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Decolonizing Utopia: Indigenous Knowledge and Dystopian Speculative Fiction

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

by

Mary Irene Morrison

December 2017

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Sherryl Vint, Chairperson
Dr. David Lloyd
Dr. Weihsin Gui
Dr. Nalo Hopkinson

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The Dissertation of Mary Irene Morrison is approved:

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This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory of Tynesha "Lovely" Davis, comrade and scholar of dystopian fiction.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Decolonizing Utopia: Indigenous Knowledge and Dystopian Speculative Fiction

by

Mary Irene Morrison

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in English
University of California, Riverside, December 2017
Dr. Sherryl Vint, Chairperson

In a time of increasing inequality and ecological crisis, it seems more difficult than ever to imagine a more just and equitable world, where humanity's penchant for invention leads to better societies, rather than destroyed environments. Yet it is also conversely more necessary to do so, because such an imagination can become an inspiration for social change.

This dissertation first examines how the techno-utopian imagination of even the most politically engaged European/Western science fiction (sf) writers is often problematic, in that it can perpetuate the utopian genre's centuries-long entanglement with colonialism (dating back to colonial themes in Thomas More's *Utopia* [1516]). This entanglement is prevalent for example in the biomedical science fictional imagination of Hollywood, as represented by the film *Elysium*, which imagines advanced medical technology and a class struggle to distribute it more equitably. Yet the film requires a White Savior (Matt Damon) to lead mostly poor people of color to revolution. Other problematic tropes abound in the genre, including alien Others as Indigenes in a primitive utopia, for example in *Avatar*. The technoscientific imagination advanced in sf with

utopian themes is also coopted by corporations, who use utopian rhetoric to mask exploitation and environmental degradation. For example, Monsanto justifies the use of pesticides that harm people and the environment, by arguing that their advancements will "feed the world" now and into the future.

This study then looks at the depiction of Indigenous sciences and knowledges in utopian/dystopian science fiction, in contrast to the techno-utopianism of Western science and science fiction. I study how Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), Nalo Hopkinson (Afro-Caribbean), Thomas King (Cherokee), Larissa Sansour (Palestinian), and others imagine Indigenous philosophies of science, specifically how these approaches can address the world's most pressing problems, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and inequality — while maintaining healthy and just societies. The fourth chapter for example focuses on Gerald Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus*, a novel featuring a utopian reservation where Indigenous scientists heal genetic trauma resulting from colonialism. I show how Vizenor offers a decolonized view of utopia, through the potential and priorities of an approach to biotechnology informed by Indigenous philosophies.

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Introduction

One afternoon during an uncharacteristically dry, hot summer in 2017, a group of Native Americans and their non-Native allies gathered outside the Tacoma Municipal Courthouse in protest. This protest was in support of a group of non-Native allies who had chained themselves to construction equipment, in a continuation of months of actions meant to stop construction of a fossil fuel facility being built on Puyallup Tribal and ancestral lands.

At the event, Paul "Cheoketen" Wagner of the Vancouver Island Saanich tribe, increasingly a fixture at these events, spoke about the pan-tribal concept of natural law and the responsibilities of tribes living on the Salish Sea to protect the life that lives on and near the water. He argued that the Tacoma Municipal Court did not have sovereign jurisdiction over the actions of these protestors, and rejected colonial law in favor of natural laws passed down to him over generations, originally given to many Indigenous peoples by the Creator. These laws dictated not only relations between individuals in community and between other communities, but also relations between humans and the environment, of which Indigenous North Americans are stewards. For the centuries that the many tribes living around the Puget Sound and greater Salish Sea lived before colonization, he said, "this was paradise." Other Puyallup Tribe members echoed his statements, telling stories of when the salmon were so thick in waterways that you could literally walk across the water.

These speeches and others (ongoing at events as I write this) constitute the building of a hopeful narrative that is reflected in the dystopian fiction I study: Indigenous peoples have scientific knowledges and philosophies that can help solve the world's most pressing problems. Indigenous knowledges are typically undermined by Western narratives that depict Indigenous cultures as pastoral, simple cultures in harmony with nature only because they are lucky enough to live in environments that sustain life without effort — this is a colonial myth. When Wagner uses the term "paradise," it does not reflect a passive, pastoral utopia of Indigenes but a better society than Western "democracy" *because* of its scientific and cultural sophistication. In the case of Wagner's activism, the problems to be solved are climate change and biodiversity loss. And this argument is extended in an academic context as well. Gregory Cajete and other Indigenous scholars show how Indigenous knowledges can inform medical advances, for example. More broadly they argue that Indigenous cultures offer systems of government that cleave toward balance and equality, alternatives to the systems that have led to our capitalist, dystopian moment.

The narrative of global capitalist progress that Wagner and others criticize is reinforced in and influenced by most mainstream science and speculative fiction (sf).[1] Futuristic utopian technologies hold out hope of making our lives easier, safer, and

[1] I generally consider the debate over the terms "speculative" versus "science" fiction not material to this discussion, and use the term "sf," which can mean both. Simply put, science fiction could be thought as a subgenre of speculative fiction that is more concerned with the ways science and technology affect what it means to be human. Speculative fiction is a generally future-oriented genre that examines trends in social and cultural change. For a discussion of the necessity of avoiding strict definitions in subgenres such as science fiction and fantasy, see China Miéville "Cognition as Ideology."

longer, and are sometimes used to justify the hegemony of the West as the creator of these technologies. Capitalism appropriates this techno-scientific imagination; Monsanto can feed the world, green technology companies will innovate us out of climate change, genetics companies will cure diseases. But rather than delivering on these promises, the rhetoric of such companies tends to justify continued colonial oppression and exploitation of the earth and life on it. Further, it masks the fact that "progress" benefits primarily only those of European descent, and only a select few of them at that.

This study is concerned with alternative visions of the future and the failed promises of Western science and technology, as expressed in contemporary dystopian fiction that is either written by Indigenous peoples — the genre known as Indigenous futurism — or otherwise contains postcolonial themes. The works I discuss first reveal our dystopian moment as a product of colonialism, appropriating the historically Western-colonial genres of science fiction and utopia for this purpose. Then these same texts consider utopia and future technology in anticolonial ways,[2] situated in the authors' own relations to colonialism, and centering the knowledge and sciences of subaltern peoples.

Theoretical Background

"All organizing is science fiction," says Walidah Imarisha in her introduction to the short story collection, *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice*

[2] Generally I use the term "postcolonial" to define a genre of literature or branch of theory, as well as the changed relations of colonialism in the context of globalization. In contrast, "anticolonial" defines a sentiment within the works I study that reflects active efforts to resist colonialism, including to decolonize spaces.

Movements. She continues: "Organizers and activists dedicate their lives to creating and envisioning another world, or many other worlds—so what better venue for organizers to explore their work than science fiction stories?" (3). *Octavia's Brood* focuses on movements and fiction by people of color in the United States, but its implications are global. While Imarisha does not acknowledge the utopian aspect of her statement, she does illustrate perfectly the role science fiction can play in "the decolonization of the imagination" (4).[3] Imarisha's contention that science fiction (or speculative fiction more broadly) is integral to projects of decolonization—and that these projects involve imagining a better world—is a major inspiration and justification for writing this dissertation within the fields of postcolonial and settler colonial theory, and two subfields of science/speculative fiction studies (sfs): utopian studies and the emerging study of Indigenous futurisms.

Postcolonial & Settler Colonial Theory

Postcolonialism as a theory first situates global power inequality between the so-called first and third worlds in a historical context: European colonialism instituted a program of settlement and resource extraction in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, that enriched Europeans while it devastated Indigenous peoples' lives, communities, and environments. The "post" in "postcolonialism," as Stuart Hall and others observe, does not imply that this is over, but rather that historical colonialism continues to inform the

[3] Elsewhere she rejects the concept of utopia, defining it as perfection akin to heaven ("Science fiction and social justice"). This seems somewhat contradictory given that the title of her collection is a tribute to Black sf writer Octavia Butler, whose *Parable of the Sower* imagines a utopian community created from a failing, dystopian one.

conditions of globalization and inequality. One can argue that postcolonial studies has an innate affinity with utopian studies in many aspects, because it is a project that identifies the problems with our world with a view towards radically changing it. However, "utopia" is traditionally considered a naive concept in the field (following Marxism), such that the term is usually used in a derogatory manner.[4]

This study will focus on Settler Colonial Theory (SCT), a newly delineated branch of Postcolonial studies. SCT is at its core aligned with the basic tenets of postcolonial theory, and takes as its point of departure the fact that, as famously stated by Patrick Wolfe, "settler colonization [is] a structure rather than event" ("Settler Colonization," 390). It separates the idea of settler colonialism from the more extensively studied franchise colonialism. A settler colony entails the permanent settlement of a group of people, who appropriate land and have at least some degree of local governance based on a shared ideology, often informed by religion and/or ethnic or national identity. Land ownership is of paramount concern. In contrast, a franchise colony is one centered around resource extraction, where government administrators generally are not permanent residents; usually, they establish an administrative class of Indigenous peoples, such as the colony the British imposed in India. These aspects sometimes overlap, but the key factor is that settler colonialism *rarely* ends, that is, the United

[4] To give a few examples in founding texts: Spivak likens "utopian politics" to the "essentialism" of first world theorists Deleuze and Foucault, who situate "the Other" in the third world (276). Fanon refers to a potential Pan-African revolution as a "utopia" using quotation marks, indicating the unlikeness of its realization (110). Edward Said is a notable exception that I discuss in Chapter 1.

Kingdom (including the British occupation of Scotland and Ireland), the United States, Israel, and Australia, were and still are settler colonizer countries.

SCT is further defined by foundational theorist Patrick Wolfe as having the following essential characteristics: it is premised on the idea that the land to be settled is empty, or "*terra nullius,*" and ready for colonization, despite the fact that this perceived "natural" land was actually developed by Indigenous peoples (*Traces of History* 23). The logic of elimination of the Native is crucial in the settler colony as opposed to franchise colonies, and it is to be achieved through a variety of means, including by enslavement, removal from land, and assimilation. Further, Wolfe shows through a comparative study of settler colonies, including the US and Australia, that processes of racialization of non-Europeans are paramount in settler colonization, and vary based on the needs of those Europeans who administer a particular area. Also important to this study is the way that European settler colonizers espoused "manifest destiny," or the idea that God meant them to expand Westward from Europe, not only to the Americas but beyond, and to dominate "inferior races." We can see manifest destiny and the idea that Europeans (and their science and technologies) are superior as an underlying ideology behind globalization. But for Wolfe, manifest destiny is not the end of racialization but accounts for the continuing unequal distribution of global power: he demonstrates that post-frontier and post-emancipation societies intensify racialization (including juridical) because settlers must rationalize inequality when slavery and the "outside" of the frontier no longer delineate racial boundaries. Racialization is thus a colonial *and* a postcolonial process. Wolfe also highlights the ways that all "modalities of settler colonialism ... come back to

the issue of land" (34). That is, the settler deploys various ways of elimination and assimilation — forced labor, forced removals, homicide, parceling community land into family holdings, miscegenation, religious conversion, boarding schools, and so forth — to take land from Indigenous peoples.

Land is a central issue for colonizer and colonized alike. To the settler colonizer, land is viewed primarily as a resource for profit and expansion/perpetuation of European society. By contrast, for Indigenous peoples, especially in North America, land is of paramount importance as the spiritual home of peoples. Cajete explains the "spirit of place," defined as the "ecological relationship borne of intimate familiarity with the homeland, and the homeland became an extension of the 'great holy' in perceptions, heart, mind, and soul of the people." Cajete goes on to cement this relationship in terms of loss of land during colonization: "It is easy to understand why Indigenous people around the world lamented the loss of their land for it was a loss of part of themselves" (94). For Cajete and others, land is part of the way Indigenous peoples perceive the world, a central aspect of their epistemologies; because this importance is reflected in decolonized conceptualizations of utopia, land and land use is also a central aspect of this project, in particular in Chapters 2 and 3.

I focus on SCT in part because "utopia" as a blueprint society has strong settler colonial implications that I draw on for this study: both historically and contemporarily in countries like Israel, the colonizer comes to build utopia on Indigenous land, through violent dispossession. Western utopian imaginings tend toward the homogenous, privileging Whiteness and European culture, and erasing cultural difference by

assimilation. As Lorenzo Varanine says, "decolonization of settler colonial forms needs to be imagined before it is practiced" (108). SCT shows how colonialism is still very much present with us, and its power structures must be understood differently in settler colonial contexts, whose founding ideologies are utopian in nature. While Settler Colonial Theory may be inadequate in that it privileges "the settler" as the point of reference, and perpetuates the binary of colonizer/colonized, my study seeks to counter this by reading mostly texts by Indigenous peoples, and mostly in the Americas.[5] My two main exceptions are works that are demonstrably aware of their status as colonizer texts and are critical of colonial politics, and I do not seek to set up a strict binary of colonizer vs. colonized authors.

My use of an SCT theoretical lens is enhanced, especially in Chapter 2, by the work of Indigenous science scholars such as Gregory Cajete and Leroy Little Bear, who argue that Indigenous scientific and cultural practices — sometimes referred to as "natural law" — are sophisticated and important in their own right, developed over millennia to survive and thrive as communities in complex environments.[6] Further, they argue that Indigenous sciences, especially sustainability and agriculture sciences, offer

[5] O'Brien argues that despite his theory's usefulness, Wolfe overreaches, "allowing the reading to conclude that the colonial logics produced the desired outcome of assimilation rather than allowing for diverse strategies of Indigenous resistance" ("Tracing Settler Colonialism" 253). I also counter this overreach through a commitment to reading sf texts through Indigenous Studies scholarship.

[6] Indigenous sciences have been developed through trial and error, including devastating errors, such as deforestation, and are not to be considered perfect or finished, as with any scientific field of study. Cajete discusses several contemporary practices for discerning environmental problems and solutions, including spiritual ceremonies meant to help people "come to terms [with] one's relationship to other life" (117), and develop respect and gratitude toward life-sustaining plants.

great hope for both preventing climate change, and for surviving in an already changing climate. Indeed, Little Bear, in his forward to Cajete's *Native Science,* espouses the powerful potential of uniting Western and Indigenous sciences to combat the urgent problem climate change, and offers a ray of hope in such uncertain times that is nothing if not utopian at the level of global collectivity.

Speculative Fiction & Utopian Studies

Speculative fiction imagines our world differently in order to grasp the complexities of the human condition. Darko Suvin, in discussing science fiction specifically, famously calls this "cognitive estrangement:" sf it is not so much about technology itself, or aliens or time travel, but rather uses these tropes to think about culture, politics, the nature of humans as tool users, etc. — this definition generally extends to speculative fiction, a term more suited to encompassing future-oriented works that may not focus on science and technology. Sf author Samuel R. Delany argues that sf is not even *about* the future, but that it is usually set there to ponder the future implications of society's present problems. SF is a way of working in the present to make the kind of future we want to see (or to warn about a future we don't want to see).

Utopias are by definition speculative in nature, and utopian fiction can be considered a subgenre of speculative fiction. Utopian Studies revolves around the central question: What do we mean by "utopia?" It is a term much maligned across the Western political spectrum, though it is still a fundamentally Western concept, and the field of Utopian Studies is dominated by Western theorists. In *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary*

Reconstitution of Society, Ruth Levites summarizes contemporary utopian scholarship of the last half-century or so, which has generally been critical of capitalism in a Marxist tradition. She rejects the idea, commonly touted by detractors, that "utopia" is a static, totalitarian society, or a "blueprint." Instead, she argues that utopia is a method, a way to "develop alternative possible scenarios for the future and open these up to public debate and democratic decision—insisting always on the provisionally, reflexivity and contingency of what we are able to imagine" (19). Utopia in other words is fluid, emergent. Levitas argues that we have an imperative to first refuse that this capitalist, globalized world is the best of all possible worlds; to then imagine a better world (with the knowledge that this imagination is incomplete); and finally to actively work toward implementing that imagination, through, to begin with, a number of socialist programs.

As Jameson argues forcefully in "Progress versus Utopia, or, Can We Imagine the Future?", utopia cannot be imagined from within Western culture; it is so totalizing on a global scale, so limits our thinking that it is impossible. Still, as utopian scholars like Robert Tally argue, building from Jameson's work, the postmodern era is the most important time to imagine utopia, even if it is also the most impossible, because we must imagine radical alternatives to the capitalist world system. Further, Tally argues that if utopia is a literary process of mapping the world around us and a guide for operating within it, rather than simply an "ideal society" of another place or time — we then find that "[u]topia is everywhere today" (9). We find utopia where communities — especially communities of color, as Imarisha highlights — self-organize in ways that resist power. And it follows, I would argue, that if Western thought is so totalizing that we can't

imagine utopia, then people outside Western hegemonic power structures would likely be well-placed to transform the utopian imagination, to decolonize it, in ways that Jameson does not account for. This "utopia from below" is indeed everywhere today.

Utopian Studies defines "utopian fiction" loosely as well, though its historical connotations are distinctly colonial. While the term "utopia" predates Western thought, it was popularized in the West through what is arguably the first science fiction book of the Western world, Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516). More inaugurated the "blueprint utopia" format; he took advantage of the excitement Europeans felt over early explorations of the New World to imagine an explorer discovering a society that, while in some ways better than our own, is not perfect (and aspects of it are downright totalitarian). However, rather than define utopian fiction stringently as a blueprint society, as most early utopias were, utopian fiction can be more broadly considered any work that posits a world that is better than our own.

Expanding on what counts as utopian fiction still further, we can identify "utopian traces," or hints at the possibility of creating a better world (a term coined by the early utopian theorist Ernst Bloch that heavily influences Levitas and others), in most fiction and art, not just science fiction. Phillip Wegner argues that it is the job of sf texts to represent a moment of "dramatic break in the status quo," in contrast to other fiction that represents and interrogates a given social and cultural moment. This means that utopian ideas are inherent in the sf genre. Wegner argues that “the most concrete manifestation of any sf narrative’s Utopianism is to be located in those moments wherein the closure of the conventional realist work is displaced by an openness to the unfinished potential of

historical becoming" (49-50). The argument advanced by much of the fiction I study — that Indigenous philosophies and sciences are integral to imagining a better world — represents such a break in the status quo, a challenge to the primacy of Western philosophy and science, even though few of the works I study actually depict better, utopian societies.

Dystopias can be defined as societies that are meant to be utopian, but are so only for a select few, while the majority of people remain oppressed; often these societies are totalitarian in nature. The texts I study here would primarily be described as "critical dystopias," a term coined by Tom Moylan. For Moylan, "critical utopias" describe sf from the late 20th century that rejects the idea of utopia as blueprint, and tries to imagine a better world in the context of Marxist (or other left-philosophies) principles of freedom and justice. Meanwhile, "critical dystopias" respond to capitalist market ideologies such as neoliberalism, which are alternately "pseudo-utopian" and "anti-utopian," because they hold that "a viable market-driven society" can only be achieved by dismantling welfare and other social support systems and destroying the environment (185-6). Critical dystopias first "linger in the terrors of the present" (199) bringing a feminist and anti-racist perspective to the anti-utopia of capitalist ideology. But then they explore "ways to change the present system so that such culturally and economically marginalized peoples not only survive but also try to move toward creating a social reality that is shaped by an impulse to human self-determination and ecological health" (189), and in their open endings offer a utopian hope. I enhance Moylan's analysis by looking specifically at Indigenous-authored dystopian fiction and dystopian fiction with Indigenous themes,

focusing my analysis on how neoliberalism and the destruction it has wrought specifically impacts Indigenous peoples, and how they respond to it.

Postcolonial SFS & Indigenous Futurisms

There is a growing body of postcolonial studies of sf, including those that engage with utopian/dystopian works, such that postcolonial science fiction studies could be considered a new subfield of SFS—and this study would fall into it. The most important example is John Rieder's *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*, on which this study draws heavily. Rieder looks at early American sf, which is coterminous with colonialism, and persuasively argues that colonialism is "woven into the texture" of the genre. Another antecedent to this study is Eric Smith's *Globalization, Utopia and Postcolonial Science Fiction: New Maps of Hope*. Smith focuses on the emergence of science fiction in the so-called third world and how it challenges the institutional limits of postcolonial readings of "first world" sf. Smith's work is very closely aligned with my project, though I intend to conduct a more systematic engagement within the context of settler colonialism, and with more attention to Indigenous science and philosophy.

Utopia is recognized as a historically colonial project by postcolonial sf scholars. Karl Hardy, in his excellent essay on the historical-colonial roots of "utopia" and the tentative possibilities of its use in Indigenous politics, cites research that Thomas More's *Utopia* may have been the first instance of the Roman word *colonia* in the English language. Hardy also points out that More's utopians are colonists themselves, who conquer lands near their island when necessary, and kill or "civilize" others when they are

deemed to be using the land improperly (125). Early fictional utopias, the Christian utopias of the pre-Enlightenment especially, were steeped in colonial tropes: an explorer must sail a trans-oceanic ship to arrive at utopia, will sometimes encounter savages, and these explorers ostensibly seek riches of the new frontier.[7] The colonial roots of utopia are well-outlined by Hardy, and scholars of science fiction show the ways this history still informs utopian fiction, for example in the ways the language of the frontier is used to describe cyberspace, and the ways aliens are racialized in narratives of space travel.

The dystopian works I study are also primarily works of Indigenous Futurism. Grace Dillon defines the genre as work that "enclose 'reservation realisms' in a fiction that sometimes fuses Indigenous sciences with the latest scientific theories available in public discourse, and sometimes undercuts the western limitations of science altogether" (2). These works estrange sf itself because they are often situated in an apocalypse that has already occurred — the colonial apocalypse — but they project a hopeful, decolonized future from these ruins. Thus they are concerned with how historical colonialism continues into the present and permeates North American societies and cultures, as they interact with each other. Indigenous science and sustainability are common themes for Indigenous futurisms, hence they receive special attention in Chapter 2. Spiritual and physical healing at an individual and societal level — emphasizing

[7] The rhetoric of utopia is also reflected in early colonies, for example the Puritan colonies of Massachusetts Bay, where John Winthrop's "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630) sermon outlined the utopian-sounding "city upon a hill" that their colony should exemplify. To take a later example, Teresa Shewry explains how in the early nineteenth century, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, director of the New Zealand Company, imagined "a perfect colony before he had even seen New Zealand... To make a better world, settlers burned and cut down forests, drained swamps, appropriated land, and waged war against Indigenous peoples" (12).

balance and harmony with the environment — is also a predominant theme, and is especially reflected here in Chapter 4.

Methodology

All of the texts of this study are rich grounds for both Settler Colonial and Utopian Studies readings, but they work together on more than just a literary level. While they may make strange bedfellows, both Utopian and Postcolonial Studies have Marxist roots. Reading texts through a utopian and postcolonial lens makes up for what I see as two blind spots in utopian studies. First, contemporary utopian theory is centered around Western concepts of human rights and, while it gestures toward intersectionality, has to date not adequately grappled with just how contingent utopia must be in a global context. It is a commonplace that classical Marxism itself famously does not fully account for colonialism in its understanding of class struggle, a fact that postcolonial theorists since Fanon have sought to remedy.

We can see this reflected in the context of utopian studies in Levitas' *Utopia as Method*: her conclusion briefly cites global inequality as a major problem and advocates for international redistribution of wealth, but both the philosophy on which she draws and her concrete ideas for utopia as method are dependent on familiarity with the language and ideas of democratic socialism, a language that often does not account for Europe and the United States' accumulated wealth through colonial dispossession, and as such is applicable to non-Western societies in a limited way, one that does not fully account for cultural difference. This understanding helps account for the ways that even sf from the

political left, such as the works I study in Chapter 1, has not fully engaged with the inextricability of colonialism from class and race struggle.

