they were lovers: Cliff Junior initially panics upon meeting Michael, thinking that Sam might be coming as well and might represent a threat to his parents' marriage. Once Michael explains that Sam is dead, however, Cliff Junior relaxes and allows Michael to leave the greenstone pendant that Sam wanted to return to Cliff. As Michael departs, he is disappointed that Cliff Senior is apparently not interested in meeting him but relieved to have returned the pendant, thereby fulfilling Sam's last promise to Cliff:

> Had Uncle Sam met up with Cliff Harper, perhaps this is where they would have ended. Together, in Muskegon County, on a small Illinois farm. … But they never found the safe place that is the right of every human being.
>
> All of a sudden the wind came out of nowhere. The dust swirled high. The trees began to sigh and whisper, showering petals. At first they were like tears, but as they continued, I knew they were like a benediction.
>
> *No, Michael. Don't grieve, Nephew. You've done your job. Thank you.* (342)

Though his meeting with Cliff Junior is not the closure he hoped for, Michael has at least discovered that Sam's memory lives on in the name of Cliff's son, even if Cliff never explained to his son what Sam had meant to him.

The meeting with Sam's namesake, which exposes the fact that Sam is remembered but his sexuality is erased, convinces Michael to introduce the conference

resolution that his hosts wanted. He brings it "for all the Sams and Cliffs of the world" (322), all those who have been erased from history. Although the audience response is initially skeptical, several First Nations people stand up with Michael in a demonstration that while this motion is brought by an outsider, members of the local community support it. Thus the presence of the outsider allows local communities to become aware of their own subject positions in new ways. After an old chief speaks in favor of the motion, thanking Michael and the other young people for their courage in standing up for themselves, the resolution passes with no dissenting votes. To Michael's surprise, the passage of the resolution is anticlimactic:

> No thunderous acclamation. No dancing around the totem pole. Change is not always telegraphed in big ways and with grand gestures. Sometimes it comes quietly from the silent places of the heart. (346)

It is this moment of quiet change that finally allows Michael to recognize that being Indigenous need not be at odds with being gay and that he has the right to expect non-gay Maoris to support gay Maoris when they ask for recognition. Moreover, it shows him that, contrary to what he had thought earlier, being gay is not "negative, something to be ashamed of" (29) but is part of a rich cultural legacy, a history that he is restoring and in which he may take pride.

Encountering other gay Indigenous people who are true to both their sexuality and their traditions, Michael becomes aware of the possibilities for reconciliation in his own life. The trip to North America—including both the conference and his meeting with Sam/Cliff Harper Junior—allows him to return home on his own terms and to begin the

work of changing his culture. The meeting with Cliff Harper's son convinces Michael that he must not allow the partial erasure of history—such as remembering Sam without remembering him as Cliff's lover. The encounter with the two-spirited First Nations people and their struggle against discrimination in their own societies gives him the strength and also the inspiration to fight for full inclusion among his Maori people back home.

His international travel enables Michael to "explore parallel lives, those other optional lives which have always been there" (310) and provides him with a safety net that would not exist if he were to take the risk of coming out in his home community. Unlike the activist Tane Mahuta, who has always been willing to take that risk at home, Michael is only able to do so once he has tried it, successfully, elsewhere. His international experiences also open up hitherto unthought-of possibilities. For example, the changes to Maori culture that Michael hopes for do not emanate from colonial ideology but instead originate in the ideas of other Indigenous peoples. These changes are a result of lateral contacts between one colonized group and another, a very different kind of outside influence than the top-down colonizer-colonized influence.

This type of contact is not only common to but often welcomed in independence struggles. Frantz Fanon's own crossover, for example, between Martinique and Algeria, suggests a similar pattern, as do the many contacts between African American and African political groups in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, Amílcar Cabral, a leader of the struggle for independence in Guinea-Bissau, toured the United States in 1972 and

specifically requested to meet with representatives of African American civil rights groups. In a speech made to these representatives on October 20, 1972, Cabral said,

> I am bringing you—our African brothers and sisters of the United States—the fraternal salutations of our people in assuring you we are very conscious that all in this life concerning you also concerns us. (75)

Later in the same speech, Cabral makes connections between his people's struggle and that of the Vietnamese people, emphasizing that it was "*similar* but…not the *same*" (77, emphasis in original). In another example of what Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih term "minor transnationalism," or contact among colonized or formerly colonized peoples, during the 1970s Maori people assisted Black Australians in setting up family education and child care centers.[21] *The Uncle's Story* offers a similar model for cultural exchange (and change): voluntary and lateral contact among Indigenous groups.