Eurocentrism leads to another problem of utopian studies I also attempt to address: if we wish to decolonize the concept of utopia, we must engage with the violence of colonial oppression, and the likelihood that true decolonization in the form of the overthrow of capitalism globally will be likely violent. Power holds many tools of violence to protect its wealth (as we know from Marx, "capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt" [926]), and anticolonial nonviolent resistance is routinely met with violence. Postcolonial studies, especially Settler Colonial Theory, also helps address this problem. SCT, which takes Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* as a founding text, grapples with the bare fact that "decolonization is always a violent event" (1), and that nonviolence is typically called for by the colonizer when the colonized rebel against violence and dispossession, revealing the colonizer's belief that only the colonizer has the only right to violence.

While the fact of violence leaves everyone (including myself) uneasy, and is a difficult subject even in Postcolonial Studies, it cannot be ignored simply because it is not part of the relatively peaceful utopian vision of the future. One way I suggest working through this uneasiness is to separate "violence" as harm to people and "vandalism" as harm to property. Though typically seen as synonymous, vandalism tends to be the form of resistance that the authors I study here are most concerned with, one that harms capitalist systems rather than individuals. Indeed, many of the texts I study will suggest that "utopia as method" — as a contingent, emergent practice that imagines and works

toward radical change — will sometimes and in some places involve violent resistance, questioning the dichotomy between utopia as "peaceful" and dystopia as inherently violent (Morris's *News from Nowhere* is an early example of a utopia that does not eschew the necessity of violent revolution, however it does place it squarely in the past of the utopia described in the book). All of these texts have implications for activism that I will explore, within the context of my own subjectivity as a White scholar of European descent. In this spirit I echo Wolfe's conclusion in *Traces of History:* "It is not my place to instruct colonized people on how to resist their condition, let alone to impersonate their agency ... I have tried to offer an analysis, in the hope that it may prove useful" (271) — useful to scholars who consider themselves activists and allies (or better still, accomplices) of colonized peoples, and who must grapple with these unsettling questions.

In adding Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies (STS) and discussions of Indigenous Science to the mix in some chapters, especially Chapters 2 and 4 dealing with agricultural sciences and biopiracy, respectively, I historicize the ways that colonization used/uses Western science and technology (including science and technology appropriated from Indigenous peoples and passed off as Western) — to further utopian projects of colonization and globalization, and in doing so I take up the challenge postcolonial STS makes in decentering Western science and technology. STS theorists observe the slippage between science fiction and science fact; some, like Colin Milburn, go so far as to suggest that science fiction is a sort of intellectual workbench of science (561). However, Western science fiction and the real-world projects which it reveals and reflects upon do not have a monopoly on techno-optimism. Instead, the texts I study put

techno-optimism to work in an anticolonial way, by subverting not-yet-existing Western technologies and by imagining indigenous technological innovations.

The contention that postcolonial sf uses technology and/or utopian ideas more broadly as means of anticolonial subversion is not new. However, in my view, the subfield of Postcolonial SFS has an unfortunate tendency to situate colonialism in the past that can be corrected through a concerted engagement with Settler Colonialism. Patricia Kerslake, for example, in her work *Science Fiction and Empire,* not only considers colonialism a historical event but suggests that sf's concerns with empire are not Western at all, but rather "the tendency *we all* share" to dominance and oppression. Ralph Pordzik, another problematic example, looks productively at third world sf in his book, *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia: A Comparative Introduction to the Utopian Novel in the New English Literatures*. However, as Eric Smith notes, he subsumes his study in multiculturalism to the point of diminishing productive differences between different postcolonial geographies.

Thus, an SCT-based study of dystopian speculative fiction and works of Indigenous Futurism can help correct this oversight and bring the discussion into our contemporary moment of increasing environmental instability and socio-economic upheaval. This study rethinks utopia against the anti-utopian projects of the settler colonizer, projects that began centuries ago and continue to this day. Some of these projects include: colonial attempts to increase the efficiency of land through new farming technologies, such as bioengineering; the use of genetics research on Indigenous peoples to further medical advancements that will not be accessible to research subjects; and

using technologies of surveillance and security to maintain the borders of the settler colonial utopia. I discuss these and more in the following chapter outline, but first I must note that all of these technologies are forms of colonial violence in themselves, and are also protected with the use of violent and deadly technologies. Technologies of colonial violence loom large over the works I study, and also loom over every chapter.

Chapter Outline

The fiction I study is set mostly in a near- or far- future, though some are set in alternative worlds, and are very contemporary; the earliest text — Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus*, was published in 1991, while most were published/released after 2000. Chapter 1, "Anticolonialism and Techno-Utopian Hope in Western Science Fiction," explores two sf texts by Western writers — China Miéville's *Iron Council* and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* — that depict settler colonization and capitalist oppression — both entangled together, both technologically dependent — as well as indigenous resistance to these oppressions. This chapter shows how some of the shortcomings of utopian studies as a Western field are reflected in Western utopian fiction, a diagnostic to which subsequent chapters concerned with works of Indigenous Futurism respond. *Iron Council* and *Cloud Atlas* are strongest when depicting class struggle in the age of technologically advanced capitalism, stretching genre conventions to do so. Both fundamentally anticolonial, they engage with concepts of time as alternately a tool of capitalist exploitation and a cyclical model of oppression and resistance. Ideas of time complicate capitalist notions of technological progress as the harbinger of utopia.

Adapting Edward Said's practice of "contrapuntal reading" canonical Western texts alongside theory written by colonized peoples — theoretical works that Said claims are part of a liberationist, explicitly utopian project — I acknowledge the novels' fundamentally anticolonial messages but pay special attention to the gaps and elisions in their anticolonial imagination. Namely, in their engagement with and estrangement of time, neither account for the fact that settler colonialism persists today; they place it in the past, implying that other forms of oppression have overcome it. Additionally, their biopolitics — seen in appropriations of advanced biotechnology towards anticapitalist resistance — tend to obscure racial oppression in favor of highlighting class exploitation.

The second chapter, "Stories to Stop the Apocalypse: Indigenous Knowledge and Community Partnership in Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle* and Nanobah Becker's 'The 6th World'" returns to the idea of Natural Law as a source of Indigenous knowledge, and Indigenous agricultural and land use sciences. I do this via two works of Indigenous sf that are also concerned with the dystopian *and* apocalyptic nature of capitalist-driven climate change. Cherokee writer Thomas King's 2014 novel and Navajo Director Nanobah Becker's 2013 short film are set in the near future, where climate disaster has become an unavoidable fact of life. Both suggest that Indigenous ways of living in community as well as Indigenous scientific literacies can help prevent further harm and enable humans to adapt to climate change, in part through main characters who are trained in both Indigenous and Western scientific and cultural traditions. Both King and Becker also show that — because Indigenous stories have communicated the teachings of Natural Law for generations, and because Indigenous storytelling is an oral tradition that

readily adapts older stories and the ideas they convey to respond to new challenges — Indigenous storytelling and mythmaking can itself combat climate apocalypse as a tool of community understanding and relationship building.

Chapter 3, "Dystopian Biopolitics in the Settler Colony: Larissa Sansour's 'Nation Estate' and Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer*," looks at two dystopian, satirical films that challenge two settler colonial systems with striking resemblances: the US — more specifically for *Sleep Dealer*, the US-Mexico border, which traverses Indigenous lands — and, in the case of "Nation Estate," Israel's occupation of Palestine. This chapter contributes to the expansion of Indigenous Studies in the US, led in part by Palestinian scholar Steven Salaita, to include the Palestinian struggle for sovereignty. Both films depict two anti-utopian settler colonial formations, formations that were once historically pastoral, and now have become capitalist-utopian projects whose technologies benefit a select few. We see utopia for the colonizer, but obviously dystopia for the colonized, and these dystopias are revealing of the biopolitics of settler colonialism, in particular the way that technology is used to make the colonized invisible and estranged from their connection to land and traditional agricultural practices, while enabling techno-capitalism to benefit from their labor and/or subjection. In their own ways, both films also think utopia beyond national boundaries; in the case of "Nation Estate" this is done by cognitively estranging signs of nationalism, while for *Sleep Dealer* this comes in the form of hacking and technological appropriation in international collaborations.

The potential for biomedical technologies, now under the tight control of large tech companies — companies that Kaushik Sunder Rajan convincingly argues sell little

by way of actual product, but instead mostly sell hype (or what could be called utopian potential) — to be used in counterhegemonic ways, is the subject of my third chapter, "Decolonizing the Utopian Promise of Biomedical Sciences: Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus*." Longevity and health are important measures of utopian legitimacy, and they can be used as justification for colonial actions such as biopiracy, or the practice of extracting genetic information from humans, animals, and plants (as well as knowledge of plants) in the "third world" in the name of scientific advancement and profit, disregarding land rights and other rights along the way. *The Heirs of Columbus* — the only work in this study that is critically utopian rather than critically dystopian — counters this in a playful and humorous way by imagining a techno-utopian Indian reservation where genomics is used to heal genetic trauma — the ravages of capitalism and colonialism visited upon individuals and communities and that continue today.

Finally, Chapter 5, "Info-topia: Postcolonial Cyberspace and Artificial Intelligence in *TRON: Legacy* and Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber*" provides insight into why mainstream rhetoric about Artificial Intelligence is simultaneously lauded as having great potential for humankind and feared for its potential to rebel against its human creators — rhetoric that big tech companies such as Apple and Google are often caught up in. Mainstream science fiction such as Disney's *TRON: Legacy* (2010) shapes and is shaped by this debate, which serves to implicitly racialize AI as a slave subjectivity and sometimes even an indigenous one. Beneath the surface of this debate however we find that such fears of AI rebellion are actually based in anxiety that world powers will lose control of the globally networked systems of people and machines that they have

dominated in the postcolonial era. By contrast, Nalo Hopkinson's postcolonial and dystopian cyberpunk novel, *Midnight Robber* (2000) views AI and cyberspace through the lens of Afro-Caribbean epistemology, including Taino-Arawak Indigenous values. In doing so AI becomes less frightening in its potential, cyberspace becomes a space for accounting for the ways information technology is complicit in colonial projects, and technological appropriation provides hope for building a better world.

At stake in this project is the viability of utopia as a project/method in a still colonial and increasingly dystopian world, and whether utopia is even a useful ideal given its tendency for ideological abuse on the part of those who promote Western technosciences and systems of government. If "all organizing is science fiction," and to an extent utopian, what role might the fiction I study or the concept of utopia more broadly play in this organizing? I have certainly observed a utopian community spirit in organizing with the Puyallup tribe, who emphasize sharing meals and spiritual engagement via song and sharing political and tribal art. A gathering to protest is inevitably a positive social one, a moment to be enjoyed and revitalized for continued struggle, but these gatherings are not (yet) framed in a utopian context. My conclusion suggests that reading postcolonial speculative fiction is an accessible way for newer generations of activists increasingly raised on narratives of technological progress to understand the world as it is, and be inspired to shape the world they want to see.

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Chapter 1: Anticolonialism and Techno-Utopian Hope in Western Science Fiction

As outlined in the introduction to this dissertation, utopia as a genre is historically bound up with colonialism, from the genre's inaugural text, Thomas More's *Utopia*, to the genre's common tropes of exploration led by white men in "exotic" places, and Eurocentric ideas of what the "good society" would look like — ideas that assume any social construction (imaginary or otherwise) other than Western democracy is invalid when imagining utopia. This reflects a larger trend observed by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*, which explores the ways Western canonical writers such as Joseph Conrad, Jane Austen, and Daniel Defoe are imbued with imperialism. While not discounting their works as important for thinking about the human condition, he pays special attention to their biases, the gaps and elisions of the violence of imperialism, which are as revealing as what they do actually portray. When Jane Austen's characters grow wealthy thanks to colonial projects, and when Conrad's are clearly anti-colonial in their thinking but cannot imagine what might be outside of colonialism—these moments, Said holds, are telling of how imperialism has so thoroughly shaped and been shaped by Western culture.[8]

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[8] Said's subject—Imperialism—is the primarily military functions of a powerful nation state, and can be used for colonial ends, but can also be used more generally to coerce other nation states as well as other entities (such as tribal groups) into such things as accepting resource extraction. By contrast, colonialism, which I define in the introduction, connotes systems of more direct rule and loss of sovereignty for the colonized. Said points out that anti-colonialism was much more common among European intellectuals in the 18th-20th centuries than anti-imperialism. Colonialism is the subject of this study more so than imperialism, but Said's argument holds insofar as many of the works he discusses are about both imperialism and the colonialism that

Said then proceeds to read works of resistance and opposition, works that think decolonization from fiction writers such as Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. But he also devotes much of the work of "contrapuntal" reading in *Culture and Imperialism* to nonfiction, reading Frantz Fanon alongside other theorists of decolonization, writers who are critical not just of decolonization but of the nationalism that rose up in many decolonizing regions, especially in Africa and Asia. He highlights how Fanon and others warn that excessive nationalism in a postcolony tends to create new structures of oppression that privilege certain sectors of populations in a region, and Said emphasizes the need to imagine *liberation* outside the terms of the nation state — a common theme in many of the works that are the subject of this dissertation. Liberation becomes a sort of second phase after decolonization, a continuation of struggle, one that recognizes Western Marxism and humanism are inadequate to the task.

Said outlines three major components of how what he calls "liberationist anti-imperialism" can work with but transcend Western concepts of freedom:

> First, by a new integrative or contrapuntal orientation in history that sees Western and non-Western experiences as belonging together because they are connected by imperialism. Second, by an imaginative, even utopian vision which reconceives emancipatory (as opposed to confining) theory and performance. Third, by an investment neither in new authorities, doctrines, and encoded

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results from it. The US is an imperial and settler state. Although Israel is a settler and not an imperial state, it is still the product of European imperialism.

> orthodoxies, nor in established institutions and causes, but in a particular sort of nomadic, migratory, and anti-narrative energy. (281)

The first point — reinforced throughout the book — emphasizes that colonized places are irrevocably changed by colonization just as colonies are; there is no "outside," pure non-Western thought, especially given that English and French are the languages within which Said, who is Palestinian, works. Said unpacks this statement further in a reading of the work of C.L.R. James and Aimé Césaire, concluding essentially that literature is an important tool for transcending cold theory and avoiding the strict adherence to doctrine that nationalist movements tend to fall into. The anti-narrative energy comes from a sort of linking of Western tropes and ideas in their work with anti-colonial struggles, of sweeping across time, space, and history in the space of, for example, a single poem. Notice also from the above quote the rare moment — rare especially in postcolonial theory — where utopian thinking is not denigrated, but rather encouraged. This utopian is linked to a "nomadic, migratory, and anti-narrative energy"; not fixed and certainly not loyal to a postcolonial government.

This dissertation in general and this chapter in particular emulates Said's mode of examination of and argument about Western and non-Western texts, which is conscious of the trap of binary Western vs. non-Western classification that essentializes hegemony and resistance.[9] The two works I study in this chapter are China Miéville's *Iron Council*

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[9] Postcolonial literary critics after Said have conducted similar readings and updated these ideas, but have generally shed the idea of utopia, and denigrated it as a facile

and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas,* both first published in 2004, a booming period for late capitalism, as well as for imperial power in the form of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Both are written in the historical seat of colonial and global capitalist power — the United Kingdom — but are pointedly critical of global capitalism and colonialism, and employ the genres of utopia and dystopia to make this criticism. Yet it is difficult to use narrative to show the continuity of structures of oppression, to illuminate their systemic nature over centuries of European colonization, while at the same time illuminating the continuity of resistance, and both texts attempt this with varying degrees of success. Their strengths and insights are many, especially when it comes to their relevance today, in a moment when hope for revolution seems unfounded. But I also pay attention to weaknesses that are illuminated by a postcolonial light, as well as to the limitations inherent in working within the utopian genre — even when writers actively subvert the conventions of that genre. Often, these limitations are most prominent when these writers depict Indigenous peoples and/or link race and class struggle.

Both works are the subject of more than a decade of robust academic criticism, more so than any of the other works in the rest of this study. They are popular among leftists and progressives in the US and UK — both casual and academic — and are perhaps the most popular of all the works in this study, yet they sit uneasily in the privileged position of a first chapter. I justify this by adopting Said's practice of "contrapuntal reading" of canonical Western texts from the colonial and postcolonial eras that mention but do not account for colonialism's embeddedness in the culture from

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Western concept (see the Introduction for more details). For this reason, Said’s approach is especially relevant to this study.

whence they came and which they critique, and applying his method to science fiction and techno-optimism, in the process seeing how useful it is for contemporary anticolonial Western texts. One aspect of contrapuntal reading is to examine what is "forcibly excluded" (67) — I seek to understand what is still forcibly excluded in contemporary Western sf, before I can explore how readings of sf texts by the formerly colonized help enhance our understanding of what is forcibly excluded and thus help fill in the gaps of utopian thinking. Also following Said, I ground my readings in theoretical texts that are from outside this privileged position, in particular Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw)'s *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. From the exclusions and gaps of both novels and through using Indigenous and non-Western scholarship I excavate a space that is filled by subsequent chapters' focus on works from Indigenous cultures — from Palestine to the Cherokee Nation and the Caribbean.

Iron Council

Iron Council — the third novel in China Miéville's Bas-Lag trilogy — could be considered an epic novel and as such any summary will be quite reductive of the intricacies of its many plots, which can be seen to flow along three lines. They are braided into each other and also move backwards and forwards in time through characters' flashbacks/memories. All are set on the vast continent of Bas-Lag, where the city-states of New Crobuzon and Tesh are located. On Bas-Lag, the main classes of sentient beings include "free and whole" humans, Remade human criminals whose bodies are altered by/with a twisted sense of ironic justice (or in order to serve the purposes of

industry), and "xenian" or humanoid races such as the frog-like vodyanoi and cactus-fleshed cactacae. The opening section of the book (though chronologically not the earliest) features the fast-paced journey of several friends (and a lover named Cutter) of Judah Low as they search for him across the vast, weird continent which is home to New Crobuzon and other nations at war with each other; they are miles behind Low himself as he in turn tries to find the Iron Council of which he was once a part. This plot line more or less flows into the others when the disparate groups join each other while fleeing from weird forces deployed by New Crobuzon to catch them. At last the small group of friends finds the Iron Council to warn them that New Crobuzon has found them and plans to destroy the Council.

In a second plotline, the Iron Council — composed of former low-wage track-laying workers, Remade slaves, and sex workers following the train — rebels against the railroad company and takes the train off into a weird and dangerous wilderness, with the help — initially at least — of the borinatch, people indigenous to the area who can manipulate dimensions and are fierce, mysterious warriors, but who leave the train as soon as the New Crobuzon militia is defeated. The Iron Council survives for a generation as a utopian commune, but eventually decides to return to New Crobuzon to aid a brewing revolution there, despite insurmountable odds against its success.

The third plotline is set in New Crobuzon itself, and follows Ori, a human seeking to start a violent revolution in the style of classical anarchism — through assassinating the mayor of the city. Miéville lays out an intricate allegory of left factionalism throughout this timeline, with "armchair" journalistic-communists in uncomfortable

alliance with their more violent counterparts and radical xenian groups. These groups include the scarab-headed khepri, who defend their own neighborhoods against the "New Quillers," a fairly direct representation of white supremacists. The Iron Council is held up to this radical-left alliance as a myth that encourages their revolutionary hopes. But the war with Tesh — a more advanced nation in terms of magical warfare if not in terms of military numbers and resources — is also happening within the city's walls, and the leftist revolution is caught between it and the New Crobuzon government's attempt to retake the parts of the city that the leftists have liberated.

Recent literary criticism of the novel relevant to this study has focused on its technological utopianism, its critique of inexorable progress, and its bearing on revolutionary hope in the age of global capitalism. It has also examined Miéville's use of utopian frontier rhetoric — the idea that explorers of a new frontier bring 'civilization' and a generally better society to the uncivilized, and will improve the colonizing society in turn in the inexorable march of progress — and tropes of the Western genre, as well as ways posthumanism can be brought to bear on analyzing the Remade. To take a prominent example of a blend of these criticisms, Hugh Charles O'Connell offers a trenchant reading of the function of the Iron Council's train (in comparison to two other science fictional works with similar themes): "the train figures as the dual symbol of both the cooptation of Utopia as closure by capitalist realism and the improbably radical utopian impulse" (21). But it also means accounting for "the legacy of (post)colonialism," or the fact that trains enabled global capitalist hegemony through the material transfer of goods from colonies to metropoles (24). Thus the train accounts for the materialism of

moving goods from the colonies to the metropole and for the ways human labor is made subservient to machinery in this process, especially in the form of the Remade. In other words, the utopian rhetoric of technological progress can be appropriated by the oppressed, as the Remade and others appropriate the train. O'Connell also asserts that *Iron Council*, by having the train move in an elliptical pattern and without a permanent rail path, challenges the linearity of progress espoused in the utopian rhetoric of globalization, suggesting "utopian openness" (25, 37). Yet, to stretch O'Connell's point further: as with many other technologies that are the subject of this study, train technology is inextricably bound up with a utopianism that is explicitly colonial in its optimism and it is difficult if not impossible for writers of European descent to fully break free of this.

O'Connell, like others who mention postcolonial themes, focuses primarily on the postcolonial aspects of the novel that reveal the way the colonizer uses technology against the colonized, often for violent extermination. This study draws on this wealth of extant criticism and expands on it, in part by examining Indigenous "technology" in the novel, such as time golemetry and resistance, but departs from it in asking what has been *left out* of the novel from a postcolonial perspective — namely, sovereignty and resistance as active concerns of living Indigenes today. Throughout, I maintain sight of the fact that, as Carl Freedman and others point out, there are no 1:1 allegories in the novel that bear direct relationships to historical events or the geopolitics of late capitalism (151). This recalls Said's linking of the utopian to if not an "anti-narrative," then at least an anti-historicist commitment to fluidity and openness to ideas rather than doctrine. The

beauty of the location of this utopian story in "no-place" is that the novel is more open to thinking about the nature of revolutionary praxis in the near future, and when and how the nature of oppression changes in response to resistance; this I argue is also at some points its weakness, especially when it comes to questions of who gets to be the leaders of a resistance and who must instead die.

Weirding and genre

First, I aim to discuss genre in relation to postcolonial themes in the text and in the process address an important point about "technology" in the novel upon which much of my subsequent argument rests. Miéville's fictional oeuvre is famous for the way it defies generic conventions, and it is often not considered "science fiction" proper. This is intentional, however, as in much of his academic work Miéville contends that genre can be detrimental as a gatekeeping mechanism. He and others argue that the “science” in science fiction is not actually working, real-world science, and is closer to fantasy as such. Fantasy, meanwhile, is perfectly capable of providing valuable insights into the human condition just as science fiction is; claims that fantasy is merely swords and sorcery (which some of it is, just as some science fiction is rather facile as well) are spurious.[10]

[10] This is an argument that has raged for some time in the academic community but seems to have been more or less put to rest in the last few years, in part by the inclusion of fantasy under the term "speculative fiction." Still, the debate has heavily informed Miéville's fiction and also his academic writing, such as “Cognition as Ideology: A Dialectic of SF Theory,” against facile interpretation of Darko Suvin’s idea of cognitive estrangement.

Miéville's fiction deliberately eschews genre, to the point where it is now exemplary of a new genre created practically around it: the New Weird, which Sherryl Vint defines as "a blend of science fiction, Surrealism, fantasy, magical realism, and Lovecraftian horror." But the genre-bending doesn't stop there. Miéville also incorporates the genre of steampunk in his use of steam-powered technologies such as the train, steam-powered robots and Remade, and dirigibles, as well as the genre's sense of wonder in adventure. Nevertheless, the genre's overall blindness to issues of race is the subject of much consternation for people of color, as the work of Jaymee Goh attests.[11] Jonathan R. Harvey adds that Miéville *also* incorporates the genre of the Western into the New Weird, both for aesthetic purposes and to incorporate ideas of colonialism and resistance relevant to the 21st century in the text.

For Miéville, the weird and other genre-bending strategies nuance arguments about the "science" of science fiction, beyond observations that ideas such as faster-than-light travel are essentially fantasy, by moving what is more straightforwardly recognizable as magic into a technological realm. Carl Freedman and others have pointed out that magic in New Crobuzon is essentially technology — some individuals may exhibit a special aptitude for it, but it is "learnable and teachable," and works in

[11] Goh argues that steampunk as a genre tends to the "post-racial" in its outlook toward race, in large part because it is a predominantly white genre and counter-culture that has itself been coopted by consumer capitalism. But the genre also discounts the way colonialism was abetted by the Victorian technologies it imagines ("Intersection of Race"). Of China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* (the first work in the Bas Lag trilogy), Goh criticizes the way humanity is set at the "Great White Default" as it racializes xenians ("China Miéville").

conjunction with technologies more commonly thought of as obeying the laws of physics such as batteries, steam technologies, and even technologies of measuring time.

To play with genre through technology can be thought of as an effort to take part in Said's mission to "get beyond the reified polarities of East versus West" (41), as much of utopian fiction attempts to do, and as fiction defined as “magical realism” also attempts. Weirding puts Bas-Lag in "no place," neither East nor West, outside of time and in a weird relationship to narratives of technological progress. Certainly weirding eschews the propagandistic commitment to Science as incontrovertible truth that drives and justifies Western colonialism and postcolonial hegemony. But to attempt to fully escape this polarity of East versus West on the part of Western authors is not a good idea; to claim to have done so would be to enter the realm of the "non-racial," which can only be a failed claim rather than an actual event or text. Miéville would make no claims to his work being non-racial or post-racial; instead the weird seems for Miéville a space to interrogate the classical Marxist emphasis on class and the postcolonial emphasis on colonial oppression together, to see where they overlap and where they are incommensurable — and importantly, where they create spaces for shared resistance. However, we cannot also leave out the moments where weirding does not quite do justice to the intricacies of colonial experience, a gap that can and should be filled by those with direct experience of colonial oppression.

Similarly to Miéville, much of the fiction in subsequent chapters of this dissertation deploys elements of fantasy and “magical realism,” a fraught term for the Indigenous peoples upon whose fiction it is commonly deployed (the works of African

American and Chicano writers are also often given this label), because of its implication of denigrating spiritual practices as magical. It is possible, then, to short-circuit this debate over the "usefulness" and applicability to the real world of science fiction versus fantasy and other genres, by simply using the label of "speculative fiction," while still maintaining the "sf" abbreviation. Indeed this is a generally accepted umbrella term in SF Studies.

The weirdness of time, technologies, and allegory

Technologies of time and train technologies are together subjected to the weird by Miéville, and have bearing on the depiction of settler colonialism and capitalism and resistance to it. A capitalist understanding of "time as money" is an essential element of the running of trains at maximum efficiency, and the narrative of relentless progress that justified the feverish construction of train tracks across the US also justified massacres of Indigenous peoples and vast appropriations of their land. Wolfgang Shiveluch documents the ways train technology was part of the utopian promise of the 19th century and the Industrial Revolution, a promise that train barons exploited in their rush to profit. The train was an engine of progress, engaged with, according to Marx, "the annihilation of space and time," and Schivelbusch shows how this paved the way for globalization through cultural shifts. He states that geographic distances were not actually shorter of course, but "What was experienced as being annihilated was the traditional space — time continuum which characterized the old transport technology" and disrupted European cultural *perceptions* of distance, making geographic regions that were culturally different

seem less so, and making them actually less so over time through exchange in various forms (60). Schivelbusch also documents how the utopian image of the train was being challenged even in 19th century because of corruption and ruthlessness of RR companies.[12] Cultural disorientation of time thanks to new technology becomes literalized in *Iron Council* as the train moves through temporally weird zones where time flows differently and dangerously. And the corruption of train barons and cultural disillusionment of train technology is acted out in the Iron Council's rebellion.

The Iron Council, when it appropriates the train, changes the valence of time in relation to trains and track laying: "Miles of track, reused, reused, it is the train's future and its present, and it emerges a fraction more scarred as history and is hauled up again and becomes another future" (262). The track becomes cyclical or elliptical, as Freedman and others have noted. Rather than an endless drive of forward progress in capitalism, the Council takes interest in their community over the need for profit; money becomes obsolete, of course. And while fleeing from the city militia, the track-layers also move much faster now that they are working for themselves, suggesting the Marxist adage that workers do not need their managers. Thus we have certainly a non-Western and non-capitalist view of time, but it is not identifiably from any non-Western culture (and it is difficult to see how this would be done without risking some romanticization of Indigenous culture, though some similarities are explored in the next section).

[12] Schivelbusch did not use the term "utopia," but Alan Trachtenberg does not shy from it when describing the promise of train technology in a forward to the 2014 edition of the book.

Importantly, *Iron Council* and the entire New Crobuzon trilogy are not set in late capitalism — New Crobuzon is more a mercantile and industrialist capitalist economy, one whose non-magical technologies are as previously mentioned more at home in the steampunk genre. This study is primarily concerned with technologies and systems of late capitalism, such as those of information technology and genetic engineering. However, reading *Iron Council,* one is reminded that late capitalism has not left industrial capitalism behind, but rather shifted it elsewhere, out of sight from Western view. Christopher Kendrick points out that the early industrialist, gritty metropolis nature of the city makes it reminiscent of Mexico City as of Lagos, Nigeria, with its chaotic relations between races a key utopian appeal, in the sense that Western-style utopias are post-racial (15). Factories still dismember bodies in developing cities such as these, if not in the weird way of the punishment factories of New Crobuzon. And the technologies of late capitalism grew from the technologies of industrial capitalism, are indebted to them. Progress arrives unevenly; time eddies rather than flows forward, and different stages of capitalism exist together (as they technically do in the real world in a global sense — yet this is the existence of different stages in one city).

And New Crobuzon also highlights the recurring nature of power and resistance, making several types of capitalism — industrial, mercantile, even late capitalism in the form of the Remade — and historical moments of resistance appear practically simultaneously in his weird landscape. Historically and temporally different references to resistance movements such as the Paris Commune can be found in the Iron Council, as many critics including Freedman highlight. The unions and left factionalism in the city

can be likened to factory union and anarchist movements in the US and UK during industrialization. This is a decidedly European treatment of revolution despite its anti-racist commitments as evidenced in xenian alliances, one steeped in history from within empire. It is also one that is very conscious of the longstanding tradition of capitalists coopting resistance through informants and agitators, as evidenced by the words of Weather Wrightby, the quintessential industrialist and head of the Transcontinental Railroad Trust.[13] He explains toward the end of the novel, when the Iron Council's arrival in New Crobuzon is imminent: "I am here to tell you thank you. For this thing you've done ... You crossed the world, something that's needed doing as long as I've lived, and that you did." He continues ranting, exclaiming that he wanted to see "iron stretched from sea to sea, that was mine. The continent cut open. From New Crobuzon west. That was mine. That's history" (523). Wrightby is full of the utopian verve of the frontier, linking the cooptation of resistance common to capitalism inextricably with the Industrial Revolution's use of Manifest Destiny. And — just as importantly — Wrightby is coopting the very idea of utopia, showing that capitalist techno-utopia has to date won out over a more communist vision.

Another important allegorical moment of resistance that is somewhat unstuck in time (insofar as it recalls past events but makes them more relevant in the context of current struggles) is seen in the complexities of left resistance within New Crobuzon.

[13] It is a commonplace that social movements in the US at least will be infiltrated by the US government, as has been revealed for example in documents related to the COINTELPRO program. However, corporate surveillance is also rampant, though more difficult to document, as corporations can legally be more secretive than government agencies (Starr et. al. 72).

When Ori, a member of a quasi-anarchist group in favor of violent revolution, assassinates the mayor, he becomes unstuck in time, and finally makes his way back to what he perceives as the present after other left factions and xenians have taken over parts of the city and a civil war has begun. At first he believes his assassination was the spark to the revolution, but eventually despairs at the realization that it was actually a personal vendetta carried out by his leader and that city government will effectively quash the revolution without the mayor.

From a place outside of time comes a complicated meditation on violence in revolution: assassination may have been effective for anarchists during the actual Industrial Revolution, when the assassination of Antonio Cánovas del Castillo — the six-term Spanish Prime Minister who led a regime of brutal colonial oppression, particularly in Cuba and the Philippines — was a key factor in the downfall of the Spanish colonial empire. But the power of the government of New Crobuzon does not inhere in any one figurehead, as is typical with colonial governments today; power instead inheres primarily in capital, and capitalist enterprises direct events, as Wrightby does with the train. What might have been effective had the tale been a straightforward allegory of empire during the Second Industrial Revolution is a useless action, as Ori realizes, in New Crobuzon.

However, this is perhaps an unfair treatment of anarchism as primarily focused on assassination or violence on the part of Miéville, given the anti-colonial history of anarchism that Benedict Anderson documents extensively in *Under Three Flags*. Anarchism spread faster to colonies than Marxism, especially Cuba and the Philippines,

because anarchists were much more conscious of colonialism's complicity with capitalism. It was not single-minded in its approach, setting up networks of intellectual and financial support for revolution against the Spanish empire. Still, the allegory of Ori holds in terms of its bearing on the changing nature of capitalist and colonial power. The history of failed movements may be important for the left to learn from and emulate with caution, but Miéville seems to be suggesting that we should remember that colonial powers have also learned from that history and adapted accordingly in part by dispersing power. A corresponding dispersal of organizing leadership — a modern anarchist tenet — that does not inhere in the kind of leadership structure where one vengeful woman could lead Ori blindly to his death may be a start.

As hinted in Ori's assassination of the mayor as an allegory unstuck in time, we see throughout the book the complicated nature of time in relation to settler colonization — which as outlined in my introduction is commonly placed in the past but is in actuality a structure of domination still widely practiced today. This is particularly evident within the narrative of Iron Council breaking free of the railroad and the TRT's plan to exterminate the stiltspear. Connections are more than just incidental: Judah cries out at one point in reference to the stiltspear swamp territory that "This isn't empty land!" but the air of Manifest Destiny returns as Wrightby responds: "What they have, what they've had lying there for centuries in that marsh, whatever it is, it's welcome to face the history I bring, if it can" (159). Wrightby seems to be comparing the magical technology of the stiltspear to his technology (of which much of it is also magical), and finds it inadequate to defend against his own. He reveals himself to be a pragmatic colonizer, despite being

driven by his capitalist ideology in a quasi-religious way. However there is not a 1:1 comparison of New Crobuzon with a settler colonial state in the tradition of European colonialism, even though New Crobuzon is seeking to expand its influence in the continent through the building of a railroad — a technology deployed by capital and government working in conjunction in the United States for settler colonization. While the train imbues the narrative with a Western generic feel, its weirdness does not limit its concerns to the historic West — technological progress is justification for a host of exploitations of Indigenous peoples that subsequent chapters detail.

For example, the colonialism of the train is couched in a religious-missionary manner that is meant to be critical of the way religion is often deployed as the vanguard of settler colonialism and an initial attempt at native genocide, yet this criticism is also updated for modern times. The leader of the train track construction (presumably this is Weather Wrightby) calls their work "holy," and states that they are "missionary[ies] of a new church and there is nothing that will stop holy work" (158). However this church is one of capitalism, of the very ideology of relentless, unstoppable progress rolling from the past into the present on train rails. There is no traditionally religious pretense with which to win over those sections of society that might otherwise reject colonialism, as there was in the historical colonization of the US. Wrightby's pragmatism is at home in New Crobuzon, which is unfettered by a dominant, Christian-like religion. This reflects the weird balance of pragmatism and ideological worship of technological progress that capitalism has increasingly espoused, focused now on a more secular conception, buoyed by international bodies, of capitalism as the purveyor of a better future. Yet if mainstream

science fiction such as *Iron Council* (and *Cloud Atlas*) are beginning to reflect a cultural fatigue with these narratives of progress, what alternatives might there be?

Indigenous science and weird time

The story of New Crobuzon and the Iron Council's resistance is limited in terms of understanding the way late capitalism and setter colonialism are intertwined in continued oppression of Indigenous peoples, including through the deployment of contemporary technologies, and also limited in terms of depicting contemporary Indigenous resistance — a gap that the texts in subsequent chapters seek to fill. *Iron Council* is important, however, when we realize just how much mainstream Western culture is stuck in early US Settler Colonial sentiments about Indigenous peoples and how futile resistance is romanticized and primitivized — even in the sf genre, which generally tends to be more liberal or even, as in the case of Miéville, leftist (see chapter five on *TRON: Legacy* for a discussion of Indigenous peoples in liberal-minded Hollywood sf). Here I look at how *Iron Council* undermines this romanticism at some points, especially in relation to time and other technologies, while possibly reinforcing it in others.

In *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, Jodi Byrd explains that "ideas of Indians and Indianness have served as the ontological ground through which U.S. settler colonialism enacts itself as settler imperialism at this crucial moment in history when everything appears to be headed towards collapse" (xix). By "ontological ground of transit," Byrd means that the Indian is assigned various,

contradictory meanings in a biopolitical move that serves to define the colonizer and justify colonialism. For one, as Byrd shows in a reading of Alexis de Toqueville's narrative of Choctaw removal, Indians are doomed to disappear — made spectral in that they are not "grievable" in the sense of being able to be avenged by state-administered justice, because their death is inevitable (recalling Mbembe's necropolitics). Today, this ontological ground of transit manifests also in the present moment of postracial identity, when what few mainstream narratives of indigenous people there are tend to be hugely problematic in terms of cultural appropriation and also in terms of depicting and romanticizing resistance. Historically and contemporarily for Byrd, "the Indian is always already past perfect" (38), despite the presence of living and acting Indigenes to the contrary. On the other hand, to be in transit "is to be an active presence in a world of relational movements and countermovements," part of an exercise of sovereignty in diplomacy and relationship (xvi-ii). Native peoples are not just acted upon as a ground of transit; they act deliberately while in transit themselves, understanding that to be human is to be in constant movement in relation to others. I wish to explore how indigenes in *Iron Council* are representative of Byrd's critique of “paradigmatic Indianness” in culture, in terms of biopolitics and transit, and then, through a reading of the Remade, how Miéville helps to nuance relationality and identity.

The stiltspear are not a central aspect of the novel, but their golemetry — a form of indigenous science-magic of time — is, because their bestowal of the knowledge of golemetry on Judah Low drives the plot of the novel. This advanced science undermines the primitivism of the stiltspear, yet their culture is still depicted generally as a pastoral

one, and the way they rarely talk unless necessary lends them an air of noble savagery. As with many colonial narratives of Indianness, we see the stiltspear through Judah's eyes, in his capacity as chronicler for them and their culture, paid to do so by the Transcontinental Railroad Trust, before the train barrels through their territory, destroying them in the process. However, contra the colonial narrative trope of the white savior that one sees in films such as *Avatar*, Judah Low is anything but a white savior, despite his romanticized narrative of colonial extermination of natives. The stiltspear refuse Judah's pleas to leave and wage a failed war against the train. Miéville's portrayal of Indigenous people is more than problematic, however, in its romanticization of their extermination. Repeatedly, Low freezes their songs and culture in time through technology, not just to preserve it but to learn their golemetry:

> He thrusts out the listening trumpet and captures their sound on wax ... He looks through a lens and is a geographer on the wax continent of the song, tracking chasms, the coiled valley, its peaks and arêtes ...
> His interior thing jackknifes. He has their soul in his wax. (213)

The stiltspear and their science of time have ironically been frozen in time, and Wrightby plans to make a museum of one of their villages as well for travelers to visit on their way to realizing the techno-utopian dreams of capitalism, a literalization of the ontological ground of transit that Indianness represents. It is a train station stop on the road to progress. Yet the "interior thing" is a spirit-like presence given him by a stiltspear, one

that transcends "teachability" in many respects — Judah still must practice, but all his practicing doesn't account for the feats of golemetry he achieves — and thus he doesn't really have their captured soul in wax. It is within him, possessing him in turn. A space is left for spirituality—a space that Indigenous scientists such as Gregory Cajete also emphasize, and which becomes a key factor in many subsequent chapters of this study.

On the other hand the culture of the stiltspear is depicted at points not as scientifically advanced or even pastoral but as downright savage: "The red sires unwrap their coddled god and recarve him as a murder spirit. They revive a death-cult" (163). While Harvey, in his essay in part on *Iron Council*, argues that this is an allegory to the Ghost Dance movement — religious ceremonies that brought tribes together in the late nineteenth century to oppose capitalism but which led to the massacre at Wounded Knee — the Ghost Dance was avowedly pacifist, and anyway this characterization serves to romanticize the stiltspear's deaths. Once again the allegory is unstuck in time. Still, Low's romanticization and documentation of the stiltspear take the soft science of anthropology to task somewhat, recalling anthropology's historical tendency to focus on documentation of "dying races," and perhaps contributing to the current debate of this tendency in the field.

And yet, to offer a reading somewhat outside the narrative: what if the very possibility that the stiltspear may not be actually extinct, just that Judah believes he sees a "last generation" as so many anthropologists believe they did, can itself be read to represent and undermine Judah's well-meaning left-revolutionary zeal, a zeal toward heroism that is already undermined throughout the struggle of the Council by their

insistence collectivism? It is unclear to what extent this portrayal of extermination is a deliberate parody of imperialist narratives that assume Indigenes no longer exist, such as de Toqueville's, rather than a mere foregrounding of Low's lack of agency despite the fact that he has great power as an individual, thanks to the stiltspear's golemetry. Given how the stiltspear disappear from the narrative, and how little of their actual voices or perspectives were part of the narrative — which focused on Judah as informer — it doesn't seem as though this assumption of their death is some deliberate allegory, though it certainly is an incidental one. If the Iron Council's train is frozen in time such that revolution is imminent, then the stiltspear with their time golemetry can certainly be part of that imminence.

Additionally, as is all too common in the history of European colonialism, Indigenous science is appropriated, even if on Judah's part it is not appropriated in the direct service of capital (though Judah's work of protecting the Iron Council is, as discussed above, eventually appropriated itself). Judah takes the science he has learned from Indigenous peoples and appropriates it in service of an allegory of class and race struggle in a Western setting — both Western in the sense of the fictional genre and in the sense of geographical-hegemonic region. Judah has, in the classic Marxist tradition, not accounted for the strength of the proletariat that stems from the resource extraction of the colonies; the narrative of the inexorable march of progress is certainly challenged by Low's actions in a more post-Marxist vein, but on whose backs that narrative was built is not fully accounted for. Revolution is multiracial in the novel, but it is not indigenous,

except insofar as Miéville employs a generically non-Western conception of time through golemetry.

Other moments in the text occasion some nuance regarding Indigenous and proletariat alliance, keeping in mind J. Keralan Kauanui's research on Bacon's Rebellion, an uprising in Virginia in 1676 that led to a brief alliance between poor white farmers and Black slaves against the English elite. The stiltspear may be dead at the hands of the TRT, but they are not the only group that bears indigenous traits. Several are met and briefly mentioned by the Iron Council in their travels, who war with them "if necessary" in order to keep the train hidden from New Crobuzon. Still another group, the borinatch, who like the stiltspear are able to manipulate reality, except in alternate dimensions, come to the Iron Council early on in their rebellion, when one member of the Council goes against the wishes of the other to send a delegation to the borinatch for assistance. Although this is only a temporary alliance, it is certainly exemplary of the types of temporary alliances needed for resistance to colonialism and capitalism, alliances. It stands in contrast to the way the Black slaves and poor whites of Bacon's rebellion massacred Indigenous people because they were perceived as allies of the English elite rather than another oppressed group; concerned with their shared economic woes, slaves and poor whites missed an opportunity for an alliance that could have strengthened their forces.[14] Colonialism, then, makes the possibilities for alliance messy, and as Byrd points

[14] Kauanui goes on to argue, in agreement with Patrick Wolfe and in disagreement with Afro-Pessimism, that Bacon's Rebellion carries implications for the ways racial formations were contingent and site-specific — the government response to Bacon's Rebellion was to cement the Black-white racial divide through legislation and other means.

out, "the Indian represents the violent slamming of worlds in what might otherwise be fluidity and flow" (20), enjambing and complicating colonial narratives of progress and narratives of resistance.

The Remade and biopolitics in colonialism

The identity and positionality of the Remade in relation to other oppressed groups have been examined by others in relation to biopolitics and posthumanism,[15] but not in relation to the biopolitics of colonialism, in particular biopolitics as it relates to racialization.[16] The Remade are cyborg prisoners, problematically assumed to be white as they are almost always human rather than xenian. Insofar as the Remade are an allegory of the prison-industrial complex in the US, this does not account for the fact that in the US, the prison-industrial complex most allegorically related here, prisoners are

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[15] Posthumanism is a movement in academia in the feminist tradition that emphasizes that the focus on individuality and other Enlightenment concepts such as human rights are flawed in that they do not account for connection—which encompasses connection between humans in a society and among societies; and connections between humans and animals, human technologies, and the environment. But the posthuman is decidedly Other, and queer; it is destabilizing. In science fiction, posthumans are often cyborg in nature, the machine parts of their bodies revealing the permeability of the human body, and the idea that the human body does not end definitively at its skin.

[16] Freedman argues that the Remade stand in for a kind of racial other, in part because miscegenation is discouraged. However this doesn't track, given that race is not typically something conferred upon someone in adulthood. Further, the "race" of humans—humans being overwhelmingly those subject to Remaking, with only a few xenians subjected to it—is virtually non-existent, and humans are more or less assumed white, with skin color not a factor in their social structure. The xenians—cactacae, vodyanoi, garuda, and so on—seem to be more obviously racial others, in the classic science fiction tradition of aliens as racial others. While this does make for a good story, Kendrick points out that this racialization "tends to collapse ethnicity and race, and figure race as species-difference" (16), making for another moment where allegory does not capture the complexity of race in the real world.

disproportionately Black and Latino (especially when considering immigrant detention). These racial connotations of the Remade are thus representative of a larger problem with Marxist thought: the tendency to flatten racial disparities in the name of class disparities — one which elsewhere in the novel Miéville is at pains to undermine.

These problematics notwithstanding, the Remade are brutally marked in their magical remaking, a permanent punishment that makes the body of the Remade into a prison itself, even after they are released from physical prison. Many are given modifications that lead to inhuman and frightening strength in order to work on the railroad; they are modified in the service of capitalism. Recalling the Marxist concept that the worker is "an appendage of the machine," the posthuman emphasis on the indistinguishability of human and machine is literalized that they may better serve capital. Their posthuman bodies are decidedly queer also, because to be a cyborg is to be in a queer state of penetration by machines. Yet their queerness is embraced eventually in the Iron Council first by the contingent of camp whores who realize that their liberation is bound up with the Remade, and who accept them as sexual partners in order to encourage egalitarianism. Jonathan Newell argues that the Remade are the apotheosis of imprisonment from the perspective of governmentality and biopolitics as advanced by Foucault, Agamben, and others. Punishment is internalized within the body, and the government can continue to use that body to further capitalism.

However, biopolitics itself, at least originally, is a field of study fraught with the absence of colonialism, given its focus on the way Western governments control Western populations, as Laura Ann Stoler and others have pointed out. Morgensen further shows

that biopolitics actually originated in the colonial setting, the grounds where control over bodies was tested before being used on Western populations; we see this still today for example with technologies of crowd control and surveillance being tested on Palestinians before being imported to the West (which is the subject of chapter 3 on Larissa Sansour's "Nation Estate"). How can the biopolitics of settler colonialism help to tease out the fraught themes of slavery and Indigeneity in the novel?