Material conditions, of course, may preclude contact among Indigenous groups. Resources for lateral travel are generally more limited than resources for margin-to-center travel. Scholarships and funds to aid colonial subjects in traveling to the metropolis—the Rhodes scholarship system serves as an excellent example here—are far more numerous than funds that enable colonial subjects to travel to meet other colonized peoples. The material limitations are very real and represent an important element of the history of Indigenous organizing. Ihimaera's narrative is quite clear on this point: Michael and Roimata's tickets to Canada are paid for by a predominantly white

[21] These Maori-Australian interactions were documented in interviews for the Maori-Aboriginal Family Education Oral History Project, archived at the National Library of New Zealand; some are also available at the Radio New Zealand Sound Archives.

organization that patronizes Indigenous arts, and there are constant reminders throughout the narrative that these tickets cost so much that Michael and Roimata could not afford them on their own.

Michael's journey also reflects historical developments in Indigenous transnationalism. For example, Michael's choice of moving to Wellington, rather than staying at his family home, represents a move toward intertribalism, for once he returns from Canada, he feels a connection with other gay Maori people in Wellington regardless of what iwi they hail from. Hence, differences among iwis, potential rivalries or old animosities, are not as important as the shared experiences of colonialism and oppression. These shared experiences are the roots of intertribalism, as evidenced when Native Americans were forced into boarding schools and discovered that their shared oppression could lead to a sense of intertribal community. Michael, in Wellington, creates his own community of other gay Maori people, even though initially the community consists only of Roimata and himself. Unlike Sam and Cliff, who are never able to expand their community of two, Michael and Roimata's community becomes public, and in becoming public it grows in numbers and in strength until it is an iwi in its own right—in large part because they connect with Indigenous activists abroad and with the Maori activist Tane Mahuta at home.

Tane initially approaches Michael not only to discuss politics but also because Roimata has asked Tane to be a go-between in discussing the possibility of marriage between Michael and Roimata. Roimata has decided that she wants children, and that

Michael would make an ideal, procreating but otherwise non-sexual husband and friend. Responding to Michael's objections to marrying his lesbian friend, Tane explains,

> "Marriage [between gay men and gay women] should be an option for gay Polynesian men and women. With it we can establish a tribe—a tribe based not just on sexual identity but on family. A tribe must have children to survive. It must also have parents, grandmothers and grandfathers. Even though the children may not be gay by practice, they will be gay by genealogy through their fathers and mothers. When my own children grow up, I want them to think of themselves as belonging to a great new gay family, a wonderful new gay tribe –" (296)

While Michael initially rejects Tane Mahuta's proposal, it does force him to think of Polynesian gayness as something new and different from American, European or Pakeha gayness.

Michael's process of reconceptualizing gay Maori identities is thus set in motion by Tane Mahuta—not coincidentally, a man who shares his name with the Maori god who separated the Sky Father and Earth Mother so that their children could live in the light. The god Tane upset the established order, forcing apart the world's founders to allow his generation to live in the world of light. As Michael says later in the narrative,

> "Many people have seen, in this myth [of Tane Mahuta], a metaphor applicable to all kinds of situations. That independence does not come without sacrifice. That fighting for space and for light, the universal image

> for knowledge or enlightenment or freedom, is the continual challenge for all peoples who cannot see the sky." (343)

Thus, even as his characters propose changes to traditional Maori ideas, Ihimaera places them firmly within a Maori cosmology and tradition, reiterating that these changes are not foreign to Maori culture but are coming instead from a reinterpretation of tradition.

Upon his return home from the conference, Michael becomes publicly active for gay Maori rights. His activism culminates in a funeral procession for a young gay Maori man to the young man's marae. Tane Mahuta calls Michael to ask him to help because the young man is from the same area as Michael:

> "A young gay boy has died of Aids," [sic] Tane said. "His name was Waka. He comes from the Gisborne area and somebody needs to lead an ope[22] to take his body back to his marae. Will you and Roimata do it?"
>
> "Yes," I said. "It's time, and I will be proud to lead the group." (363)

Tane is not the only one with a name out of Maori mythology; the dead youth's name is Waka, the Maori word for the ships that brought the first voyagers to Aotearoa. These names signal that the new gay iwi begins here; we are reading its origin story. These mythic resonances also connect Michael's modern voyaging with the voyaging traditions and origin stories of generations of Maori ancestors. As Ranginui Walker points out in his history of the Maori people, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End*,

[22] Ope: Funeral procession, leading to the *tangi* (funeral).