Again, Jodi Byrd is helpful here, in her invocation of Puar's biopolitical concept of "terrorist assemblages" wherein the terrorist is queered, arguing that historically Indians were the original terrorists, and further creating a cacophonous relationality between Indians and other identities. Race, gender (implicitly sexuality), and class collide in the figure of the Indian. Ultimately Byrd expands on Puar's assertion that within such a cacophony of identities inhering in and across groups of people, we find "conditions of possibility" for "rethinking relationships between settler, native, and arrivant," while rejecting multiculturalism and other liberal humanist ideas as a perpetuation of colonial erasure of indigenous peoples. She does this in part by likening them to the "relational spirals" of the Chickasaw and Choctaw, that have "a center that does not so much hold as stretches, links, and ties everything within two worlds that look in all directions. It is an ontology that privileges balance, but understands that we are in constant movement" (20).

The Remade can be likened to arrivants, who do not choose to build the train or take part in the violent extermination of the stiltspear — though it is, in keeping with the weird, not a 1:1 allegory. The Remade are in a sense their own weird cacophony of slave arrivants and cyborg-citizens of empire, the site at which incommensurable subjectivities

have been unhelpfully collapsed, along with discrete spatio-temporal moments of oppression from which those subjectivities obtain — that is, African slavery in the US and contemporary biopolitical control. Their status is also one of victimization by a colonizing state whose colonial activities they violently rise up against, and this does allude to the potential of revolutionary alliance that Byrd speaks of in cacophonies of identity and relation, even if it arguably falls into the trap of emphasizing class struggle over race. Relationality and alliance in terms of the biopolitics of colonialism is thus tenuous at best here, but the work of Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) expands on this idea, and as such is the subject of Chapter 4.

Cloud Atlas

Whereas *Iron Council* is useful for thinking about the intersection between class and race struggles in late global capitalism broadly-speaking, *Cloud Atlas* is useful for thinking about the persistence and vibrancy of class and race struggles as a source of utopian hope more specifically in the context of imminent environmental collapse precipitated by capitalism. The novel is a set of six "nested" narratives, with the chronologically earliest as the opening and closing narrative, while the latest is placed in the center. The first narrative is set in 1849 in the Pacific, in the style of a travel journal; Adam Ewing, a naive young man on colonial business for his family's overseas holdings writes while he is being slowly poisoned by his doctor. The second, an epistolary narrative in the United Kingdom of 1936, is about composer Robert Frobisher, a swindler and dandy, who is working on his grand Cloud Atlas Sextet. Then, in 1975, a crime-

thriller narrative stars Luisa Rey on a quest to expose damning evidence about a nuclear power facility that has been covered up through a series of murders; the increasing power of capital in neoliberalism through deregulation is on full display in this tale. The next narrative, a caper set in the present-day, tells the story of Timothy Cavendish, a book publisher and swindler in his own right, as he escapes a nursing home with fellow inmates. The fifth story, a cyberpunk thriller-romance reminiscent of *Blade Runner*, is set in "New Seoul" in 2144, and follows a "replicate," Sonmi-451, as she becomes conscious and leads a failed revolution.[17] The sixth story is a post-apocalyptic tale set in Hawaii, where Zachry, a member of what is assumed to be one of the few surviving communities on earth, meets Meronym, a member of an advanced and ocean-going, but dying race called the Prescients; they seem to represent the decline of Western civilization and even potentially the end of human progress.

All narratives are linked somehow to an artifact of the past surviving in their present, for example Rey's search for Frobisher's sextet, or Zachry's tribe's worship of Sonmi-451 via what has survived of her revolutionary speech. It is also implied in a generically Eastern, or perhaps superficially Buddhist, concept of transmigration, that the main characters of each novel share the same soul, which has transmigrated over the centuries, "like clouds crossin' skies o' the world," as Zachry says his tribe believes they do (302). One main character in each tale carries a comet birthmark as a sign of this transmigration.

[17] Sonmi is the name of a real-life Japanese actress and model, so presumably Sonmi-451 is a replicant based on her image. Meanwhile, the Yoona series of replicants, which also work in the Papa Song restaurant with Sonmis, are presumably modeled after the South Korean woman singer of the same name.

Criticism of the novel has largely focused on Mitchell's deployment of Eastern philosophies in the novel, especially nonlinear concepts of time and the cyclical nature of history implied by transmigration of souls. Heather Hicks explores the novel's relationship with time, which she argues deals with the cyclical nature of violence in a manner that suggests humanity's coming to terms with "the terror of history," or the inescapability of repeating the past (and I might add that those who typically commit the terrors of history in colonialism are the ones who justify it as such). Additionally, for Hicks, the nested narratives focus — as many post-apocalyptic novels do — on the individual struggling within their own place in society and history, rather than the collective. For those individuals, time's linearity is as confining as the cyclical nature of history. Yet for Hicks the suggestion that their souls have transmigrated across time into people of different cultures and ethnicities connects characters to the Other, and thus "brings into focus how a cyclical ontology could enable a positive departure from the self-interested conventions of individualism" (n. pag.). Similarly, Gerd Bayer identifies a rejection of linear time in the novel by arguing that Mitchell has located the apocalyptic in not just the future but also the present, as informed by historical events — among them colonialism and globalization — that locate even elements of the apocalyptic in the past. Bayer states: "Mitchell counters the much-discussed mythological tradition of cyclical cosmic cataclysms with a sense of the omnipresence of the apocalyptic, revealing the ever-so-fragile nature of peace, health, safety, and joy" (348). The comet birthmark they share is an apocalyptic symbol, as Bayer points out.

But what kind of apocalyptic symbol is a comet? I would argue it is one that implies apocalypse is inevitable, beyond the capabilities of humankind to prevent. The "terror of history" tends to absolve individuals of their responsibility for oppression, and the idea of time as cyclical has lately been seized upon by right-wing authoritarians for just such purposes.[18] In *Postmodern Science Fiction and Temporal Imagination*, Elana Gomel argues that postmodernity (and *Cloud Atlas* is certainly a postmodern novel) is not an age at the "end of time" but an age where our conceptions of time have greatly expanded, including beyond the idea of time as linear. She argues that "new timeshapes are being formed and re-formed in the crucibles of science, ideology and religion" (4) and that science fiction reflects these ideas and develops them in turn, which leads also to re-envisioning our understanding of history. However, utopia and apocalypse are inseparable, given that they both connote the "end of history" (21). For Gomel, the Christian sense of the apocalyptic is also infused in this aspect of the temporal imagination, and the forlorn hope of Western intellectual thought is then replaced with an "immutable millennium" (heaven) that represents the end also of history. In *Cloud Atlas,* by contrast, the cyclical apocalypse does not bring heaven, nor does it bring some better hope for humanity; instead, it suggests the persevering nature of the human spirit in an

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[18] Steven Bannon, one of the leaders of the so-called "alt-right" and a white supremacist, infamously adopts the generally discredited work of amateur historians who argue that history is marked by "saeculums" — cycles of about 80 years that herald a new age after a 10-year period of catastrophic wars and genocides. For Bannon, liberals are to blame for the economic instability of the past decade, and conservatives must prepare to seize the moment, as per the narrator of his documentary: "When you get into a crisis era, literally anything can happen. The restraints come down. These are the eras of revolution. These are the eras of reigns of terror ... the question of what the new order will be is up to us" (qtd. in Sifry).

alignment with secular Western thought. A sense of utopian hope in human agency is hard to find when comets exist as *deus ex machina*, but this sort of forlorn hope can be found nevertheless, especially in Zachry's narrative, which is being told to his offspring. But it is rather a weak hope, and Indigenous perspectives on apocalypse are perhaps more sophisticated and robust when it comes to imagining the world after apocalypse, as I discuss in Chapter 2.

Still, *Cloud Atlas* is important from the perspective of this study insofar as it depicts historical and contemporary human relations of oppression and resistance in the face of environmental destruction verging on apocalypse, and also how it then imagines a post-apocalyptic world informed by capitalism's destruction of the earth, which is inextricable from European colonialism. Jodi Byrd and many others discuss the ways that European colonialism has "morphed" into capitalism and its methods of control, from the war on terror, anti-immigration legislation, incarceration (224). Together the narratives of *Cloud Atlas* reflect this: they track global capitalist hegemony from the heyday of nineteenth-century Pacific colonialism and its impact on late nineteenth century European decadence, into the early days of neoliberalism, then into the present world of putting profits over everyone — including family in the case of Timothy Cavendish, and then into a fairly bleak near-future, where in 2144 a "corprocracy" rules a world wracked by climate change, the implication being that trends of neoliberalism toward extreme wealth inequality and wanton abuse of the planet have intensified. Finally, the middle narrative tracks capitalism after its complete collapse, with technological knowledge lost and various types of pollution endangering what is left of the human race. The two futuristic

narratives of the six are also representative of the increasing impossibility of imagining any sort of better future that is not built on the ruins of society as we know it today, recalling the classic debate in utopian studies that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than an end to capitalism." As such I focus on these two narratives here.[19]

Posthumanism and race in the novel's future narratives

Like *Iron Council*, *Cloud Atlas* is both productive in its accounting of racialized and colonial oppression and problematic at times. Once again, *Cloud Atlas* tends to flatten struggle in terms of class, similarly to Miéville's Remade, in a way that is unhelpful. This happens foremost at a broad, conceptual level when Mitchell borrows the Eastern religious philosophy of transmigration that can be found in several Asian cultures. However, Mitchell's use of the idea suggests that characters of various races across time are reincarnated from the same soul. While the text at moments seems conscious of the racial nature of oppression, especially when Mitchell depicts a parody of white saviorism in the first of the nested narratives in the form of Adam Ewing. Ewing is at least at first a failed white savior who could be productively compared to Judah Low, bumbling in his naiveté and himself in need of saving at several points in the narrative. However Ewing's character development turns his failures into moralizing about slaver at the novel's close, making his status as a white savor less ironic. Overall the

[19] In doing so I do not intend to discount interrelated nature of the various narratives, or the importance of their nested nature. Heather Hicks argues that "the second half of each of the stories suggests ways each character might improve the karma of coming incarnations through their positive efforts, perhaps avoiding the disastrous scenario the centerpiece of the novel plays out" (n. pag.).

transmigration theme sits uneasily — shared struggle is not exactly extant between an elderly male Britain trying to escape a nursing home and a bioengineered Asian woman slave.

Much of the criticism of *Cloud Atlas* centers around the novel's depiction of the continuity of oppression, especially in regards to the recurring trope of cannibalism throughout the novel, and this criticism often finds that the novel — while provocative in many aspects — comes up short. Luke Hortle, in an excellent reading of posthumanism in Sonmi-451's narrative, argues that the novel is actually humanist (or neohumanist), in that it "refuses to commit to such a radical decentering of the human subject" that posthumanism demands, particularly in the age of the Anthropocene, where human extinction is a distinct possibility (254). Fabricants are disabled biopolitical capital without reproductive organs, who are "killable" and expendable in their bare life, and are literally consumed by humans and other fabricants alike as an edible "soap." Hortle argues that "the posthuman body [in the novel] attracts a desire with no future," effectively queering posthumanism. Yet despite being obviously posthuman, queer, and cyborg, emphasis is placed on Sonmi-451's "ascension," which Hortle points out relies on Enlightenment concepts of human reason. Further, though this posthuman narrative decenters the focus on reproductive futurity that is characteristic of Anthropocene discourse, Hortle argues that the far-future narrative privileges the non-cyborg human, creating "an overarching moral narrative for the human, indicative of the human's reiterative presence and resilience as an identity construct and species" (268). Humans will endure thanks to their intelligence, cunning, and quest for knowledge, and the

children and grandchildren that Zachry tells his stories to cement the hope of reproductive futurity.

In other words, the trope of the vulnerable Asian sex worker essentially becomes layered with additional biopolitical significance in the narrative; it becomes wrapped up in trope of the sexy Asian cyborg that began with William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, to create a sort of composite trope. Thankfully, though Sonmi-451 is vulnerable, she is not explicitly sexualized (though she does discover that some stolen replicants become sex workers through surgery).[20] But what are we to do with that fact that she requires saving by fully human men — men from a movement that is explicitly leftist in nature, but men nevertheless — and that a key aspect of her saving is an ascendance akin to Enlightenment? Sonmi-451 becomes an intellectual figurehead willingly, but it is for a movement that is committed to Western concepts of freedom and worker solidarity, as evidenced by their very name, Unionists. Mitchell does not seem to demonstrate much faith in the ultimate success of leftist movements in late capitalism, or a commitment to radical philosophies such as posthumanism, but neither does he look for alternatives when he imagines the near and far future. Despite a demonstrated commitment to Eastern philosophy found in Mitchell's examination of Eastern concepts of transmigration and cyclical time, we must search elsewhere for Eastern or other non-Western ideas about how humans should live with one another in increasingly unstable environments, as the following chapter does.

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[20] For an example of this composite trope being explicitly sexualized, see Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*.

Perhaps the most racially problematic aspect of the cli-fi or central section of the novel from a postcolonial perspective are the 'tribal' relations between the Kona, who are marked recognizably as Indigenous, and the other 'peaceful' and educated tribes of the Big Island. Kona is a Hawaiian word for a type of wind that brings winter rains, but it might sound more familiar to Western readers because it has been appropriated as a coffee brand and a separate bicycle brand — thus a further literary appropriation seems unsurprising. The Kona are described as "painted savages," and it is implied that they are descendants of Indigenous peoples on the Island. To add to the complicated racial dynamics in this narrative, the Kona are not only savages, but possibly even cannibals, as we see when one leader licks the blood of Zachry's father from a blade. Given also the historical racist belief held by white colonizers that Pacific islanders were cannibals, racial problems in this novel clearly run deep.

Racial problems are also to be found in Zachry's tribe, which is most likely descended from European peoples, given their shock at how different the dark-skinned Prescients appear. Zachry's tribe considers itself civilized, peaceful, and relatively well-educated, second only to the Prescients, who are much darker-skinned (but this is because they genetically altered themselves to adapt to climate change). It is possible, as hinted at in the chronologically earlier story set in New Seoul, that the "Civilized tribe" of which Zachry is a part are descendants of Asian refugees, however the Biblical name of the main character and his brother Adam, as well as the variant of English used in the text that seems reminiscent of today's Southern accent, suggest otherwise (perhaps though they are descendants of both). In any event, they are definitely not Indigenous to Hawaii;

Zachry's tribal history tells that their ancestors came by a flotilla designed to save remnants of humanity from the Fall. So despite the narrative's invocation of them as peaceful people defending their land from invasion, they are essentially colonizers in the first place. Yet their plight has been indigenized; they must defend themselves from invasion. This indigenizing of settler colonizers' struggles is certainly nothing new from a historical perspective, and Mitchell seems to be uncritically adopting this common Western narrative.

The real-life racial dynamics of Pacific Island colonialism cannot be ignored even though this section of the novel is set in the far future, and not just because the historical colonialism of Hawaii continues today in attempts to dispossess native Hawaiians. Zachry himself invokes colonialism, when he becomes suspicious of Meronym's motives for visiting the tribe. He essentially suspects her of being a sort of missionary vanguard of colonialism despite her kind words, saying that only he could see "the arrows o' flatt'ry them words fired, or how this crafty spayer was usin' our ign'rance to fog her true 'tentions" (252). And it turns out he would have been correct; the Prescients were planning to move to Hawaii as refugees from a plague, but it has ultimately wiped them out before they could execute their plans. On its face then, this is a rather racist tale of civilized colonizers against uncivilized indigenes, but one where victimhood and the sense of fighting a just struggle is compounded, so that settlers become colonized in turn. Behind it is also the suggestion that humans are inherently violent toward each other, a suggestion that discounts the fact that the history of violent conflict in the last five centuries has overwhelmingly been incited and perpetrated by Europeans. At the very

least, Zachry's tribe's racial ambiguity is representative of a general trivialization of racial difference and assumption of Western ideology as most legitimate and advanced, and this is generally symptomatic of mainstream sf.[21]

However, one of Meronym and Zachry's many conversations about their cultural differences, nuances the civilized/savage binary. Meronym suggests that "ev'ry human is both, yay. Old Uns'd got the Smart o' gods but the savagery o' jackals an' that's what tripped the Fall. Some savages what I knowed got a beautsome Civ'lized heart beatin' in their ribs. Maybe some Kona" (303). Still, such nuances do not quite reach escape velocity, in large part because such assertions once again fall into thoroughly Western-capitalist ideas of the basic greediness of humans, the idea that something violent lives inside every human and is at the root of war and conquest, but that can be tamed by civilization — a civilization such as Zachry's, whose intelligence justifies its colonizing presence on the Island of Hawaii. Such a contention seems more a justification of European culture and colonialism than actual, provable facts of human nature. Further and perhaps contradictorily, civilization is repeatedly associated with pacifism, despite Western civilization's clear penchant for violence; Zachry's tribe prides itself on this, and doesn't take adequate steps to defend itself against the Kona. Why do the learned have to commit to pacifism, at least rhetorically if not in fact, even in the far future? Perhaps this

[21] The Wachowskis and Tom Tykwer, who directed the adaptation of *Cloud Atlas* into film as a trio, certainly thought they were white, given their casting of Tom Hanks in the main role and Susan Sarandon as the Abbess, as well as their decision to use whiteface on Doona Bae (who is Korean) for the role of Sussy, Zachry's brother. However the problematic "post-racial" politics of the film—though they visualize and amplify those of the novel—are beyond the scope of this argument. I address to some extent Hollywood sf and its racial problematics in the final chapter through a reading of *TRON: Legacy*.

stems from the contradictory perception from within European empire that European culture is peaceful, on "keeping the peace," except when provoked of course, because of its immense knowledge and resulting technological advancement.

Technologies of globalization and the transit of empire

For all its flaws, *Cloud Atlas* is an anticolonial novel, one which is conscious of the way technology is deployed in colonial domination. Whereas *Iron Council* imagines the appropriation of train technology as part of revolution, a different technology of movement is a central trope of *Cloud Atlas:* that of ocean-going ships and their accompanying navigational technologies. Lisa Lowe notes that concepts of liberal humanism were developed alongside colonialism, as encounters with the "other" — especially enslaved Africans — forced Europeans to define what it meant to be human in opposition to slavery, even though concepts of freedom still privileged Europeans and justified colonialism in other respects. In this context, ocean-going ships were necessary to the process of turning Africans into slave commodities, and that ship logs developed dehumanizing language to do this — in transportation, humans become cargo (11).[22] *Cloud Atlas* acknowledges this history while also finding parallels in late capitalism — parallels that are productive if also problematic.

Navigation technology is firmly tied to the history of colonialism and European racial domination in the chronologically earliest narrative, "The Pacific Journal of Adam

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[22] Schivelbusch also notes that passenger trains tended also to reduce humans to cargo in calculations involving other goods to be moved; however these humans generally maintained their humanity (or lack thereof) in their treatment on the train and when they disembark.

Ewing." Autua, described as the last free Moriori, escapes death by learning how to sail ocean-going ships, suggesting that survival is dependent on learning European ways (this ties into discussions of hacking that are the subject of Chapter 5). Also, at the close of this tale, which is also the ending of the book, Adam Ewing meditates on the nature of humankind and its tendencies to both "vicious acts & virtuous acts." He hypothesizes remorsefully that white Europeans like himself will likely prevail in the world, "so long as our luck holds." He continues:

> So what if our consciences itch? Why undermine the dominance of our race, our gunships, our heritage & our legacy? Why fight the "natural" (oh, weaselly word!) order of things? Why? Because of this: — one fine day, a purely predatory world *shall* consume itself. (507-508)

Adam then decides he will join the Abolitionist cause and shape the world he wants his son to inherit, despite how hopeless his cause seems. Perhaps we might think of Zachry as his son, many generations removed, and Adam and the generations between them as having collectively failed. His words are at once hopeful and prophetic of the future described in the chronologically later narratives. Once again we meet a forlorn sort of hope that seems endemic to contemporary dystopian and apocalyptic narratives.

But two endings in the novel (the chronological end found at the end of the middle section and the end of the novel itself, which is also the end of "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing") are not without their merits despite this. It is a commonplace

that Western utopian vision represents a culmination of a narrative of societal progress, at home with Enlightenment ideas of time as linear progression. Key to this of course is the narrative of technological progress, and while *Cloud Atlas* effectively takes this narrative to task when technology leads to the downfall of civilization as we know it, we are left with a pastoral vision of the future of technology with Indigenous overtones, of a human future of regression-as-utopian possibility. Ocean-going ship technology progresses from the gun-ships described by Ewing to the murderous container ships of Nea So Copros that harvest used replicants, where once again humans are reduced to cargo.

These ships represent the culmination of efforts on the part of neoliberal politics and the biopower it wields to eliminate any adherence to democratic principles advanced by nation states (while, as with *Iron Council*, perhaps ahistorically conflating posthumanity to racial subjection). Though we might observe that if these principles are rooted in the dichotomy between slave and "human" that led to liberal humanism in the first place, then these principles are inherently weak and ripe for cooptation (the complications of applying concepts of biopower to colonized populations is in part the subject of Chapter 3).

One last bastion of humanity holds on after the decline of Nea So Copros, in the form of the Prescients, who are also sea faring. Yet even the Prescient's ship — an ultra-high-tech research vessel and the representation of the twilight of civilization as we know it — appears to have been destroyed in the chronologically latest section of the novel. Mauna Kea, the former satellite observatory that now lies in ruins and where Zachry takes Meronym in order to research the Fall of civilization, could also be said to represent

the futility of learning about the skies for celestial navigation (on earth and in space), the failure of technological progress stemming from European Enlightenment to save humankind. Zachry and Meronym are rescued from the Big Island of Hawaii in a simple kayak, an ocean-going vessel that is limited in its ocean travel to between islands, the technology of many Pacific Island tribes. The kayak, an Indigenous technology, then becomes the vessel that saves the remnants of humanity.

What to make of the novel in light of its challenging of technological progress narratives rooted in colonialism, if in making such a challenge it falls back on pastoral indigenous utopian visions of "simple" technology? Jodi Byrd, in making the previously outlined argument about Indians as "ontological ground of transit," alludes to the historical use of Western science and technology and more specifically the technology of ships and navigation. The metaphor of Indians as this ontological ground of transit stems from Captain James Cook's expeditions, which were launched under the auspices of measuring the transit of Venus across the sun, as a way to skirt the political squabbles of other colonial powers while traveling. During this voyage, their scientific observations encountered distorting effects that refused exact scientific calculations; Byrd likens these to the distortive effect of Indianness between "Indians" in North America (and the Pacific Islands, Indigenous Hawaiians being the subject of one of her chapters) and Indians in India, both of whom are distorted by colonizers as they resist colonization. Do distorted conceptions of Indianness, then, become uncritically caught up in the novel's challenging conceptions of technological progress?

It is a central argument of this study that Western science was mobilized in the same narratives of technological utopian progress that distorted the experiences of the colonized through narratives such as de Toqueville's romantic tale of Choctaw removal, as Byrd highlights. For all its anticolonial themes, *Cloud Atlas* seems to fall back on this distortion insofar as it borrows from Eastern (which includes Indian) and Indigenous philosophies of time, science and technologies — it borrows but distorts not only their conceptions of time but their sophisticated understandings of technology and romanticizes their "backwardness." The alternative to the fetishizing of technological progress cannot merely be techno-phobia and the romanticization of the Indian as "extra-technological;" a postcapitalist vision of a better world that is still one uncritically mired in colonial ideas of Indigenous utopia. Hortle echoes this sentiment, stating that "As Mitchell's novel invites us to think at grand scales beyond the human (temporally, historically, materially), it restabilizes itself upon a conservative human scale organised by heterosexual romance and a return to liberal humanism" (358). Slavery as a colonial enterprise of dehumanization may have been thoroughly linked across time through the narratives as new forms of slavery are linked to historical European ones, but slavery was not the only genocidal form of oppression in colonialism. Just as Non-Western philosophies are interesting to play with as themes but not to fully espouse, non-Western sciences and technologies are not taken on their own merits but are considered primitive. *Cloud Atlas* is still, then, a thoroughly Western novel.

Cloud Atlas *on Revolution*

Cloud Atlas is also thoroughly Western in its vision of revolution. Both *Iron Council* and *Cloud Atlas* offer leftist and anticolonial critiques of globalization and a tenuous, post-Marxist utopian hope. Both novels deny the reader access to a "traditional" or modernist ending, in part through suggesting the circularity of temporality, but also by alluding to the perilousness and uncertainty of our current moment of failed revolution, from Occupy to the Arab Spring—moments that do not lend themselves to optimism for writers attempting to make sense of such a moment. O'Connell argues that Judah Low's time golem in *Iron Council* offers the utopian hope of "revolution despite the closing of the *augenblick*, the moment of revolutionary possibility" (38). The revolution *is* coming, just not today; the inexorability of progress inherent in train technology being dialectically deployed in creating this immanence of revolution.

Just as resistance in *Iron Council* involved appropriating technology controlled by capital, so it is in *Cloud Atlas.* This technology ranges from individuals appropriating their own bioengineered bodies to trains and surveillance technology, and this is especially evident in the case of *Cloud Atlas* in Sonmi-451's narrative. Further, just as the creative, appropriative nature of resistance is coopted in *Iron Council*, so it is in *Cloud Atlas*, and this is one of the great strengths of the novel. Throughout Sonmi-451's confession, one is struck by just how much she is willing to give away about the methods of the Unionist movement, how they have for example figured out how to hack "Souls," small egg-like implants that act as credit cards and identification for every citizen. A true revolutionary wouldn't reveal so much to police, but Sonmi admits that Union resistance

is thoroughly compromised by the Hegemony, and is allowed to operate because "it attracts social malcontents like Xi-Li and keeps them where Unanimity can watch them. Secondly, it provides Nea So Copros with the enemy required by any hierarchical state for social cohesion" (348). I know of no better allegory of the state of Western far-left movements today, riddled as they are with social misfits whose energy is just as dangerous as it is productive and informants who cripple their effectiveness, while corporate-controlled media excoriate radical leftists as threats to social stability.

Yet Sonmi-451 knowingly participated in the movement, to the astonishment of the Archivist who interviews her before she is to be executed. She explains her reasoning: "We see a game beyond the endgame… Media has flooded Nea So Copros with my Catechisms… My ideas have been reproduced a billionfold." She then offers a kind of desperate hope before resigning herself to her fate: "As Seneca warned Nero: no matter how many of us you kill, you will never kill your successor" (349). She is still, however, a figurehead who is willing to be martyred, the embodiment of the trope of the self-sacrificing Asian woman, and her martyrdom as we will see does not stop the final downfall of late capitalist society. We return to the closing of the *augenblick* — the moment of revolutionary possibility — even in the future, to a failed movement that is still imminent, and to the forlorn hope that seems all the European left has to hold on to.

Conclusion

It is past time for literature that exhibits hope beyond a forlorn one lost to history's cycles. But where to find it? Toward the end of *Culture and Imperialism*, Said speculates

on non-Western literatures in relation to the title and subheading of the end of the fourth chapter, "Freedom from Domination in the Future: Movements and Migrations. " Said identifies the limits of Western postmodern culture's ability to imagine a better future, in part because of its tendencies to homogenize human experience, and argues that by contrast

> in the Arab and Islamic world many artists and intellectuals… are still concerned with *modernity* itself, still far from exhausted, still a major challenge in a culture dominated by *turath* (heritage) and orthodoxy. This is similarly the case in the Caribbean, East Europe, Latin America, Africa, and the Indian subcontinent; these movements intersect culturally in a fascinating cosmopolitan space … And their debate over what is modern or post-modern is joined by the anxious, urgent question of how we are to modernize, given the cataclysmic upheavals the world is experiencing as it moves into the *fin de siècle,* that is, how we are going to keep up life itself when the quotidian demands of the present threaten to outstrip human presence? (329)

Said places great importance on these writers' insistence on critiquing nationalism, and the role of art in liberation, which is an intellectual mission. He also argues that migrants and refugees such as himself are uniquely positioned to engage in this mission, given their placement "between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages." They also have a direct experience with all of the horrors of imperialism in

addition to the possibilities offered by Western intellectual ideas such as humanism. He also adds that "[f]rom this perspective then all things are indeed counter, original, spare, strange" (332). The refugee and migrant can then be said to have a unique perspective on cognitive estrangement itself!

I detail Said's argument here by way of making an important parallel. Just as Said argues postmodern culture in general is limited in its understanding of the world in this time of instability and looming cataclysm, Utopian sf, a genre so concerned with imagining a better future, is consciously at a loss for how to do so. We need more than casual borrowings from non-Western philosophies such as the ideas of non-linear time that Mitchell and Miéville engage with. Any hope of freedom from domination on a global scale will have to come from beyond Western empire, and utopian sf from Indigenous and non-Western societies is well-positioned to offer it, by appropriating a Western genre and infusing it with non-Western philosophy in a way accessible both within and beyond empire. And writers who are migrants and refugees, or directly descended from them as a result of Western Imperialism, are not coincidentally featured in every subsequent chapter, in particular Native North Americans, who have long traditions of creative expression dealing with forced migration. Themes of forced migration are endemic to nearly every work in this study.

Can speculative/science fictional literature counter the capitalist rhetoric of the utopian potential of technology, with a new techno-utopian rhetoric *that both accounts for and works against colonialism*? Both *Cloud Atlas* and *Iron Council* exhibit a sort of fatigue with narratives of capitalist utopian progress, but such fatigue negates the

possibility of imagining a better future without, in the case of *Cloud Atlas* falling back on Indigenous-pastoral-utopianism, and in the case of *Iron Council* relegating Indigenes to the past. The above readings of sf texts from within Western empire, with special attention paid to their limitations, leave us then with several questions that subsequent chapters address and nuance, if not outright answer.

One such overarching question is what capitalist techno-dystopia looks like for Indigenous peoples — e.g. we need a better picture of how technology is deployed in specifically settler colonial contexts on Indigenes. Larissa Sansour's short film "Nation Estate" (Chapter 3) is one of the more pointed examples of this kind of illumination from a Palestinian perspective, but this is a theme in all the chapters. From an understanding of existing problems through the lens of sf, we can then ask: What would science and technology look like if it were not only wrested free of capitalism, but if non-Western philosophies, sciences, and technologies (deliberately pluralized) were also understood as expressions and practices of Indigenous sovereignty? Once again, a short film provides a snapshot of this: Nanobah Becker's short film "The 6th World" (Chapter 2) looks specifically at Navajo agricultural technology for answers.

If we grant that the above novels show how the master’s tools (both in terms of genre and literary convention and actual technologies that inform and are the subject of sf literature) cannot alone dismantle the master’s house, then what other tools and forms of knowledge are available? I explore in both Chapter 3 with Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer* and Chapter 5 with Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* how both hacking the master's

tools and maintaining the tools and Indigenous philosophies and sciences offer utopian hope.

Further, can the inadequacies of an internationalist view of revolution be nuanced by more place-based knowledge, for example the knowledge of Indigenous peoples, knowledges that also work to adapt in cases of forced migration precipitated by climate change? Chapter 2 on the work of Thomas King and Nanobah Becker, and Chapter 4 on Gerald Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus*, are especially concerned with how Indigenous conceptions of community and solidarity might also strengthen the internationalist view of revolution found in Western leftism. Individually and together, the works I study here show that there *is* hope in the science/speculative fictional imagination for revitalizing the co-opted, currently unthinkable utopian.

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Chapter 2: Stories to Stop the Apocalypse: Indigenous Knowledge and Community Partnership in Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle* and Nanobah Becker's "The 6th World"

China Miéville writes in "The Limits of Utopia" about the increasing closeness of the ideas of "apocalypse" and "utopia," thanks to industrial capitalism and the climate change it engenders:

> Far from antipodes, these two have always been inextricable ... The one, the apocalypse, the end-times rending of the veil, paves the way for the other, the time beyond, the new beginning. Something has happened: now they are more intimately imbricated than ever ... This is not quite a dystopia: it's a third form – apocatopia, utopalypse – and it's all around us.

Throughout the essay, Miéville seems to suggest that utopalypse is increasingly becoming the only way to imagine utopia, because the apocalypse of climate change is now unavoidable. It would be unrealistic to simply hope and ignore the very real despair resulting from increasing environmental collapse. It is also important to acknowledge that this environmental apocalypse stems from the dystopian system of neoliberal capitalism. But it *is* possible — even preferable — to hope and despair at the same time.

This chapter looks at two works of dystopian speculative fiction from Indigenous North Americans who have lived the through the historical and ongoing apocalypse that is colonialism. If, for these writers, a better world can only be thought of in the context of an apocalypse that has already happened and is still in process of happening, then

"utopalypse" is the only kind of utopia possible in Indigenous sf. Grace Dillon explains that "Native Apocalypse" is conceived as a state of imbalance, and says that

> Native apocalypse storytelling, then, shows the ruptures, the scars, and the trauma in its effort ultimately to provide healing and a return to bimaadiziwin [Anishinaabemowin word for 'the state of balance']. This is the path to a sovereignty embedded in self-determination. (9)

This healing and return to balance from the ruins of apocalypse, such that the earth sustains people and people sustain the earth, is arguably a concept at home with the utopian impulse, especially in the context of the two works I examine here. Further, by understanding the philosophy behind *bimaadiziwin*, Westerners who seek to be allies/accomplices with Indigenous peoples will not lose sight of an essential aspect of a decolonized utopia: sovereignty.

I am not trying to argue that *bimaadiziwin* and other ideas of Indigenous philosophy centered around community and balance with nature are inherently or necessarily utopian — that would be capitulating to the facile colonial vision of agrarian-utopian Indigenous community. I am especially not arguing that the idea fits comfortably within the modern-Western sense of Levitas' "utopia as method," though utopia as method's emphasis on a dynamic, contingent process of working towards a better world is certainly relevant here. As I have shown in my introduction, Western ideas of utopia tend to flatten difference and are generally lacking when it comes to enacting utopia outside

the Western world — though this is changing, and this work intends to be part of that change.

Indigenous philosophy and the idea of utopia are incommensurable in many other respects. Karl Hardy notes that, generally speaking, the particularity of place for Indigenous communities is not compatible with "utopia" as a term implying "no-place" (123), a tension especially inherent in one of the works I study here, Nanobah Becker's short film, "The 6th World." Given that utopia has come to be thought of as temporally in the future, we find further incompatibilities with Indigenous conceptions of time as cyclical, a concept especially evident in the Navajo idea of successive worlds necessitated by human folly that Becker suggests in her title. Equally incompatible is the distinctly colonial aspect of the Western utopian fiction tradition. This is best exemplified for Hardy by the fact that More's *Utopia* may have been the first instance of a theory of colonization, as practiced by the Utopians on their neighbors, who, when their island's resources become strained, take land from those who don't "properly" use it. I would add that this vestige of colonialism is still present in the most popular of Western utopian fiction dealing with climate today, for example the homogeneity and unacknowledged colonial occupation of the Pacific Northwestern utopian state in Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia*.

Hardy does not argue that therefore utopian studies is completely opposed to imagining an anti-colonial utopia. Instead he contends that "recognition of settler colonialism's contribution to and naturalization within much of the modern [Western] utopian tradition is fundamental to utopian studies' engagement in an ongoing project of

'unsettling'" (127). This unsettling applies to both utopian studies and to the imagination of a better world more generally. Hardy goes on to acknowledge several Indigenous scholars and philosophers whose work could be considered a part of unsettling utopia, including Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), whose radical reconceptualization of the concept of nationhood as inhering in a group of people as opposed to a state apparatus is certainly utopian in nature. Also utopian in nature is the attendant act of reimagining relations between members of nations, and those peoples' shared responsibility toward their land and others' land — that is, responsibility for protecting the environment as allies sharing space on earth.

In the spirit of "unsettling" utopian studies, this chapter looks at two works of Indigenous science fiction that contain elements of utopalypse and recognize the dystopian moment we live in, and that carry implications for the role of Indigenous sciences and knowledge in building a better world in the face of climate change. The first is Cherokee and Canadian-American writer Thomas King's 2014 novel, *The Back of the Turtle*, which highlights environmental racism in Canada, the imperatives of being an ally/accomplice, and solidarity. The second is Navajo director Nanobah Becker's 2013 film, "The 6th World," which foregrounds Indigenous scientific literacies through a narrative of a Navajo Nation member joining a crew on a mission to colonize Mars. These works engage with the complexities of seeking *bimaadiziwin* despite the devastation of capitalist-driven environmental destruction, and show the urgent necessity for radically reimagining both sovereign community relations and science and technology in order to build a better world. They draw heavily on Indigenous storytelling practices,

which allow for stories to change over time; such stories discourage unifying and implacable moralism, and their implications are not simply proscriptions for living and being in the world. Robin Ridington explains that "Indian stories are not supposed to provide all the answers. They are supposed to generate questions, as the listener makes the circle of stories his or her own." This reflects the idea of "utopia as method," which holds that there is no simple path to utopia. Thus *The Back of the Turtle* and "The Sixth World" exemplify how not only Indigenous scientific practices but also ways of being in the world — including storytelling as method of dissemination of cultural ideas — might, if better understood by the Western world, quite literally save humanity.

Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle*

Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle* is set in Canada in the very near future, with the world slightly closer to environmental collapse than ours is now. The novel follows several main characters, including Gabriel Quinn, a scientist who until recently worked for Domidion, a Monsanto/Exxon-like company that epitomizes environmental racism and wanton destruction in the name of capital. Gabriel tries to commit suicide over his culpability in an environmental disaster that killed his mother's Indigenous community in Samaritan Bay, British Columbia. This disaster stemmed from Gabriel's development while at Domidion of a genetically modified bacterium called GreenSweep, which was intended as a weed-killer for crops, but turned out to destroy all plant life, and which was used near the Samaritan Bay reservation (ironically in an attempt to clear

forest to install an oil pipeline), causing major devastation and death, and turning the reservation into a ghost town.

Gabriel finds unexpected allies when he returns to Samaritan Bay in an attempt to kill himself at the scene of his crime: among them are Mara, a surviving woman of his mother's tribe; two Taiwanese families whom Gabriel unknowingly rescues after they abandon the *Anguis*, a ghost-like ship carrying Domidion's remaining GreenSweep; as well as the non-Indian community of Samaritan Bay. The non-Indian community is also a shell of its former self, because it relied on tourists who came to see the turtles who hatch on a nearby beach but who were killed by the original spill. Three other characters of note are a suspiciously devilish old man, Nicholas Crisp;[23] a developmentally disabled and reclusive young man, Sonny, who believes his father is holed up in a derelict hotel room and to whom he talks through the door; and a curiously intuitive dog, named Soldier by Gabriel. One other major plot line of the book serves as dark humor and political satire; it follows the only flat character in the book, Dorian Asher, the CEO of Domidion. Dorian is sick with a mysterious disease, but delights in upscale food and shopping in order to deal with the fact that his company's stock is falling due to a recent chemical spill, and his wife is leaving him. Dorian can be thought of as taking part in the

[23] Nicholas Crisp's name and timeless agedness also recalls Santa Claus. He is one of many Christian allegorical figures, yet evil/devilishness and good are combined in one figure. I return to this later in the chapter.

capitalist systems that are destroying both himself and the planet; he is also a victim of the system he profits from.[24]

The novel closes on a high note despite the evil that Dorian Asher and all he represents has wrought. The newly re-formed community of Samaritan Bay pushes the toxic *Anguis*, which has landed on its shore, out to sea using a combination of community solidarity and Indigenous ceremonial song; together they welcome a spring tidal wave that comes to reclaim the ship. Gabriel and Mara discuss the possibility of "doing something" against Domidion, but instead settle uneasily near each other on the reservation. In the final scene, a first new clutch of turtle eggs hatches on the beach, and they head out to sea under Sonny's watchful eye.

This is a more hopeful note, I argue, than one critic allows, albeit a measured and contingent one. Kyle Carsten Wyatt, in an essay that draws parallels between the novel and two recent works of Indigenous Canadian political theory, calls the novel "a cynical indictment of twenty-first-century Canada. Nothing much happens, but this is precisely the point." He notes that at the novel's close,

> [A]fter 518 pages it more or less ends up where it started. [Gabriel] Quinn hasn't killed himself, nor has he won over [Mara] Reid. Plant and animal life slowly begin to return to Samaritan Bay, including Sonny's missing turtles; it remains to be seen whether the tourists will follow ... The resolution is both abrupt and

[24] We might think of Dorian Asher as the antithesis of Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray. Rather than his actions having effects only on others, they affect him directly — until the novel's close, which I will return to shortly.

> contrived, but in the circularity and carefully circumscribed character development lie the work's true strength.

Perhaps one of the more contrived moments is the coming together of the community to push the ship out, because it hints at a level of community solidarity that doesn't exist, at least not on a broad scale, and is arguably an affected gesture toward multiculturalism and facile utopia. It is one of those uncertainly hopeful endings that we see in many novels that are generally dystopian in tone, but I contend that it doesn't quite fail so thoroughly, especially given the circular nature of the plot and the focus on a limited kind of character development that Carsten Wyatt identifies. The conclusion may be repetition, but it is repetition with important differences that we might bring to bear on concepts of time as cyclical versus linear outlined in Chapter 1.

I will return to this issue of repetition in my conclusion to this chapter. First, however, it is necessary to recognize how King identifies the dystopian condition not only of Indigenous peoples in North America but of disenfranchised peoples more generally thanks in part to the falsely utopian rhetoric of Western science. I also argue that he envisions the possibilities for inter-community solidarity in the age of climate change and environmental instability, which he suggests can be attained with a foundation of sharing stories. I then focus on how the plot lines involving Sonny serve as a new myth to be shared for its suggestions for how white allies might act in relation to Indigenous peoples in an era where resourcefulness and adaptation to climate change will be necessary — an era of salvage.

The disasters of Western science, its rhetoric and false utopian promise

King is rather unforgiving in his indictment of Western sciences and the corporations that deploy their frameworks and methods for profit, especially in agriculture, and the energy and fossil fuel industries. Gabriel's obsessions become one primary vehicle for King's preoccupation with nuclear and chemical sciences. One of the ways Gabriel deals with his anguish over his responsibility in the disaster that killed his mother, sister, and nephew at Samaritan Bay (along with many members of his mother's community) is by writing the locations of other disasters on the walls of the apartment and later the trailer that he lives in. Among these locations are Bhopal, the site of an infamous pesticide gas leak in India, and Chernobyl. He then lists more obscure disasters: Lanyu, China, a nuclear waste dump; and Renaissance Island, an anthrax facility used by the Soviet Union. Capitalism (as opposed to Communist-oriented societies) is not the sole culprit then, but it does receive the most attention. Gabriel also lists the names of Indian reservations that have fallen victim to disasters related to for-profit extraction, including Pine Ridge, South Dakota, where a uranium mine has led to severe health problems. Disenfranchised people across the globe are remembered as victims of these disasters; Gabriel has an understanding of environmental devastation that arguably transcends Western/non-Western and colonizer/colonized binaries, though it is also attentive to them.

Gabriel remembers past disasters, while Nicholas Crisp is wary of corporate attempts to create new disasters, as Samaritan Bay comes under a new threat from those who offer to remedy the economic devastation of the previous environmental disaster

with an oil pipeline. They hold out promise of a new prosperity: "Opportunity, they blithered. Salvation, they blathered. Wealth. Prosperity. Economic Security. Cuban Vacations" (62).[25] Yet Crisp can see through this corporate spin, a spin that gets much more attention in the story line of Dorian Asher, CEO of the Monsanto/Exxon-like Domidion. Crisp can see what Wegner calls the "false utopia" — outlined in the introduction — of industrial capitalism.[26] And, as I will show, Crisp works to create a community that offers an alternative to this utopia.

Disasters marked at a fixed point in time such as those above are far from the only forms of capitalist industrial harm King excoriates. The way corporations spin the "slow

[25] This is likely a reference to the continuing struggles of First Nations peoples in Canada to block pipelines, which have further intensified since the publication of King's novel. Several viral Internet videos showed First Nations women telling companies like Trans Canada that they were not welcome. They sang and played drums, and asked them questions like “What do you have planned for the future? In 20 years, 25 years when the pipeline is old?” (Blue ThunderBirdWoman). King is clearly paying tribute to these activists, and acknowledging that the fight for a future for their children and the children of others is one—at least in part—of competing rhetorics of the future.

[26] Monsanto for example is infamous for its own version of a false utopia in the form of a greenwashing campaign targeted at criticism that its pesticides have led, among other things, to the decimation of monarch butterfly populations. The page for its "2015 Sustainability Report" is littered with future-oriented slogans about how essential its work will be to both feeding the world and making it habitable for generations to come. One graphic contains the words "Growing Better Together," and within the graphic’s letters are monarch butterflies and a smiling, racially diverse cast of farmers tending their crops. Another page promises that the company is "meeting the needs of today while preserving the planet for tomorrow." These utopian words gesture towards a bizarre incongruence that simultaneously excuses Monsanto's actions of today as necessary, and assures readers that they have a plan to "do better" in the future. They mask the reality that their monocropping has destroyed soil around the world and caused biodiversity loss; their pesticide use pollutes water sources; and that they have contributed to the destruction of stable third world economies (as Vandana Shiva details in her work on the ways GMO seeds and other corporate activities destabilized the Indian economy). Yet for the purposes of corporate PR these effects are the cost of feeding the world, unfortunate side effects of altruism.

violence"[27] of environmental pollution from heavy industries — e.g. the way they cover up actual crimes against communities of color — is roundly parodied even from the beginning of the novel. We first see this early on in the novel, when Dorian is first told about the *Anguis* and the Taiwanese who are presumed dead on board. What to do for their families? "I suppose we can announce some kind of package," Dorian says, then when pressed for details, he responds: "Let's start with the announcement ... We can revisit compensation itself at a later date" (19-20). Press appearances are paramount, as they are whenever a corporation is responsible for a major disaster, such as the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico; there is no indication of justice or even a semblance of justice in the form of monetary compensation.

Other moments of parody are more directly a critique of the marriage of science and capitalism. When explaining to his subordinates how to spin a major spill of byproduct chemicals from fossil fuel extraction that becomes lethal to life in Canada and spreads to the Arctic, Dorian references the now widely-known fact that companies who seek to sow doubt about their activities' effects on the environment have taken their playbook from successful tobacco companies' PR campaigns in the latter half of the 20th century, and also from the gun lobby's spin, such as their argument that mass killings demonstrate the need for more guns. Then, in a gesture towards government complicity

[27] In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), Nixon explains that slow violence is violence committed by the globally powerful upon the poor, but drawn out in time. It is often related to environmental pollution, and is difficult to understand as violence because it is less directly manifested. It does not appeal very strongly to Western media consumers as a cause for concern because it is not an easy sound-bite in our information age. The task of the writer-activist, for Nixon, is to portray these things, and he reads the nonfiction of writers like Arundhati Roy to illustrate this.

in these efforts, Dorian cites Harry Truman's dictum that "If you can't convince them, confuse them" (440). Dorian's PR subordinates catch on, suggesting they use another time-honored argument for environmental racism — lifestyle choices: "Fortunately ... most of these are Native communities where the mortality rate is already higher than the norm .... Making it difficult to determine whether the additional deaths are the result of the spill or lifestyle" (437).[28] This is one of many examples where King links a strategy to deceive the public at large about the environmental disaster of capitalism to issues of environmental racism specific to Indigenous communities. And there are no consequences for Dorian or his company; stocks falter but then recover, Dorian's mysterious disease disappears, and those most responsible for the dystopian and apocalyptic world we live in continue to commit atrocities unimpeded.