> Because the maritime traditions of the Polynesians endured as an important folk memory of Maori tribes, the waka in New Zealand became a potent symbol of tribal identity, mana and territory. (38)

The waka, as origin point of tribal genealogies, is a key component of Maori iwi identity, serving as both a point of connection to the ancestral homeland of Hawaiki and as a bond to the land where the voyagers came ashore. The waka are where routes and roots merge.

Because the age of ocean voyages aboard wakas is over, the "new gay tribe" does not have a physical ship in which it arrives; however, the body of the boy Waka, ravaged though it may be by AIDS, is renewed through its service to the iwi as a figurative ship, the point of origin of the new tribe. While the physical distance this new iwi traverses is not oceanic, the symbolic distance it travels is enormous. Traveling to a traditional marae as openly gay, lesbian, and transgender people, they ask for nothing less than recognition of their full selves. Michael, who before was satisfied with a closeted existence at home, has completed what Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko might call "an interior journey" in which he emerges with a new awareness and as part of a new tribe, "always aware that interior distances cannot be reckoned in physical miles or calendar years" (Silko 37). Together, Tane, Waka, and Michael initiate the new gay tribe as they journey toward Waka's home and toward their own emergence as a people.

The ope, which includes gay men and lesbians, drag queens, prostitutes, drug users, punk kids, and many more who do not appear to be traditionally Maori, constitutes the new gay tribe that Michael dreams of building:

> When we arrived in Gisborne, Auntie Pat said it looked like a circus had come to town. … I didn't care that we looked a rather odd tribe. It took courage to front up to a culture as forbidding as ours.
>
> "We are a people," [I said.] "We are a tribe. We bring our dead. If tradition has to be broken, then I will break it. Nobody will stop us from burying our own among the people where they belong. The time for hiding ourselves and our dead is past. The time for burying them in some anonymous cemetery is over." (364-5)

In spite of Michael's determination, however, the procession cannot merely enter as it pleases. Outsiders must be welcomed onto the marae; without a welcome, their presence is not legitimate, and so Waka's procession is reliant on the support and welcome of someone from his family or iwi in order to be recognized and to complete their journey. By submitting to this requirement of recognition and welcome, Ihimaera's characters acknowledge that they are not willing to break with their families, with their relatives, and—in spite of Michael's statement that he will break tradition if need be—with tradition. Family connections are essential to Maori culture, as Ranginui Walker notes:

> The searches for loved ones [in Maori legends] by heroic figures establish the bonds between parents, children, siblings and spouses as the most significant relationships in Maori culture. (22)

The gay Maoris in this new tribe are committed to the importance of existing family connections even while they are making new ones.

Though they must wait for quite some time without welcome, Waka's grandmother Lilly finally acknowledges the ope. That it is the grandmother who welcomes them is significant. For one, age conveys a certain mana within society. Moreover, in Maori society, the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is extremely important; often it is the grandparents who are responsible for educating—and sometimes even raising—their grandchildren (mokopuna).

> [The boy's grandmother] straightened up. She looked at us. I think we probably gave her a bit of a shock. She knew we had brought Waka's body back, but she was trying to figure out some tribal reference point [to welcome us properly]... E hika, we were like no tribe she had ever seen. Ah well—
>
> Lilly raised her right arm…
>
> "Welcome to this marae," Lilly called. "Welcome you strange tribe I see before me! Come forward, you tribe of men who love men and women who love women! Welcome, you brave gay tribe, whom none have seen before! Come! Bring your dead who is also our dead—"
>
> Our tribe was born that day. It was born out of a grandmother's compulsion to take her grandchild back to her bosom. Out of a need to accept that a new tribe was coming. That day we signaled, "Make way, we are coming through."
>
> We would not be stopped. (364-365)

The welcome from Waka's grandmother is thus a further acknowledgement of Maori traditions. The existence of this new gay tribe, and the change that it signals in the lives of all Maoris, is due both to international experiences and to the reclaimed history of gay Maoris.

The past, in the form of ancestors, is vital to the new gay tribe which is being formed not out of a void but out of a combination of many genealogies, both physical and spiritual. "The past is not behind us," Roimata explains, "It is before us, a long line of ancestors to whom we are accountable and with whom we have an implicit contract" (326). Michael's ability to reimagine Maori traditions stems in part from his awareness that he has historical precursors like his uncle, and he feels a great responsibility to recover the history and memory of Sam that has been erased from his family:

> Grandfather Arapeta had consigned Uncle Sam to Te Kore, The Void. He had disconnected him from the umbilical cord of whakapapa,[23] and sent him falling head over heels like a spaceman trailing his severed lifeline through a dark and hostile universe to oblivion.
>
> This was how it was done to all gay men and women. But if we were lucky, oh if we were lucky, someone remembered who we were. Someone stopped us from becoming invisible. Expunged from memory. Deleted from the text. (322)

Sam's experience here stands in for that of other gay Maoris. The implication, first presented in Michael's speech before the Indigenous conference assembly, is that gay

[23] Whakapapa: Genealogy, family history.

Maoris have existed throughout Maori history but that their existence has been continually denied. When he initially comes out, for example, Michael is told that there has never been anyone like him in their family. Only his aunt's decision to honor her brother's memory reveals to Michael that this is a lie: there *has* been someone like him in their family, his uncle Sam. The novel demonstrates—with recourse not only to international Indigenous communities but also to specific stories from Maori history and legend—that acceptance and celebration of gay Maori history are possible without abandoning Maori traditions, as long as there are people like Lilly who are willing to make and accept changes.

The new ideas Michael brings back from the Canadian conference challenge his iwi's traditions; as they challenge the culture, they also strengthen it, ensuring its continued vitality. The new ideas are absorbed into Maori traditions and in the process, they are "Maorified," becoming Maori rather than foreign. Thus Ihimaera makes the point that, like all cultures, Maori culture is still developing and changing. While such cultural dynamism seems a commonsense notion, Indigenous cultures are often viewed as timeless and unchanging, and some Indigenous activists have embraced this stereotype in their fight against perceived "outside" forces like homosexuality or feminism. The gay iwi, and the cultural challenges it represents, assert the mutability of culture and the importance of an acceptance that goes beyond mere tolerance. It also serves as an illustration of the force of history and transnationalism in Indigenous cultures and in Indigenous literatures.

CONCLUSION

When I first planned this project, I had four chapters in mind. The first three are the ones present here: one on Canadian Cherokee author Thomas King, one on U.S. Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko, and one on Maori author Witi Ihimaera, from Aotearoa New Zealand. The planned fourth chapter was to focus on Aboriginal Australian writing, in particular the poetry of Lionel Fogarty. Fogarty's work is both lyrical and radical, and reaches out to a range of colonized and oppressed groups, including Indigenous groups and African Americans. In fact, the African American civil rights movement is frequently referred to not only in Fogarty's work but in that of other Aboriginal Australian writers, where it often is framed as an inspiration for their own struggle. Why the African American civil rights movement played such a relatively large role in the imagination of Indigenous Australians, far larger than in Maori or Indigenous American writings, is an interesting question, and one I intended to explore further in the planned fourth chapter. However, since finishing the first three chapters, I have realized that my plans for the fourth chapter reflect a limitation in my conception of Indigenous internationalism.

Internationalism in an Indigenous context is not defined by the boundaries of nation-states. Nevertheless, the chapters I have written are organized not just according to the Indigenous nation to which the authors belong, but also according to the nation-states within whose boundaries the authors live. Implicit in this organization is the notion that nation-states are more significant in defining identity than tribal nations. While that implication is by no means intentional, it does serve to illustrate the depth of colonial

narratives that devalue tribal sovereignty and which consider Indigenous nations to be, in the words of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Worcester v. Georgia*, "domestic dependent nations."

As I now recognize the unspoken implication of my selection of authors, incorporating another nation-state into this project would only reinforce the unintentional focus on the nation-state. Therefore, rather than looking at Lionel Fogarty, it would be valuable for the project as a whole to examine writings by Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) authors, in particular Gerald Vizenor, Louise Erdrich, and Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, as well as a historical component addressing the work of George Copway. As Akiwenzie-Damm is also the editor of *skins*, the first anthology of Indigenous writing to describe itself as consciously international, this chapter would also address the subject of anthologies, which represent a literary demonstration of cross-cultural, international contacts.