But from this dystopia, this apocalypse, what might stop these trends before the planet becomes completely unlivable; how might we survive amid the ruins, in spite of all the things it is too late to fix? King does not leave us completely without hope. At the end of the novel, when Gabriel is once again contemplating suicide, he realizes how he had bought into the utopian rhetoric of Western science:

> Science was supposed to have been the answer. World hunger. Disease. Energy. Security. Commerce. Biology would save the world. Geology would

[28] For more on pollution and mortality rates in Indigenous communities, see Hoover et al, "Indigenous Peoples of North America: Environmental Exposures and Reproductive Justice." This 2012 study found among other things that "The system of federal environmental and Indian law is insufficient to protect indigenous communities from environmental contamination;" though it perpetuated some "lifestyle" myths in the process, it does call for more research and policy interventions.

> fuel the future. Physics would make sense of the universe. At one time, science had been Gabriel's answer to everything. Love. Friendship. Family … He could see his errors now, could see all his illusions in stark relief. Too late, of course. Very much too late. (446).

Instead of being the answer to the world's problems, Western science — in this case agricultural science in the form of GreenSweep — is about to cause (another) apocalypse, and Gabriel is its unwitting architect.[29] But Gabriel isn't allowed to kill himself. Mara insists he has a responsibility to do "something" about his culpability in the disaster, a real possibility given his knowledge of Domidion, though she doesn't specify what, precisely. We don't see solutions here, or Gabriel saving the day, or even a promise that he will try. What we *do* see however is Gabriel returning to his community and its spiritual and storytelling practices; this represents possibility for the kind of partnership between Indigenous and Western science that could lead to solutions to many problems posed by climate change.

Storytelling and community in an unstable world

[29] King demonstrates here and elsewhere an understanding of the way that science and technology companies frequently greenwash (or "GreenSweep" as King calls the Domidion pesticide) their motives while displacing Indigenous peoples, including so-called "clean energy" companies. Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez offers one example of this: a wind farm company in Oaxaca, Mexico—the state with the highest Indigenous population in the country—bought the rights to build a wind farm on Indigenous lands. While they do not claim to own the land outright, the contracts prohibit landowners from farming their land (204). This is one of many ways in which multinational companies work in concert with the Mexican state to effectively "deprive people of control over their subsistence practices" (190) in the name of environmental sustainability.

The Back of The Turtle is revealing of the ways that Indigenous philosophies based in spiritual beliefs might be useful in partnership with left-philosophies in the era of climate change. The novel can be read as a demonstration of King's philosophy of storytelling, as outlined in his 2005 book, *The Truth About Stories*. Storytelling is an expression of sovereignty and community values: "The truth about stories is that's all we are" is a maxim repeated throughout the book. King emphasizes the importance of stories in creating community and communicating with other communities, and offering hope for building what he calls "a truly civil society, " by defining community priorities and guiding individual actions.[30] King highlights the imperative to make a story one's own by infusing it with one's unique style, focusing on "The Woman Who Fell From the Sky" as an example and retelling the story many times. The story stands in stark contrast to monotheist Christian stories of an omnipotent God as found in the Bible. The novel's framing myth is also "The Woman Who Fell From the Sky, " a story told by many tribes

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[30] Daniel Heath Justice's work on Cherokee literature and nationhood helps to contextualize Indigenous community and sovereignty in the novel. In *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (2006), Justice defines Cherokee literature — including the work of King — broadly, as any writing attempting to have a lasting effect on Cherokee culture. This literature often remembers removal, especially the Trail of Tears, and articulates regeneration. As a whole, Cherokee literature also helps articulate a radical conception of Cherokee community in terms of nationhood. Nationhood for Justice is defined against "the coercive nationalism of industrialized nation-states... which work to preserve a sociopolitical boundary by which the sacred is protected," and instead as a non-coercive/anti-assimilationist form that focuses on "culture and its continuance," and "kinship rights and responsibilities" (8). Cherokees, Justice explains, have been writing literature about these ideas in English for more than two centuries, examining what it means to be Cherokee in different times and places. This articulation of nationhood of course doesn't negate the importance of Cherokee government as a unifying community force and protector of Cherokee people/ representative in international affairs. Instead and in contrast to the nation-state, it deemphasizes government as the embodiment of nation.

including King's. At the risk of oversimplifying an oral story, the plot usually involves a woman who falls from the sky by digging a hole from her own world, is rescued by water animals, and is helped by them to build a home on the back of the turtle — a home that becomes North America. There she gives birth to twins, one whose powers are creative, while the other's powers are destructive.

"The Woman Who Fell From the Sky" lends itself to an environmental message rather easily, encouraging an understanding of humans' responsibility to the earth and the forces of creation and destruction in a perilous balance, a balance that the Anishinaabe call *bimaadiziwin*, and which Grace Dillon highlights as a key component of Indigenous Futurism. The story is told in many different ways in the novel, both as one of the framing myths of the narrative and by the characters. Gabriel originally names the GreenSweep project after the tale (before it becomes renamed to be a clear greenwashing allegory), implying he is the destructive twin. Mara also tells Gabriel and others that her mother used to change the story of "The Woman Who Fell" by naming the left-handed twin after the angel Gabriel. Mara and Gabriel at multiple points are referred to as the twins, and also Adam and Eve when they return to the reservation together; they are additionally accompanied by a cast of non-human animal and human animal characters suggestive of both tales.

The way King weaves founding myths of two traditions imaginatively acts out something else King explores in *The Truth About Stories:* the possibility for intra-community solidarity in storytelling that weaves cultural myths together. He suggests a way out of the Christian Adam and Eve story's harmful emphasis on man's dominion

over earth. He points out that Christian stories are also exactly that — stories — and suggests making these stories more malleable, by adopting the fluid nature of Indigenous myth:

> What if the creation story in Genesis had featured a flawed deity who was understanding and sympathetic rather than autocratic and rigid? ... What if Adam and Eve had simply been admonished for their foolishness? ... What kind of a world might we have created with that kind of story? (27-28)

As Robin Ridington points out, *The Back of the Turtle* is in part a narrative exploration of this question, as well as of similar questions around the Christ story, via Sonny and Dad, who resemble Jesus and God. Ridington also emphasizes that as per Nietzsche, Dad is Dead, nonexistent in hotel Room Number One or a sort of absentee landlord — he is possibly returned to earth in the form of the dog whom Gabriel names Soldier. Sonny is certainly a savior of the town of sorts, but there is little room for painting him as heroic or infinitely wise. Rather, he is a playfully imagined, deeply flawed version of a forsaken/abandoned Christ, one whose obsession with Salvage is integral to King's new myth in the era of climate change. Rather than setting up Christian and Indigenous stories in competition with each other over souls and cultures, the myths are told together.

I will return to Sonny and the stories of salvage told in the novel, but for now I maintain a focus on the importance of storytelling more generally. Storytelling as inter-community communication extends beyond North American cultures, as we see when the

Taiwanese refugees first meet Mara, Gabriel, and Crisp. The Taiwanese refugees complicate and nuance *The Back of the Turtle*'s commitment to storytelling as community practice, by globalizing the stakes for which such practices might address. As such we can productively read this aspect of the novel in light of Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015). Tsing explores how perceptions of community and inter-community solidarity must change to adapt to climate on a global scale. She offers a creative ethnography of the seasonal communities around the world, including in North America, who forage for matsutake mushrooms, which grow only in human-disturbed forests. These communities and the mushrooms they farm represent the possibility of "life without the promise of stability," and suggests that they might "catapult us into the curiosity that seems to me [Tsing] the first requirement of collaborative survival in precarious times" (2). "Collaboration," she notes, "means working across difference, which leads to contamination. Without collaborations, we all die" (28). Tsing speaks of the "contaminated diversity" resulting from the forced migrations of people who make up the foraging communities, which include war refugees and economic refugees from all over Asia, people working to maintain a sense of self and culture while interacting with others from many other cultures to forage. These communities are far from utopian — foragers do not enjoy job stability or benefits — but they do offer marginalized peoples some freedom of movement, and the opportunity to build a life outside of rigid capitalist structures, even though their financial stability is ultimately indebted to a global capitalist trade system.

What are the Taiwanese in *The Back of the Turtle* — who arrive as castaways (from a ship full of environmental toxins) to a landscape and community itself scarred by capitalist-driven environmental disaster — but an opportunity for the cultural entanglement and collaboration that Tsing speaks of? At the beginning of the novel, when they seem to answer Gabriel's drum as he makes his first attempt at killing himself in the ocean they are described as otherworldly: "At first he didn't see it. Saw only the vague shadows of the running tide. And then it was there. A hand thrust out of the water, then an arm, fragile, a slender branch caught in the flood. And then a pool of black hair, floating around a child's face" (7). After Gabriel saves her, the sea becomes "alive with people," and he rescues them all before disappearing in fog. Sonny then sees them several times before they are revealed to the community, and he believes they are reservation Indians who have returned, describing the girl again as a shape before realizing it is a girl: "Someone moving quickly with long black hair. An Indian ... A young Indian girl in the alley ... Sonny can feel his whole body tremble with excitement as he realizes what it means. The beginning of days ... And he is pleased" (104). Here, creation stories merge: Sonny's pleasure refers to God's pleasure at creating the earth, and he also references the biblical flood when he hypothesizes that birds and other creatures will now return "two by two." But the girl also has much in common with the woman who fell from the sky, as the first to be seen, as myth becoming real for those in Samaritan Bay.

The Taiwanese shift from myth to real slowly, as they begin to make a life for themselves after being wrecked ashore, so they are essentially refugees of a global capitalist system that does not care about them. And as such they share much in common

with the Indigenous people of Samaritan Bay — so much so that when The Taiwanese initially hide in the reservation; they salvage what they can for shelter and food, and steal what they have to. But they are made to feel at home by Crisp, who enthusiastically shows that he wants to welcome them by exchanging stories. Crisp and Mara together model the generosity necessary in inter-community relationships when Gabriel, Mara, and Soldier finally meet the Taiwanese who have come out of hiding on the reservation. They share a meal, an essential aspect of community-building, and Crisp overenthusiastically encourages them to tell their own stories. He is described as "flinging his voice about the room" and declaring "I'm a pirate's dog with a bone, when it come to a good story" (434). The Taiwanese then tell the tale of how they had been working on the *Anguis* and were incredibly resourceful at fixing the aging ship, until it finally broke down beyond repair, and they had to abandon it, to be saved from drowning by Gabriel at the beginning of the novel, as he attempts to commit suicide on ocean rocks. Crisp promises to seek forgiveness from the white community members from whom the Taiwanese have stolen, which he will gain easily, in part because his repeated displays of generosity have gained him the social grace for easy forgiveness.

Then, when Gabriel feels overwhelmed by the storytelling and food sharing that is the beginnings of a new inter-community relationship and tells Crisp he "should be getting back" to his trailer, Crisp responds: "This is the back to which ye needs be getting. Look around. Ye are already here" (436). The devilish Crisp can sense that a new community is coming, that recovery and rebuilding are on the horizon, and commits himself to arranging events in subtle ways that ensure this. This makes him not just a

story-teller, but a story facilitator and enabler. But the new community won't be a unified "community" per se; the Taiwanese move into the town, implying respect for the sovereignty of the reservation. Nor will it be a utopia in the sense of an unattainably perfect place, and it never was; Crisp recalls to Gabriel when they return to the community center on the reservation that: "It were no paradise, if that be the question. But it were a community" (417). Instead, Samaritan Bay could be a collection of communities living as much as possible in balance with their still-damaged environment and each other, uniting when necessary, as seen when the community pushes the *Anguis* out to shore. Together they will salvage community from a landscape that will not fully recover for several lifetimes, but it will be community nonetheless.

A salvage story to stop the apocalypse

Not only are storytelling practices encouraged within the novel as a necessity in the age of climate instability, the novel itself can be thought to represent one such story to be told — a story of salvage. Salvage is a concept with unfortunate connotations in different fields,[31] but King's use of salvage dovetails well with the idea of Salvage Marxism. *Salvage*, the new periodical of "revolutionary arts and letters" (one of whose editors is China Miéville), argues for the urgency of restoring the dated idea of Marxism

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[31] Salvage Marxism stands in contrast to two forms of salvage worth mentioning here. The first is "salvage anthropology," which emphasizes the collections of remains and artifacts for "preserving" Native North American cultures perceived as dead or dying. Obviously this runs counter to the emphasis on survivance and active presence of Indigenous cultures. The second is what Tsing identifies as "salvage capitalism," or practices of profiting from landfill waste through various schemes, which amount to "translat[ing] violence and pollution into profit" (64).

— not least because the promised revolution never happened, but also because Marx's contention that capitalism represented "progress" discounted the violence of colonialism — and bringing it to bear on capitalism in the age of climate change, while paying attention to intersectionality rather than a sole emphasis on class struggle. The planet is in serious danger thanks to the wrecking ball that is neoliberal capitalism, and Marxism's strength is in critique of capitalism, so it is not to be wholly discarded. To salvage (in verb form) Marxism is to call for the left to seriously examine its failings, to learn humility, and, echoing Tsing, to rebuild revolutionary movements from the ruins of capitalism. One such necessary examination is of the idea denigrated across the political spectrum known as "identity politics"; the few issues to date of *Salvage* demonstrate their stated commitment embracing identity politics, seeing feminist, postcolonial, and queer studies as integral to analyses of neoliberal capitalism. The editors are largely pessimistic about the future, but claim to have earned their pessimism in a rational study of the current dystopian state of Euro-American politics. That is not to say that there is no place for hope, but, they claim in their editorial statement/masthead that "hope is precious; it must be rationed. "For the most part, it seems to me, a fragile utopian hope shines through the journal's engagement with art and creative expression under Miéville 's direction as Art Editor. Salvage Marxism, with its explicit commitment to postcolonial critique, is a salve against the tired Marxist tendency to background all other oppressions in favor of a focus on class. But it does not claim to be the locus of a new left revival; it is rather an attempt to understand what about the Marx-inspired left of the 20th Century is

worth keeping in the 21st, what is useful for resisting a new era of capitalism that may even now be post-neoliberal.

Miéville also argues that art and creative expression help us employ what he calls Boolean literalism, or the rejection of false choices (such as Clinton OR Trump), choices which sometimes mean rejecting art and creative expression that lacks some unattainable perfection free of capitalist and colonial complicity. Ideas can be salvaged from even the most problematic of Western literature (as I do in Chapter 1 with *Cloud Atlas*), and Miéville examines creative expression from the developing world in this light as well. Boolean literalism enables hope and despair to co-exist, allowing artistic expression to be simultaneously liberatory while also bound up in the multiple oppressions of global capitalism. King seems to reject Boolean literalism as Miéville does, especially when it comes to issues of hope and despair. Writing in *The Truth About Stories* of himself and a writer-friend who committed suicide, he remarks, "we were both hopeful pessimists. That is, we wrote knowing that none of the stories we told would change the world. But we wrote in the hope that they would" (92). It seems that salvage for King is a key part of his mythmaking, an alternative to the facile prospects of redemption and apocalypse, a concept born of hopeful pessimism.

Much of this emphasis on salvage is made by way of Sonny's plot line. Sonny is obsessed with Salvage to the point of religious fervor; he reflects early in the novel that "In the beginning was the Salvage" [28], and spends much of his time beach combing. Sonny can not only be seen as a stand-in for Christ, but also for the recklessness of Christian attitudes about dominion over the earth. Sonny is, as previously mentioned,

developmentally disabled, and Crisp secretly keeps him fed at a derelict motel (featuring a blue star suggestive of the Star of David and therefore an apt place for the Son of God to reside) by refilling an "EverFresh" vending machine, perhaps a metaphor for the bounty of nature but commoditized in the service of capital. One day however he exuberantly destroys the machine while demonstrating his prowess as a tool user to the dog that Gabriel has named Soldier. Sonny thinks to himself, in third-person:

> Perhaps Sonny was too enthusiastic when he was showing the dog how he could hammer things. Perhaps he should have shown more control and self-restraint.
>
> A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.
>
> This is one of Dad's sayings, and while Sonny doesn't know what it is supposed to mean, he is sure that it applies to vending machines as well as cities. (353)

Sonny recalls several of Dad's enigmatic platitudes such as this one, but despite fumbling through his life without a clear understanding of his purpose, he does have a sense of understanding of the need for community thanks in large part to the tricksterish Crisp, and is able to turn his knowledge as a tool user to that purpose, if imperfectly, in the form of the lighthouse he decides to build to guide life back to Samaritan Bay. He builds it from salvage — metal odds and ends, shells and bones, and copper wire he steals from the then-abandoned community center on the reservation. Sonny thus represents the

resourcefulness and creativeness so renowned in white European men, which sometimes manifests as scientific practice or (creative re-) use of technology, but King undermines this renowned trait in showing that it can be destructive or even appropriative of others' resources, in this case the copper wire. This seems to suggest that just as important to recognizing what elements of physical objects and philosophies are useful to a given problem, so is recognizing what is *not* useful or what is useful but should not be used. Sonny especially must learn the difference between salvage and garbage, but so must everyone else, and here is where the *Anguis*, the ship that beaches itself in Samaritan Bay becomes an important lesson in the age of salvage.

The *Anguis* carries a many-layered significance, both historically and allegorically. Its travels along the Atlantic, where it was repeatedly rejected from ports for the waste it carried, mirror the plight of the MOBRO 4000 in the 1980s, also known as the "gar-barge, " which could not find port while carrying garbage from New York. Early in the novel, King provides decidedly anticapitalist commentary through Dorian's sinister musings, about the way garbage and pollution management have become capitalist industries, with developing countries competing for the garbage of the developed world. But the name also embeds the ship in the weave of Christian and Indigenous myths: an anguis is a type of lizard with no legs, so one can draw an allegorical reference to Satan, who lost his legs when in snake form as punishment for tempting Eve.[32]

[32] We might contrast this Satanic figure to Crisp, as a refashioned version of Satan — if Mara can also be considered Eve, then Crisp tempts her into a relationship with Gabriel

To return to the ship: Sonny believes the *Anguis* will provide the best salvage opportunity he's ever encountered; he will "be paid," he thinks, buying into the profit motive of capitalism when looking at refuse. To treat the *Anguis* as salvage, thereby dooming the community once again, is a temptation that Sonny resists with the help of also devilish Crisp. Two manifestations of devilishness — one of delightful mischief that is more trickster in the Indigenous sense of the term versus one of destruction and evil, and therefore a representation of balance between good and evil that is a key idea for the twins in "The Woman Who Fell" — compete for Sonny, as Crisp explicitly warns Sonny that the ship is "not salvage." Though it isn't made clear that Crisp knows exactly what is in the ship, he seemingly instinctively knows that it does not belong on the shore. He and Mara rally the remnants of the white community of Samaritan Bay to push the ship out to sea, as a sort of next step in the community's re-formation after the meal-sharing and storytelling with the Taiwanese castaways. Yet when Gabriel initially rejects Mara's pleas to help with the ship, it is in part because he sees it as a scientifically impossible task. She responds to his dismay by saying: "It's not about moving … It's about community" (498). Eventually, with the help of the traditional song Gabriel sang when he first rescued the Taiwanese, and nature's help in the form of a spring tidal wave, the community successfully pushes the ship out. This signals, in light of Salvage Marxism, a rejection on a community-level of the technological "salvation" offered by neoliberal utopia, here represented by an agricultural miracle chemical-turned-destructive pollutant, but it still relegates hopefulness to a place-specific thing. After all, the *Anguis*, essentially

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by inviting them to bathe in hot springs. But it is a temptation in a trickster fashion rather than one that suggests temptation to evil.

a time-bomb at this point, beings to circumnavigate Turtle Island once again, threatening to return to its original port on the Atlantic coast of Canada. And wherever it sinks it will cause great harm.

Also towards the end of the novel, before the ship is pushed out but after Mara once again rescues Gabriel, Crisp tells Sonny he can rename the dog, and he names him Salvage, which Crisp agrees is a fine name. Salvage has become a deity, cementing its importance as a guiding philosophy for our uncertain times. Between Sonny, Mara and Gabriel, King has salvaged two Christian myths—both dealing with issues of redemption and lost paradise—showing, as Salvage Marxism teaches us, that we should stop waiting for the redemption, but be the agents of change. This will not be a redemption from without, via a Christian god or the form of revolutionary Marxism that manifests as a *deus ex machina*. Instead, King offers us a blueprint for creating intra-community myths as a step for solidarity, that is mythmaking as a guiding strategy might be a way to create the web of alliances between communities needed while the Western "left" remains broadly disorganized and ineffective. This would, King seems to suggest in the ending of *The Back of the Turtle,* involve a commitment to more place-based community work rather than the broad analytic scope that Salvage Marxism generally implies, but I myself find solace in tackling local environmental (and other) problems in the face of such overwhelming global catastrophe, so perhaps it is a useful start. And mythmaking also seems that it might help make Marxist analyses of capital's culpability for both climate change and perpetuating colonialism more accessible outside an academic audience, and help imagine an accessible future against the grain of false capitalist utopian rhetoric.

Nanobah Becker's "The 6th World"

Like "The Woman Who Fell from the Sky," "The 6th World" is both a migration story and a creation story, as well as a story where the forces of destruction are balanced by the forces of creation. Freely available on YouTube, this short film is set in the near future, and many details about the deteriorating state of the earth are left to be surmised by the necessity of a voyage to Mars to begin a new colony there.[33] The film opens on a failing corn crop, with stalks falling to the ground in New Mexico's Monument Valley. One corn stalk is saved by a shining being, which is meant to be one of the Holy People of Navajo myth — this is the first indication of many that the story is embedded in traditional Navajo storytelling.[34] The next scene transitions to a dark space ship interior, where we see a promotional piece about the ship's technology, which relies on oxygen created by genetically modified corn to keep its crew alive.

With the exception of a few spiritual-dream sequences and the closing shots, the entire film is shot in the dark, metal and sterile space of the ship; the grey of space suits matching the equipment and walls. The set and costume design creates a sense of dystopian restriction, emphasized by the frequent use of alarms and suspenseful percussive music. This predominant greyness ironically contrasts with the hopeful opening narration, in the form of the filming of a promotional video by crew members speaking about the ship's technology. One of these members is a Navajo woman, Tazbah

[33] These inferences are confirmed by Becker in the "Behind The Scenes" video for the film, also available for free on YouTube.
[34] I use "Navajo" tribal name variant as opposed to "Diné" because it is the name used in the film. I do this with reservation, as "Diné" is arguably the more culturally sensitive term for Anglo scholars to use.

Redhouse (Jeneda Benally, Navajo), but the promotion is interrupted by a visit to the space station from a Navajo leader, General Bahe (Roger Willie, Navajo), who has set alarms off on the ship by attempting to bring Navajo corn pollen aboard as a gift for her. The other crew member and their boss dispose of the corn, but we learn from the elder's comments that the mission would be impossible without Navajo technology, and by extension that the Navajo nation has become a powerful nation on Earth, among the few nations who can send their people into space.

General Bahe is able at least able to give Redhouse a "Navajo Nation astronaut flag," which she may take with her on the voyage. She also explains, as they take off for Mars, that "some Navajos believe that Mars is our new homeland, and that my going there marks the end of our time on this world, and the beginning of a new life on Mars." As is foreshadowed by the elders' visit and Redhouse's dreams, the GMO corn fails, and the ship's balance is disturbed to the point where it becomes unlivable for humans. At the last minute, Redhouse finds her ancestors' corn pollen hidden in the Navajo flag, and uses it to restore the ship's ecosystem. While Redhouse and her fellow astronaut enter hibernation pods in hopes that the Navajo corn will keep them alive, Redhouse dreams that she is Changing Woman, a Holy Person known for saving the Navajo by creating healthy children, after disease decimated the population (Estrada 525). The film ends with an establishing shot of the new "colony" on Mars, green and lush and tucked into canyons at the planet's equator.

Like *The Back of the Turtle*, the film's title signals that Navajo myth informs and directs the film's plot and message. As Becker confirms in interviews, it is based on the

belief that there are three to four worlds beneath this one, making this the fifth world, and the world to come the sixth. Robert S. McPherson, who has gathered the traditional teachings of several Navajo elders in his book, *Dinéjí Na'Nitin* (2012), explains that this migration myth is rooted in Navajo perceptions of time: "in its simplest form… there is a combination of shorter linear periods interspersed with small cycles, both of which are encased in a larger cyclical series of episodes" (239). McPherson goes on to outline the major features of the myth:

> [T]he general theme inhabitants encounter in each of these worlds is one of a new beginning, growth, and development, followed by disobedience, strife, decay, and destruction. [This is followed by] emergence of those remaining into a different sphere, and a new beginning follows.

Holy people also teach humans how to live in the new world, and generally humans are better equipped based on past experience to survive and thrive, but their success is not guaranteed.[35] Thus we once again have a story of repetition with key differences, cycles that could perhaps one day be broken free from.

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[35] McPherson's book is generally a good resource for understanding Navajo traditional teachings, but it fails in its general pessimism about the future, which he claims is reflected by the words of the elders whom he interviews. He does not give voice to people like Becker, who are working to maintain the vitality of Navajo culture, if in ways that are not completely accepted by every elder he speaks to. The book thus arguably perpetuates the dangerous Western trope of the Vanishing Indian, something that Becker is clearly working against.

Critical reception of Becker's filmmaking more broadly and "The 6th World" in particular has been overwhelmingly positive. Randolph Lewis contextualizes Becker's films as part of a larger project of a nascent Navajo national cinema, and argues that they "may help to illuminate what it means to be Diné in the twenty-first century, reminding viewers that indigenous nations are able to stand apart from the encapsulating state on both political and cultural grounds" (59). Lewis draws on an interview with Becker, where she explains that she wants her work to speak to multiple generations of Navajo, including younger generations who are becoming more familiar with digital technologies as modes of expression.

Gabriel Estrada in turn situates "The 6th World" firmly in contemporary Navajo politics, using an excellent critical analysis of the film and another interview with Becker, where she explains that "'walking in beauty into old age' is the harmonious vision that her film's final scene and words impart" (521). Estrada outlines the ways Becker delicately balances making a film appropriate for Western audiences, with a feminist intervention into contemporary Navajo politics, where women are beginning to assert their rights to become community and ceremonial leaders. He explains that the film does this first by depicting Holy people in ways appropriate for Western audiences to see, and by using a Hoop Dance song (performed for Western audiences) instead of the private ceremonial songs Redhouse-as-Changing-Woman might have sang. Becker also deliberately chooses a woman Holy Person to lead a new migration, but depicts her with a more traditionally male warrior paint on her face, signaling strength and gender balance (528). The feminist work Becker is doing here seems to be a direct answer to the kinds of remarks that

McPherson records from elders who believe women do not belong in roles of leadership. It echoes the words of a female chanter whom Estrada quotes, Eunice Woman, who points out that White Shell Woman led chants which brought the Navajo into existence, and argues therefore that women are well-equipped to be community leaders.

Becker's film is a Navajo storyteller's feminist contribution to Navajo mythology, one that speaks to the Navajo nation's contemporary geo-political and environmental climate. Like King, Becker makes liberal use of oral storyteller's license to draw on old and create new myths. "The 6th World" is at one level an allegory with a clear message: the ship itself can be seen to represent earth, the Western crew member is representative of Western science, while Redhouse herself represents an Indigenous scientist struggling to balance her Indigenous knowledge with her Western training (also similar to Gabriel Quinn). Neither can hope to be successful as scientists (or in the case of Gabriel especially, whole as people) until they incorporate their indigenous philosophies and scientific knowledge into their work. At the same time, the ship also represents a womblike voyage to the sixth world of Navajo myth, and hope for a future despite an apocalypse of human creation. The two scientist/astronauts *both* narrowly survive when they accept the necessity of Indigenous technology to restoring balance, and heed the warnings Redhouse is given by her ancestors through her vision of Changing Woman or White Shell Woman.[36]

[36] By many accounts, White Shell Woman is another Holy Person, sister to Changing Woman. However in some versions of these myths, the two Holy Women are the same, and Estrada seems to conflate the two based on this, though without direct explanation.

In what follows I add to Estrada's excellent observations about the richness of the film as allegory, going beyond the allegory's surface to make links to larger, more global concerns about science and the balance between sovereignty and inter-community cooperation. I also focus on the ways the film depicts science, land, and migration as articulations of sovereignty, while foregrounding the necessity of inter-community cooperation for survival—a survival that may involve migration. Finally, I conclude this chapter by linking the film as a Navajo migration allegory of cyclical repetition with difference to some of the premises of Salvage Marxism, in order to show its broader applicability in this colonial-apocalyptic world we find ourselves, and, along with King, Becker's tentative contribution to utopalyptic hope.

Agricultural Science in "The 6th World" — A clear message

Gregory Cajete (Tewa) is one of many Indigenous scientists who call for a collaboration between Indigenous sciences and Western science, in order to both combat the instability brought about by climate change, and to survive the changes that it is too late to stop. In *Native Science: Natural Laws of Independence* (2000), Cajete defines Native sciences as creative, participatory processes of understanding the world and humans' place in it, and also as methods of sustaining peoples in a distinct bioregion. Indigenous sciences do not pretend to objectivity, but understand science is practiced by fallible humans, and as such he argues that Indigenous scientists are more attuned to the complexities of humans' place in the living world. Though ecological sciences are a major part of the Indigenous scientific practices Cajete studies, he also discusses the

scientific nature of religious ceremonies and storytelling — in part as ways to transfer knowledge of science — and Indigenous medicine. Art is also a scientific and knowledge-transfer practice, as is keeping a relational cosmology that works as "a contextual foundation for philosophy" (58), and therefore a basis for community and institutions of that community. Cajete calls for a necessary collaboration between Western and Indigenous scientific practices to survive the world changes and instability to come. Importantly, just as King melds Western and Indigenous storytelling, Cajete does not set up a binary between Western vs. Indigenous science, but rather an opportunity for balancing mainstream and alternative perceptions of science. Becker, I argue, emulates this mode.

Much of the work of scientific collaboration today involves using Indigenous place-specific knowledge of sustainable agriculture and other environmental sciences in Western-led adaptation projects.[37] This collaboration is happening now, if at a relatively small scale that in many cases doesn't address the roots of colonial oppression. To take one example in Canada: the Canadian government recently engaged Indigenous knowledge in a conservation project in the Arctic, where the government pledged to "[incorporate] indigenous science and traditional knowledge in decision-making" (Hoag), especially with regards to plant and animal wildlife management. *Original Instructions*, a collection of talks from the ongoing annual Bioneers conference, is an example of the

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[37] Daniel Wildcat echoes this in his book *Red Alert!* (2009). Wildcat argues that climate change has become another form of removal of Indigenous peoples, and argues for a "cultural climate change" in sciences that respect life and humans' place in the ecological systems. He does not argue for a pastoral return, but instead for Indigenous sciences, which are deeply place-based, as a way to ensure technology is appropriate to specific ecologies.

potential for a wider, anticolonial collaboration. One speaker, Priscilla Settee, remarks how Indigenous knowledge continues to gain currency among scientific communities in a wide range of fields, among them agriculture (but also notably medicine). Less acknowledged by Westerners in this emerging conversation and collaboration is another aspect that Settee also discusses: the inseparability of art in many Indigenous scientific philosophies, both as useful products of such sciences (such as a birch bark basket), and also a way to convey spiritual knowledge that has practical, every-day uses (such as in Indigenous storytelling). In short, yes Indigenous sciences are important, but just as important is a rethinking of the relationship between community, scientific practices, and spiritual and philosophical beliefs.

The importance of Indigenous agricultural sciences to community survival is a clear message of the film, and is symbolized by corn. Echoing Cajete, Becker convincingly shows that GMO corn — depicted in the film as fragile kernels on a cob without husk or stalks, sparse roots stuffed into tubes without soil — is not sustainable as a staple crop for feeding the world, and advocates for a combining of traditional sciences and Western ones to find new alternatives. Corn is widely known as a sacred crop to many Indigenous peoples, and plays key roles in creation myths, including that of Changing Woman, who used white (male) corn and yellow (female) corn to make humans. Estrada argues that this symbolism "critiques genetically modified organism [GMO] agribusiness as an example of postmodern corporate sterility while emphasizing the survival of Navajo Nation migration beliefs, matriarchy, and spirituality" (522). Much of this sterility, he points out, is represented by the use of glass to grow the GMO corn,

and the ways glass in the film blocks communication between Redhouse and the other characters. Estrada further observes, "the film reflects aspects of Navajo science [and] allows for a speculation that reinforces an evolving viability of those beliefs in a space age." However, Estrada does not detail what these sciences are, beyond pointing out that they have to do with "a deeper understanding of the earth, corn, and spatial migration" (525). Becker's use of corn as a symbol deserves further study in a geopolitical context.

What specific changes are possible to our world food system if Western agricultural sciences were to acknowledge aspects of Navajo science, and its attendant myths, and accept an alliance between scientific practices? To answer this question we can consider that "The 6th World" is a myth combatting another myth: the myth that Western science feeds the world. I return to Vandana Shiva, whose book *Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology, and Politics* challenges this myth directly. Taking the Punjab region of India in the 1970s and 80s as an example, Shiva explains that GMO companies deliberately destabilize working food economies in order to impose their crops on a region, through passing new laws and even possibly poisoning food supplies. GMO crops rely on pesticides (also sold by the companies) that destroy soil, creating temporary gluts of food products that can only be sustained by more monocropping, which in turn, because monopoly prices send farmers into further debt, further destabilizes the economy. The food diversity that sustained healthy lifestyles is also affected. In the case of Punjab, these developments also led to political violence and loss of sovereignty for the Sikh-minority population of India.

The way forward, as Becker and others show, is to be found in Indigenous sciences — those agricultural practices that have sustained Indigenous peoples around the world for centuries and millennia before now. But because these sciences are not respected as sciences in their own right, they are only now beginning to be heard in academic and political arenas.[38] A pertinent and widely-known example of Indigenous science is farming using the Three Sisters method, which is used by the Navajo and other Native North Americans. The method involves creating a shared ecosystem with squash, corn, and beans that can also incorporate other crops; the Three Sisters provide a balanced diet that also revitalizes soil. It is passed down through a tale about three sisters: Corn Girl, Bean Girl, and Squash Girl. Though this tale is clearly based in scientific experiment over millennia, its non-Western explanation through myth arguably delegitimizes it in the eyes of Western scientists as a practice, which seeks an overt understanding of chemical compounds at a microscopic level. While the Three Sisters method is not directly referenced, Navajo corn pollen does save the crew, and

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[38] One example of Western science beginning to understand Indigenous agricultural sciences comes from Africa. In a 2016 article for *Quartz*, a digital magazine, Lily Kuo shows how a group of Western scientists and anthropologists have learned that the practice of women in Ghana and Liberia of adding kitchen waste to soil rejuvenates it. The tone of this article, however, implies that incorporation of these Ghanaian and Liberian women's practices is going to be co-opted as simply another tool that Western science can use in combatting climate change. A counter- example that emphasizes partnership can be found in Canada, where the activism of Indigenous peoples (of whom Thomas King is certainly one) has led to increasing political sovereignty and influence with the Canadian government. Canadian agencies have recently sought help from First Nations peoples in conservation projects in the Arctic, "incorporating indigenous science and traditional knowledge in decision-making" (Hoag). However, this improved relationship between First Nations peoples and the Canadian government is still uneven and ultimately a colonial one that does not recognize sovereign land rights, especially when it comes to resource extraction.

presumably Navajo agricultural sciences like the Three Sisters method is responsible for the ending shot of Mars with green valleys, over which we see the words "Są'ah Naghai Bik'eh Hozho," the Navajo nation's creed that emphasizes harmony and balance with earth and universe. Indigenous place-specific knowledge of crop growing may be translatable to new regions as migrations become necessary. Again and again throughout Indigenous science fiction, balance in changing circumstances is a key trope.

Astronomy, Cosmology, and Land-based Sovereignty in the film

Navajo astronomy is inseparable with Navajo agriculture. Cajete notes of Native agriculture more broadly: "plant cultivation was one of the primary reasons for the development of accurate Native calendars … By studying the constellations, mainly the Seven Sisters (Pleiades), they created a calendar that determined the proper times for planting crops such as corn, beans, and squash" (237). Cajete also outlines the sophistication of Navajo astronomy as cosmology, e.g. a way to order and understand the universe, for example the rotation of the earth and its relationship to the sun, and therefore the seasons. He also explains that "the sacred nature of the Navajo interpretation of life recognizes the stars as having human qualities with supernatural force or powers," which "are reflective of life, children, leaders, elders, and animals, among other things" (218). To understand one's way in the physical and cultural world as a Navajo, it follows that one must be an astronomer of sorts.

The role of Navajo astronomical sciences in "The 6th World" carries perhaps more nuanced implications than Becker's message about Indigenous agricultural science,

though inter-cultural cooperation and Indigenous sovereignty, including land rights, are still central aspects, especially in the event that migrations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike become necessary. This is in part because Navajo astronomy is so inseparable from agricultural sciences, as well Navajo cosmology and myth. The intricate links between agriculture, astronomy, and Navajo myth are embodied by Redhouse, whose primary role in the mission to Mars, as we see in the informational scene of the film, is to pilot the ship. She is also to assist Dr. Smith in maintaining the GMO corn, but she is the mission's only navigator, one whose intimate understanding of astral navigation will be vital to a successful mission. Yet when the mission fails, Redhouse becomes Changing Woman and/or White Shell Woman in a dream, holding corn and singing a Navajo song, her face painted in a warrior style. Redhouse becomes an astral navigator and spiritual guide, who will aid her people (and humanity more broadly) in their migration to the next world.

If we consider that migrations might be necessary when climate change has made large parts of our world uninhabitable, then the parallels to the apocalypse of climate change and the need for those remaining to migrate to the sixth world become obvious. But the film is a metaphor, and is not to be read as a literal injunction to colonize Mars and leave the Earth for dead, as someone from the Mars First movement might be inclined to argue as a solution to surviving climate change. Such an injunction would undermine the global Indigenous environmentalist movement that emphasizes Earth as in need of protection. It is a metaphor that teaches of inter-community cooperation in the sciences, but also, as with *The Back of the Turtle*, highlights possibilities for cooperation

at the level of incorporating Indigenous myths and storytelling practices, a cooperation that does not discount the inseparability of Indigenous spirituality with Indigenous science. But this cooperation will be a delicate one, one that risks in the turmoil of climate change the upending of Indigenous sovereignty and autonomy.

We see confirmation of Becker's emphasis on sovereignty first in her demonstrated sensitivity to keeping aspects of Navajo ceremonies and myth that are not shared with outsiders out of her film, and also in her foregrounding of Navajo land. Lempert notes that Mars is "artfully presented through red filtered shots of Monument Valley, the Diné landscape made famous by John Ford's westerns." He goes on to suggest that because of this reclamation of Indigenous land as a backdrop for Western film, "The 6th World" "may be viewed as representing a future beyond the colonial confines of nationhood and blood quantum" (168). In an interview with Estrada, Becker explains the importance of linking Mars to Monument Valley: "We are on our ancestral homeland. The stories are in the land, in the landscape" (523). She also recounts how, while they were filming, it was raining, and they frequently saw rainbows. As Holy People travel on rainbows, Becker took it as a sign that "we were meant to do this [film]" (524). Thus, embarking on this filmic mission to Mars is a sort of commitment to the homeland for Becker, and of reaffirming her people's land-based sovereignty.

In linking the landscape of Mars so firmly to the landscape of New Mexico, Becker raises a tension highlighted by Daniel Heath Justice, in the context of historical Cherokee forced migration: "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." Yet, he emphasizes that "to ignore these relationships to the land, in all their messy variation, is to 'divorce our narratives from the landscapes that should give birth to them,' thus impoverishing any attempt at informed engagement with those narratives" (49, quoting Craig Womack). The global forced migrations that climate change and environmental disasters — driven by neoliberalism-as-colonialism — have only begun, and must be taken into account. Who better to account for these than Indigenous peoples who have already experienced and continue to experience forced migrations in many forms? Migration may be necessary, but it must be accompanied by work to rehabilitate a polluted earth that cannot sustain life, with a mind toward enabling Indigenous peoples to return to their ancestral parts of the earth, and be equal partners in the process of revitalizing earth. The tension between coming to terms with forced migration and sovereignty as tied to land is not one that Becker tries to solve, but rather invite conversation around. It is a conversation that understands migration in the context of respecting the rights of other peoples, and cooperating with them for survival.

Conclusion

Repetition with a difference in Indigenous storytelling is a helpful tool for dealing with the dystopia that is capitalist-driven climate change. While we may feel trapped in a cycle of human folly that is making the world unlivable, King demonstrates through Gabriel especially that humans are capable of learning from their mistakes, of shedding their harmful ideologies, even if this still makes them imperfect. "The 6th World"

similarly uses a myth that humans needed to be guided through new worlds after their failures made previous worlds unlivable with the help of spiritual beings, and suggests that the increasing acceptance of scientific partnerships between Indigenous peoples and Western scientists might prepare us for life in a new world of climate apocalypse. But for both King and Becker, these cyclical repetitions involve an emphasis on healing through community, as opposed to the inescapable cyclical repetitions of human folly in the mainstream Western fiction discussed in Chapter One. They are a corrective to David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, where the Western focus on individualism and savior complexes are mapped on to Eastern notions of cyclical time. And they nuance China Miéville's emphasis on class struggle against the cyclical nature of capitalist oppression, by foregrounding Indigenous survivance and sovereignty. A return to balance in the time of climate apocalypse may take generations, but Crisp promises Gabriel and Mara that other surviving members will return to build a community, one that will be strengthened by the international community of Samaritan Bay.

Repetition and cyclicality also brings a challenge to the idea of utopia as a culmination of Western progress. Becker, echoing Hardy's aforementioned statements about the colonial nature of the idea of utopia, expresses hesitation over discussing her film in a utopian context. In an interview, Lempert explains that Becker "cautioned against the direct application of 'utopia' to any indigenous context, as it problematically implies a distinct sense of linear progression, rather than cyclical time and the maintaining of balance" (168). The decolonized perspective on utopia that this dissertation offers then—as a project of "unsettling" utopian studies—does not subscribe

to the linear view of Western progress that is key to so much Marxist-inspired utopian writing from the Western world (such as William Morris's *News from Nowhere*). Instead, it suggests intersectional solidarity and Indigenous sovereignty as essential to visions of a better future, one that is still utopian in the sense of Levitas's "utopia as method" as outlined in the introduction. Cyclicality with differences helps remind us that better society may not last; vigilance is necessary, as Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* also teaches us.

A decolonized vision of utopia also sheds the connotation that utopia is unreasonable hope, hope that does not take into account mourning for the future that could have been, or the increasing inevitability of planet-scale environmental collapse. And this is where China Miéville's concept of utopalypse is useful. He writes:

> Earth: to be determined. Utopia? Apocalypse? Is it worse to hope or to despair? To that question there can only be one answer: yes. It is worse to hope or to despair. Bad hope and bad despair are mutually constitutive. Capitalism gets you coming or going.

Miéville calls on us to hope *and* to despair, in an informed way that can differentiate between the false utopian visions of neoliberalism, and a calculated hope amid mourning and loss. It is just such a calculated utopalyptic hope that the works of Indigenous fiction I explore here have to offer. Both King and Becker echo Miéville and Salvage Marxism more broadly in rejecting the violence of neoliberalism-as-colonialism. Both argue for a

scientifically-based resourcefulness that can adapt to our changing times; Indigenous corn grown with the science fictional space-hydroponics repurposed from a failing ecological system. Key to adaption, then, will be salvage.

While at home with Salvage Marxism in profound ways, King and Becker enrich the potentiality of utopalypse beyond its outline in the work of Miéville, and in accordance with the journal *Salvage*'s commitment to intersectionality. King and Becker understand that, as Temagami First Nation writer Dale Turner argues, "the politics of ally-ship and solidarity between Native and non-Native peoples are of real importance to social movements concerned with transcending settler colonialism" (131). Of course, settler colonialism can only hope to be transcended through an understanding of its link to neoliberal capitalism and its disastrous effects on people and the planet. In their own ways and with different emphases, both works highlight Indigenous science and interrelated spiritual and storytelling practices as essential to the survival of the human race, in the context of mutual cooperation between Westerners and Indigenous peoples. Ally-ship and solidarity includes, as this chapter does, advocating that Indigenous sciences and Indigenous philosophy more broadly have a lot to offer in partnership with Western science and philosophy. In a time where Western philosophers admit that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than utopia, this ally-ship offers a vision of a better world while mourning for the parts of the world that are now beyond full repair and restoration.

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Chapter 3: Dystopian Biopolitics in the Settler Colony: Larissa Sansour's "Nation Estate" and Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer*

Two images open this chapter; they are from two independent, dystopian science fiction films set at two different border walls, both built by settler colonies. The first is from *Sleep Dealer*, a 2008 feature film directed and co-written by Peruvian-American Alex Rivera. The second is from Palestinian director/artist Larissa Sansour's "Nation Estate," a short film accompanied by still images, that was part of an exhibit that first premiered in London in 2012. Both are extreme close-ups of eyes coming into contact with advanced, bodily intrusive technology.

Fig. 1 Contact eye technology (film still) from Rivera, Alex. *Sleep Dealer*. Maya Entertainment, 2008.

Fig. 2 Eye Scanning technology (film still) from Sansour, Larissa. *Nation Estate (Short)*. 2012.

In the first image (fig. 1), this technology is represented by a blue-tinted eye contact, part of a system that enables Latin American laborers (in this case a former Oaxacan farmer) to control machines across the border in the US. The system includes "nodes," implanted slots for inserting large needles into the body that (presumably) enable the worker to transmit muscle movements. They are implanted in lines that presumably follow the nervous system along the worker's shoulders and neck, and are also the subject of frequent extreme close-ups throughout the film. The second extreme close-up from "Nation Estate" (fig. 2) is the eye of the unnamed Palestinian main character in the process of being scanned for entry in a border zone, while the character remains calm and unblinking. The scan is part of a system of ultra-securitized border technologies that enable Palestinians to travel to and from a Palestinian state that has become a large, super high-tech skyscraper somewhere outside of Jerusalem, with Jerusalem now controlled completely by Israel.

Both images represent an incredibly fine level of control over the bodies of colonized peoples, through the use of technologies that provide a comfortable barrier between colonizer and colonized, in part alienating the colonizer from their role in oppression, enabling colonizers to never be too physically near the colonized. This shifts also the colonizing gaze. The colonizing gaze is a luxury for the colonizer, and John Rieder explains that it "distributes knowledge and power to the subject who looks, while denying or minimizing access to power for its object, the one looked at" (9). For Rieder, the colonizing gaze in early sf is often held by the scientific observer as he views a native or alien population; here, the colonial gaze is diffused through technology. We see in these two films close-ups of bodies of the colonized to see how confined and claustrophobic their lives are, implicating the viewer in the surveillance of colonization. Technology literally obscures their vision, symbolizing how they are hindered from understanding their individualized oppressions in the context of a larger whole.