The Anishinaabe have a long tradition of travel and migration. Traditional stories say that the origins of the Anishinaabe are in the Great Lakes area, where their communities are currently located, but these stories also say that the people were forced to leave their homeland a long time ago because they angered the Creator. The Anishinaabe migrated eastward all the way to the shores of the Atlantic, where they lived for some time. Many years later, a sacred *miigis* shell appeared to lead them back to the land of their origin; a prophet told the people that they would know they had arrived in their homeland because it was the place where food grew on water—a reference to wild rice. The traditional story tells of a migration that lasts a long time; the community stopped in numerous places, as they were told to do by the *miigis*, and while many of

these places are outside of the boundaries of contemporary Anishinaabe communities, they remain significant today.

Anishinaabe authors were also among the earliest Indigenous people of the Americas to travel to Europe and publish about their travel experiences. In 1851, George Copway published *Running Sketches of Men and Places in England, France, Germany, Belgium and Scotland*, which describes his travels to and in Europe. Copway was born in 1818 in Canada as Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh. At age 16, Copway joined missionaries to learn to spread the gospel to the Ojibwe, and in 1838 – the year of the Cherokee Trail of Tears – began his formal education at a missionary school in Illinois. Ten years later, he published his first and most well known book, *The Life, History and Travels of Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh (George Copway), a Young Indian Chief of the Ojebwa Nation, . . . A Sketch of the Present State of the Ojebwa Nation, in Regard to Christianity and Their Future Prospects*. Copway's belief in the importance of Christianity and education for Native Americans assured him an attentive and sympathetic audience for each of the three editions that was published (two in the US and one in Britain).

Copway's personal identification was complex, as he belonged to three different nations: the U.S., Canada, and the Anishinaabe nation. His travel narrative, in particular, evokes how his national identities shift. For example, in describing his feelings upon leaving America, Copway several times invokes his love for his "native land." On the first page of the narrative, he tells us,

> The fact of leaving my native land seems now a reality. The suggestions which were then made as a means of preparation, have been attended to -

> and now I am going to a country where the people will be strangers to me, and whose language will be different from mine – whose habits and manners will be altogether their own.

Copway's invocation of "native land" is a complex one that resonates with the multiple identities contained in his multiple names—George Copway and Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh—and in his multiple citizenships. Before he leaves Boston Harbor he makes it clear that "native land" means the land of the Anishinaabe; Boston and New York, for example, where he stays en route to Europe, are explicitly not his native land. Upon hearing of the death of U.S. President Taylor, Copway writes,

> [Hearing a commotion outside,] I could distinguish the following sad sentences, 'The president is dead! He died last evening.' Then General Zachariah Taylor is no more! and we shall take to Europe the news of his death. My only wish on hearing of this event was for his safety; and I hoped the Great Spirit had forgiven him for killing so many of the red men of my country." (13)

Copway clearly uses the terms *my country* in opposition to Taylor's country. Implicit, though never explicit, is Copway's identification with the "red men's" country and not with the United States. It is also worth noting that in identifying the "red man" as his people, rather than just the Anishinaabe, he may be gesturing toward pan-tribalism.

Once he has left the shores of the U.S., however, Copway's affiliation shifts dramatically. The passage where he loses sight of the American land itself is fascinating, and worth quoting at length:

> The last thing I could see in the distance was the Bunker Hill Monument, which appeared to tower over all the surrounding country. This column was reared in commemoration of a battle, and in honor of men who fought bravely for their firesides, while they expelled the red man from his native soil. The day I hope is not far distant when the cause of Humanity will be blessed with the men who will change this spirit of hero-worship into adoration for everything noble and elevating. Then shall columns devoted to the Prince of Peace arise one after another to the clouds, which shall be like beacon lights in the highway of Progress for the generations yet to come.
>
> The rocky Islands loomed far off in our view, and soon nothing but the dark outline of the land could be seen – and still I gazed and gazed, and when it had become concealed from sight, I could with a heart full of affection for my native land, say –
>
> "America, America! Heaven's blessing attend her!
> While we live we will cherish, and love, and defend her.
> Tho' the scorner may sneer at, and witlings defame her,
> Our hearts swell with gladness whenever we name her." 16-17

(There are other such poems elsewhere in the book, and in the context of the whole it is clear that the sentiments expressed here are not meant ironically.) While Boston is in view, Copway is reminded constantly of the injustice done to his people by the United States. Only when the country fades out of view completely is it possible for him to

idealize it and to wax romantic not about the hills and valleys of his childhood in Anishinaabe territory (as he does earlier in the book), but about *America*. Only when it is not visible, when it is relegated to the realm of ideals, does Copway feel he belongs to the U.S. Copway thus belongs *to* an idealized America, but he does not belong *in* the real America.

As he travels through Europe, he frequently implies that Europeans lack manners, suggesting that the French and English are less civilized than he is, though he is careful not to say such a thing outright. He prefers to use irony and sarcasm to make his point, as when he describes his reaction to being given a letter to be opened only when he is halfway across the Atlantic.

> I have had my curiosity excited to know what was in it, for an Indian has *some* curiosity, though he does not show it by opening his eyes and mouth unmercifully, as refined and polite nations do, who have more manners than the red man. (32)

The sarcasm here is hardly veiled, but is couched in Copway's typical disingenuous description of his own lack of civilization.

The book is full of such moments, Copway noting with practiced astonishment the odd behaviors of the supposedly more civilized peoples. Of the German hills he passes, he notes that "Tales and Legends are told at each crevice of the rocks. Wonders and displays of miraculous power, and a great deal of superstition, much more than the North American Indian ever had" (201). Copway is dismantling the myth of European superiority. He is not trying to suggest that the Europeans are uncivilized savages, as the

negative qualities he mentions tend to be balanced by the positive attributes he also ascribes to the people and countries he visits. Nevertheless, he has a keen eye for hypocrisy and falsehood, and it is clear that he finds the belief in European superiority to be both. Moreover, by his refusal to be so impolite as to say so directly, he appears to take the high road, while nevertheless demonstrating the truth as he sees it to his readers. Indians, the readers learn from this unique travel narrative, are no more and no less civilized than Germans, Belgians, or the English – and as his target audience was not his fellow Indians, but Europeans and Euroamericans, they probably benefited from the reminder.

In the end, Copway insists on the equality of Indians to the other nations he visits, and this equality also means the right to self-determination for Indian peoples. Copway hopes for a separate Indian state on the Western border of the U.S., and part of his European journey involves raising funds to purchase land for the creation of this state. But even without such political self-determination, Copway demonstrates the value and importance of Anishinaabe culture in his own life. He emphasizes the importance of missionaries and trade schools to teach Native Americans the values of white society, but he also insists that these teachings are actually in keeping with Native traditions—one need not supplant the other. At a time when the choice many saw for Indians was to assimilate or perish, Copway was suggesting a third way: to maintain traditional culture *and* learn more from the whites.

He illustrates this possibility by quoting a letter to his father, which he quite naturally has written in Anishinaabe. Including the Anishinaabe text in the book, he suddenly breaks off after two sentences and notes in parentheses,

> (I had better not write this letter in Indian, on the pages of this book, for fear some one will come on me for damages for the breaking of his jaw while trying to speak the words.) (39-40)

He then offers the "interpretation" – he does *not* say translation – of these two sentences. This insertion of the Anishinaabe text is a remarkable moment of insistence to his white readership that, even though he is mission-school educated and has traveled across Europe and America, he is still very much part of an Anishinaabe world. Moreover, the text is a reminder to white readers that his world is one to which they have access to only when he chooses to interpret it for them.

As Copway travels through the various territories of his colonial experience, his resolute and constant identification of himself as Anishinaabe first and foremost represents a clear challenge to assimilationist politics. Intriguingly, however, Copway was not a proponent of Anishinaabe sovereignty; rather, he supported the creation of a tribal nation on the West Coast, to which Indians of all tribes would be moved. This proposal was largely a pragmatic one, as Copway recognized that Native peoples were being driven off their lands by increasing numbers of white settlers. But it may also reflect the prominence of communal migration in traditional Anishinaabe stories, as well as an early pantribal orientation.

Turning to more contemporary writers, mixedblood Anishinaabe author Gerald Vizenor often invokes the power and importance of travel as well as motion more generally. Vizenor views himself as a trickster, and identifies the trickster with fluidity rather than fixedness. The trickster, in his ability to challenge assumptions and remain in motion, never the same, can be a fundamental challenge to colonial, categorizing discourse.

"Terminal creeds" is Vizenor's term for static belief systems that do not allow for motion or change, and which rely on an ability to place people in fixed categories. Colonialism in particular is a terminal creed, for it relies on an "order" that it imposes on the world. In Vizenor's view, trickster discourse inherently resists these "terminal creeds," for the trickster is a vagabond and is constantly in motion. In a discussion with Dr. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, Vizenor explains,

> A trickster is not a person, it's a literary figure, a character of the imagination, not a real person. … A trickster is not a representation and it can't be defined structurally or causally. It can't be known. I'm convinced that anything that becomes easily defined, and whose causes are established in some interesting and convincing way…that it's lucid or knowable – will instantly be commercialized and become the mundane.

The trickster resists definition, and is constantly in flux; motion and mobility is central to the trickster, and to Vizenor's texts as a whole.

Travel, too, plays an important part in Vizenor's work; his first novel, the *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles* (first published as *Darkness in St. Louis Bearheart*

in 1978), involves characters journeying from the northern U.S. to New Mexico. In the postapocalyptic narrative, people survive in part through the telling of stories, and travel is vital in finding new stories:

> Oral traditions were honored. Families welcomed the good tellers of stories… The listeners traveled with the tellers through the frames of time and place. The telling was in the listening. (162)

Moreover, the novel's chaotic setting, in which the U.S. government has collapsed in part due to its abuse and over-use of natural resources, would make an interesting comparison with *Almanac of the Dead*. Vizenor's novel *Griever: An America Monkey King in China* (1990) features a Native American protagonist living in China, and is an extended meditation on the similarities that connect the Anishinaabe trickster tradition with Chinese stories of the Monkey King. Meanwhile, *Heirs of Columbus* (1991) hinges on the notion that tribal people from the Americas voyaged to Europe before Columbus—and that Columbus himself is a Mayan traveler who, rather than "discovering" the Americas, is returning home.

Vizenor in particular is also wary of pantribalism, as he believes it often subscribes to the romantic notion of the stereotypical Indian that has no basis in reality. In *Fugitive Poses,* Vizenor critiques Native writers and activists who buy into and support the dominant discursive formation of the *Indian*, those he refers to as the "indian kitschymen" (39). Those who rely not on tribal identities but on a pantribal identity that is an invention of colonialism are parodied in a story in his episodic novel *Trickster of Liberty: Tribal Heirs to a Wild Baronage* (1988).

> De Fountain was an urban pantribal radical and dealer in cocaine. His tribal career unfolded in prison, where he studied tribal philosophies and blossomed when he was paroled in braids and a bone choker. He bore a dark cultural frown, posed as a new colonial victim and learned his racial diatribes in church basements. The race to represent the poor started with loose money and ran down to the end with loose power. (111)

Vizenor nonetheless has sympathy for the "urban pantribal radical," and once idolized Dennis Banks, one of the founders of the American Indian Movement. In the essay "Confrontation Heroes" in *Tribal Scenes and Ceremonies*, Vizenor offers a compelling and problematizing description of the transformation of the business-suited Dennis Banks to the choker-wearing Indian warrior Dennis Banks. But overall, in his depictions of the pantribal, internationalist activists of the American Indian Movement, Vizenor is wary of the "terminal creeds" they represent, the static, unchanging Indian they choose to represent.

Vizenor's caution vis-à-vis the potential pitfalls of a pantribal or internationalist Indian identity offers a reminder that, in order to effectively counter colonialist narratives, Indigenous internationalism must be rooted in a firm local center, and must critically engage stereotypical views of Indigenous people (which, as Silko demonstrates, are not the exclusive provenance of non-Natives). Vizenor's use of stories and oral storytelling techniques further emphasizes the importance of mobility and travel in traditional Anishinaabe culture as well as their ongoing significance today.

Finally, looking far into the future, this project will lay the groundwork for a book about with Native American travel narratives and their place within the field of Native American literature and the travel writing genre. By narrowing the focus to individual travel narratives, I will be able to explore how these memoirs of travel challenge the conventions of the travel narrative and how their inclusion in the canon can broaden the scope of Indigenous literature. The experiences of Native authors as they move away from and, in many cases, back toward their home can illuminate not only the importance of mobility and travel, but of place and home: exploring routes to understand roots.

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