Taken together, these images are suggestive of larger systems of disciplinary biopower in the border zones of the settler colony. For Foucault, disciplinary biopower describes the way the state manages populations in the modern era, controlling all aspects of individuals' lives through systems of regulation and surveillance, from a proliferation of documents for individuals, for example, to school and hospital regulations. Foucault takes the idea of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison, wherein the prison is structured such that prisoners could potentially be constantly surveilled by guards whom the prisoners cannot see, such that the prisoner internalizes the idea that they are under constant surveillance, even if they are not. In this way, the prisoner is made "the principle

of his own subjection" (203), and becomes part of the "mechanism of power" that is discipline (217). Scholars of settler colonialism have applied principles of biopolitics to settler colonial formations. Following Scott Morgensen, settler colonialism structures biopower: the colony *is* a permanent "state of exception,"[39] where the indigenous are to be controlled and eliminated through the various means that Patrick Wolfe outlines: removal and "governmental procedures of 'recognition' — even, of 'nationality' or 'sovereignty,'" a sovereignty limited by the authority of the colonizing state (62). Affording the indigenous some limited governance is a biopolitical move of elimination designed to pacify indigenous populations, in part by formalizing bureaucratic methods of inclusion and inclusion and creating systems of registration that can be used to oppress those on rolls and off of them in various ways. Thus Morgensen and Wolfe help us understand, for example, that the highly securitized, biometrical Nation Estate, is a glorified refugee camp masquerading as an opportunity for Palestinian freedom.

The two films reveal different aspects of biopolitics at work in and around the technologically-advanced borders of contemporary settler colonies,[40] yet neither the images above nor the films as a whole focus on actual border walls and their technological systems themselves. They focus instead on the ways border biopolitics

[39] The state of exception is, roughly, the power to decide when its own laws can be broken in defense of its subjects. Morgensen focuses on how Agamben links the state of exception with the ability to decide who can be made *homo sacer* — reduced to 'bare life' — but points out that neither Agamben nor Foucault grasped the way colonialism informs the state of exception, and became the grounds for developing biopower imported from the colonies.

[40] As detailed in the introduction to this dissertation, while no two settler colonies are identical, they share similarities that Wolfe spends much time comparing such as genocide by violence, assimilation (as an aspect of genocide), and land and resource appropriation.

affect individuals, through a satirical rendering of border technology in the not-so-distant future. *Sleep Dealer* emphasizes what Foucault calls “the body-machine complex,” the way humans become part of machines that capitalism profits from, and this emphasis reveals how the US desires only migrant labor, not migrants themselves, and satirically proposes an “ideal solution” such that the bodies of migrants can remain south of the border. “Nation Estate” also proposes an “ideal solution” from a settler colonizer’s perspective; it focuses more on the biopolitics of surveillance, and of the docility of the body that Foucault maintains biopower demands, even while it confers some of the “benefits” of global capitalism upon its subjects, now made citizens. But, true to the unique settler colonial structure that is the Israeli occupation of Palestine, where the labor of Palestinians is unnecessary, this ideal solution is dystopian in a different way, taking the form of a refugee camp. The main character must remain still and calm, and the sterile technology — which is also satirically consumer-oriented when it is not surveillance-oriented — that she comes into contact with is aimed at minimizing potential disruption in the “flow” of individuals through the border and within the camp.

This chapter is concerned with the way these two dystopian films reveal the biopolitics of border technology designed to make the colonized invisible, and how they otherwise complicate liberal visions of utopia in the settler colony. Both films take a commonplace idea of mainstream dystopian film as a starting point: that states with closed borders and highly visible technologies of control and surveillance are dystopian. Some examples of this in recent popular film include *Children of Men, V for Vendetta,* and the *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games* series. Surveillance is a sign of creeping

fascism, of the Panopticon-style internalization of surveillance that Foucault argues permeates society. But all too often these films obscure race in their examination of oppression, and even, as Noah Berlatsky argues, posit "white European colonizers as the threatened victims in a genocidal race war, thereby justifying any excess violence" (n. pag.) committed in the name of modern imperialism.[41] From this starting point, both films move the recognizable tropes of dystopia into the context of settler colonialism, and cognitively estrange them further, positing that dystopia exists in the present outside the Western world. A major cinematic component of this estrangement is the extreme close-up shots of body parts, including eyes, that create a layering of significance upon the bodies of the main characters. These reflect the similarities and differences of biopolitical control at the US-Mexico border, and the separation wall between Israel and Palestine. They also provide insight, via contrasting the colonial (surveillance) gaze with the vision of the colonized, into questions of agency, resistance, and possibilities for liberation in dystopia.

The first, and more accessible of these films for US audiences, *Sleep Dealer*, is set on a US-Mexico border which has been fully closed to human labor. Workers, known as "cybraceros," in a pun on the post-World War II Bracero Program, whose predecessors once traveled across the border for temporary work, now work remotely via the aforementioned "nodes." Any job in the US, from food service to farming to construction, is now done this way, such that the US enjoys the benefits of Latin American labor

[41] For more on this idea of justifying colonial violence, see Chapter 5 on Artificial Intelligence, which examines by way of a reading of *TRON: Legacy* how AI often stands in for the colonized-in-revolt, and heroic battles to stop these revolts become narratives of saving "humanity," that is, European humanity.

without the presence of their bodies. The US has colonized resources beyond labor in Mexico too, in particular water, which is now prohibitively expensive for Mexican farmers.[42] The main character, Memo Cruz (Luiz Fernando Peña), formerly a Oaxacan farmer, seeks work there after a US-based drone strike mistakes his father for an "aqua-terrorist," people who blow up dams that have appropriated local water for US use, thanks to Memo's innocent hacking of phone lines. There he meets his own La Malinche-like figure, Luz Martínez (Leonor Varela), who implants his nodes and who also secretly records him for a story project she sells on the Internet. We later learn that the drone pilot who killed his father, Rudy Ramirez (Jacob Vargas) has become remorseful over his killing, and is buying the stories from Luz. Meanwhile, Memo goes to work in the dangerous cybracero factories, where power surges and overwork sometimes kill the workers. Memo sends money back home, though it is heavily taxed, until Rudy finds him, and convinces him to assist Rudy in blowing up the dam that Memo's father was falsely believed to be trying to destroy in the first place. Thus they begin lives of subversion at the film's close, with Rudy's commitments toward subversion more geared toward anticolonial property destruction and Memo's toward international activism and connection in shared struggle.

[42] This form of colonization is arguably closer to franchise colonialism, that is, where resource appropriation is paramount (for example the British colonization of India). However, given that the Mexican government is a postcolonial government that engages in settler colonial-style oppression of Indigenous peoples as the US does, and given that those peoples engaged in resistance that involves asserting Indigenous cultural and land rights, I am more focused on concerns of settler colonialism here, such as land appropriation and assimilation as a form of genocide.

To date, scholarship on *Sleep Dealer* — which has been fairly extensive considering its independent and relatively recent release — mostly highlights the importance of technology in the intensification of globalization, and the way globalization opens borders to capital but not to migrants. Luis Martín-Cabrera and Libia Villazana, in two separate articles, discuss cybraceros in the film as a new iteration of the increasingly more common systems of "cognitive capitalism" in globalization, evinced by call centers and other remote work. Martín-Cabrera also touches on the colonial nature of global capitalism's practice of "accumulation by dispossession" beyond nation-state borders, as represented by the damming of Mexico's water that drives the plot. He also points out the patriarchal nature of the film, given Luz's betrayal and the lack of other women resistance figures. Fiona Jeffries examines the theme of resistance through hacking in the film, and the fact that the cybraceros, posthumans made posthuman in the service of global capital, are unintentionally equipped to resist capital through their access to transnational networks. Then, in an article that focuses on the hope offered by such hacking efforts and the potential for young people of various backgrounds to resist the dystopian future of global capital together, Cravey, Palis, and Valdivia briefly mention the importance of accounting for Indigenous resistance in the film. Finally, Lysa Rivera contextualizes the film in relation to other works of what she calls Chican@futurism, which together reveal the ways capitalism is an intensified version of colonialism, though she does not address Indigenous resistance in the film beyond a moment in the film that likens its characters resistance to the Zapatista movement. The politics of Indigeneity in the film certainly call for more scrutiny if we are to understand

the ways settler colonialism persists in the age of global capital, and this chapter is designed to address this gap in critical reception.

The plot of "Nation Estate" is much simpler, though in fact this 12-minute film is hardly plot-driven at all; rather it is more a film that takes the signs associated with Israeli occupation and Palestinian resistance and estranges them in a dystopian environment. It depicts a satirical "vertical solution to Palestinian statehood," and follows the unnamed main character, played by Sansour herself, who is returning from a journey abroad via an underground train. She takes an elevator to her floor, a replica of Bethlehem, passing other floors that are replicas of other famous Palestinian cities, including Jerusalem and its iconic Dome of the Rock. Much of the film's shots focus on extreme close-ups of her body as she engages with her environment — her hands touching sterile surfaces and her ears presumably listening to her surroundings. We most frequently look at her from behind or above as she moves in her environment. Without saying a word through the film, the protagonist makes her way through the sterilized, highly securitized Estate to her own apartment, where she waters her olive tree, prepares a premade Palestinian meal for herself in crockery decorated with the keffiyeh pattern, and looks out her windows at the real Jerusalem beyond the separation wall of Nation Estate—which has the same concrete sectional look of the current Wall. At the end of the film is a final shot of her body from a side angle, which reveals for the first time that she is pregnant. The narrative continues and transforms after the film, in the form of still images independent from the film but referring to it, that have been displayed alongside it at exhibitions. These images are a major focus of this paper, because two in particular suggest more overtly a

resistance or rebellion that only exists in the film as an undercurrent, thanks to the arabesque electronic music, images of Sansour's tense facial expressions, and the film's overall satirical tone.

Critical reception of "Nation Estate" has been much more sparse — mostly brief reviews from the art world — but overwhelmingly positive. Chrisoula Lionis and Ariel Handel offer two academic treatments of the film. Lionis, as part of a larger study of Palestinian humor in art, looks at "Nation Estate" as a "way of negotiating where/what constitutes Palestine" through humor, or more specifically satire that "destabilize[es] conventional associations to Palestine, " especially the association of Palestinians in refugee camps. Handel draws a brief but important comparison to the film and the RAND Corporation's Arc project, a high-tech neoliberal proposal for connecting the West Bank and Gaza using a European-style train system, and therefore Westernizing the Palestinian state. Handel argues that this kind of mapping favors a neoliberal human rights discourse that turns Palestinians into statistics — or, from a biopolitical perspective, a population — that needs to properly "flow" to destinations. Further, this spacialization of Palestine does not account for relationships to land and community, but instead adheres to the "geography of occupation. " I expand on this focus on "flow" here, and explore how the film reveals the way such limited freedom of movement is an aspect of the limited autonomy "given" to colonized peoples in place of sovereignty, and in an attempt to obfuscate the fact of their continued colonization.

An Indigenous studies response to neoliberal utopian formations

Why read these films together? Beyond the similarities of border and surveillance technologies, there are other political reasons to discuss a film dealing with a continued neoliberal colonization of the Americas alongside one that offers a perspective on the colonial occupation of Palestine. *Sleep Dealer* is not an explicitly Indigenous text, and its director does not claim Indigenous affiliation to my knowledge. However, Indigeneity is so implicit in the work, such a "structured absence,"[43] that it bears examination in the context of this study, lest we unwittingly participate in further erasure. There are deliberate hints of this absence, given that the two main characters are conceptually linked to a "water-terrorist" organization that is an explicit nod to the Zapatista movement, via a justification of US colonialism from a satirical COPS-like show called DRONES. However, some of the political shortcomings of the film, such as its ultimate failure (though still a productive one) to posit solutions to the global capitalism it so poignantly satirizes are arguably linked to another implicit suggestion of Indigeneity, as represented in *milpa*-style farming, which is romanticized throughout the narrative. The film resorts to this romanticization in its hopeful ending, which makes it ultimately rooted in the very unexamined binary of technology versus tradition that the majority of the texts in this study rigorously challenge.

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[43] Here I borrow a term from Adilifu Nama's *Black Space* (2008), meant to describe the ways Blackness is unavoidably part of films that have no Black characters. One salient example he gives is *Star Wars*, which uses James Earl Jones' voice—a deep voice that played on racially biased conceptions of evil—for Darth Vader, who is not Black. While Blackness is made to represent evil for Nama, here Indigeneity is made to represent a romanticized vision of a way of life in peril.

Reading *Sleep Dealer* with a focus on the "structured absence" of Indigeneity in the film helps broaden this study's scope of settler colonialism in the Americas beyond the US, in recognition that Indigenous peoples exist and are engaged in struggles for sovereignty against governments such as the Mexican and Guatemalan governments, governments that are often supported by the more prominent Western colonial powers, in ways that mirror the US support of Israel. In *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, Steven Salaita sheds light on the growing movement toward incorporating Palestine into Indigenous and Critical Ethnic Studies discourse in the US.[44] Salaita recognizes the utility of making connections between the two colonial formations, so long as those connections transcend mere comparison and suggest possibilities for decolonization. Such possibilities are limited in the context of academia, but include the nonviolent movement for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions of Israel as a way to force change through economic and social/cultural isolation on a global scale.[45] Understanding such connections enables scholars to pinpoint for example how those corporations who benefit from Israeli occupation benefit from other forms of oppression do so in a broader context, and target them accordingly.

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[44] I am not interested in re-articulating here the historical and political arguments for Israel as a settler colonial society, which has been made adequately by many scholars, including Edward Said, Ilan Pappe, Joseph Massad, and Patrick Wolfe (whose comparison of the US, Australia, and Israel articulates a provocative theory of racialization in *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*).

[45] Laura Pulido and David Lloyd, among others, make connections between struggles over the right to education among Palestinian Youth and undocumented Latinx youth in the US, and argue that this is a major opportunity for solidarity among Latinxs and Palestinians as well.

Further, because Israel is considered by the US to be a part of its manifest destiny, and its colonization receives major support from the US (and, in its founding, support from Europe more broadly), colonization in the Americas and in Palestine are historically linked and — as these two films together show — contemporarily linked in their capitalist-driven methods. This reading also is relevant then given a lesser-known fact in relation to Israel and the Americas: Israel's support of post-colonial governments in Latin America, which Salaita details. In Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador, Israel assisted postcolonial governments both materially and strategically, in some cases directly suppressing indigenous movements. In Mexico, Israeli weaponry to this day supports the fight against Zapatistas, the Indigenous-led resistance movement that *Sleep Dealer* implicitly models its political resistance after. The leader of the Zapatistas, Subcomondante Marcos (now Galeano) demonstrates his understanding of the links between Indigenous struggles in the Americas and Palestine, saying: "Not far from here, in a place called Gaza, right here next to us, the Israeli government's heavily trained and armed military continues its march of death and destruction" (qtd. in Salaita 9).

Notice the ways not just borders but an entire ocean is mitigated by this statement, highlighting the need to discuss globalization alongside settler colonialism. Such rhetoric functions as an antidote to tactics of individualization and fragmentation of the colonized that are present in both films. Sansour's character never speaks to those she meets, she appears to live alone in a sterile environment; hope for connection seems remote. However, repeatedly in *Sleep Dealer* we see Luz attempting to connect to individuals as a sort of memory journalist, selling video versions of her memories to others. She is not

commercially successful; capitalism is a poor venue for connection. However her memories are used by Rudy to find Memo and recruit him, which he must do in person despite the difficulties of crossing the border. Physical proximity is certainly more successful in cementing connections, but Memo and Luz understand the importance of cyberspace for fostering solidarity, the ways it can dissolve spatial distance even though it is part of a system of oppression. Therefore, reading these two films together helps expand the traditional discussion that links United States and Canadian colonization with Israeli colonization, and highlights the ways military-technological support to this day upholds a vast global system of colonial dominance (this also includes Israeli intervention in Africa, but which is outside the scope of these two films). International connection in shared struggle, part of *Sleep Dealer*'s arguably trite ending, is redeemed as the basis for this chapter.

Another reason to read these two dystopian films together is to compare the way they challenge two different, but both specifically *utopian* settler colonial formations, formations that were once historically pastoral, and now have become neoliberal utopian projects that rely on a more contemporary technological utopian imagination. European colonization, as I detail in this dissertation's introduction, is bound up with utopianism, from utopian fiction to ideologies exemplified by John Winthrop's famous "Shining City upon a Hill," his vision in 1630 for Massachusetts Bay. As the colonization of Palestine is also European, it should come as no surprise that the ideologies of Zionism are comparable to ideologies of European American colonizers. Zionism was first a pastoral

utopian project, as seen in the kibbutz movement and through utopian socialists such as Martin Buber. In its new neoliberal-utopian iteration, the key utopian technologies of Zionism have changed from agricultural to surveillance and security, but the colonizing functions of these technologies have remained: they are still geared toward land-, water-, and other resource-appropriation and genocide. Today, Israel is a top global exporter of militarized security and surveillance equipment, and Occupied Palestine acts as in the eyes of the Israeli Defense Forces and the massive structure of for-profit war and surveillance technology companies that surround it, as a laboratory for testing this technology (Weizman 154).

How does this translate to film for Rivera and Sansour? *Sleep Dealer* presents a challenge to a specific, contemporary component of North American settler ideology around labor that has a distinctly utopian flavor, a utopia for the white and wealthy: the jobs that are necessary for perpetuating a relatively high US standard of living, but that no citizen wants to do, are done by unprotected, non-citizen laborers whose lives are deemed disposable. It is a satirically-depicted dark underbelly of a utopian vision for the few lucky enough to be part of it. This challenge is perhaps most obviously depicted in several scenes north of the border of cybracero-controlled robots quietly picking oranges in a peaceful sunset, and in Memo's first job, where we view his robot constructing a high-rise building to the tune of light-hearted music meant to evoke wonder and amazement. Yet the tranquility of this utopia-for-the-few is shattered in a later scene, when a power surge in the cybracero factory causes a robot to drop a shattering pane of glass that is then seen falling far below. This scene reveals the fragility of this system of

dissociated labor, that such labor is not only dangerous and disposable but potentially harmful even to the citizens of utopia. The failure of the network then opens up the possibility in later scenes for its hacking, which Memo and Rudy do later on in the same factory.

"Nation Estate" similarly addresses the dark, hidden reality of Zionism as a utopian project. We have a classic presentation of a utopia that looks perfect, yet this surface appearance is obviously fraudulent. Every environment is sterile; the whiteness of Sansour's character's domicile, for example, evokes a hospital room rather than a place to live a life. Seemingly spiritually-dead reproductions of Palestinian culture and architecture abound — the Palestinian flag is a key card or a section of painted marble, not something to be waved in defiance or pride. The Dome of the Rock's pristine solitude does not pretend to be real; its computer-generated contours appear deliberately to be rendered as false, a poor substitute for the real place. The Estate represents a successful future attempt to whisk away Indigenous Palestinians into refugee camps where any resistance can be safely contained, so that Zionists can build their own cities upon hills, cities free of the Arab peoples who once lived there.[46]

But the film also challenges the so-called two-state solution, a liberal-utopian vision in its own right, one that seeks to legitimize much of the land Israel has stolen as a

[46] The city-upon-a-hill concept is both metaphorical and literal here just as it was with Winthrop. A component of Jewish mysticism that Zionists adopted for their architectural strategies entail building settlements on hills, as Weizman details (87). But Weizman also explains that hilltop building was strategic from a military standpoint; many hilltop cities in Israel were designed with buildings with inward-facing doors and outward-facing windows, arranged in circular patterns on hilltops, with the idea that they would be more easily defensible to ground invasion.

permanent Jewish-only state — a homogenous utopia. This supposed path to peace neglects the Palestinians who have managed to eke out an existence on land behind the so-called Green Line marking Israeli territory, and is part of a broader calling-out of the concept of peace without justice, or a false justice which could come for example in the form of reparations or full citizenship rights for Palestinians. Sansour thus reveals the fallacy behind the two-state solution, that separate but equal can never be truly equal, and given the commoditization and deadness of the culture surrounding the main character (a culture which emphasizes extended family living situations, and the film clearly implies that the main character's living situation is one of individual alienation), this is a new Final Solution, ironically a "solution" proposed by a group who was once subject to a Final Solution of their own, a solution that seeks genocide by assimilation into Western commodity culture.[47]

Dystopia at (and beyond) the border

There are several immediate similarities between the US-Mexico and Israel-Palestine border walls to keep in mind while reading these films. Physically, the walls both traverse Indigenous lands that were once contiguous, though the US border is less

[47] We do see though an invocation of the idea of pastoralism as Indigenous utopia, a frequent tension between utopian and Indigenous studies as outlined in the introduction to this study. It is an invocation by presentation of an opposite: an ultra-high-technology environment as false Indigenous utopia. It may be a false utopia, but it *is* one in which Palestinians are depicted as accessing and using the creature comforts so important to European culture: easy food access, efficient transportation technology, security technology. So perhaps we see an acknowledgment that pastoralism has some place in utopia, but a rejection of the idea that Indigenes are backward and therefore due to disappear as a people.

contested on an international scale, and is also more "fixed" in terms of geopolitics than the non-contiguous, "elastic" system of walls that make up the Wall between Israel and Palestine, which is moved often in order to take more land, and sometimes moved back in response to International pressure. They are made of comparable materials, both high- and low-technologies: fencing, sectional solid wall materials, surveillance equipment from cameras to footfall sensors, to name a few. And many of these materials are sold to both Israel and the US by the same corporate entities, entities that enjoy exorbitant profits in a government relationship that is so closely-knit as to sometimes be indistinguishable from each other.

Further, expensive projects aimed at intensifying border security are justified by both the US and Israeli government in the name of stopping "terrorism," nebulously defined for them in a way that essentially means Arab violence against the colony's citizens. Both walls ironically produce more violence, but in different ways; the brutality of drug cartels on Latin American populations in the name of money is not comparable to the resistance of Palestinian Intifadas — a last resort for the violently colonized, yet both violences become a feedback loop that further justifies wall building. Both walls thus become part of a system of violence that is its own form of colonizer-state terror, rooted in the "state of exception" as defined by Agamben. Border control at the US border — by for example using fencing in populated areas that drives migrants into desert regions where they face dehydration — is an act of violence, while direct Israeli violence against Palestinians is highly visible on a daily basis in border zones, at checkpoints. But in both cases, such violences extend, as both borders are "thickened," a term Peter Andreas uses

in reference to the US wall and Border Patrol checkpoints and legalized discriminatory vehicle searches, as well as immigration raids in cities far north of the US border; Israel's analog to this are the "depth barriers," checkpoints and transportation barriers for Israelis that choke off Palestinian neighborhoods beyond the border.

Borders are particularly thick in *Sleep Dealer*, where corporate control of resources extends far into the Mexican state, such that an American fighter jet can freely fly in to assassinate individuals perceived as terrorists. The factories may be situated physically near the border because there was historically a reason to be close for exporting goods, but the node and wire technology that the workers use to connect could literally be anywhere; technology nowhere near a border wall becomes a part of the border. This is the case with "Nation Estate" as well; the Wall can be seen from outside the windows, but Sansour's character never approaches it. She presumably goes under it in the train, but surveillance and biometrical technology serves as an additional border crossing inside the Estate, reminiscent of checkpoint-riddled Palestinian commutes. One wonders if there is any distinction to be made between an actual border line and those who are kept on the "wrong" side of it.

Perhaps the most significant difference between the two walls begins in their economic purposes, and different applications of biopolitics emanate from there. There economic similarities: both are a significant source of revenue for private contractors, and both inhibit the economic freedom of Palestinians and Latin Americans. But migrant and Palestinian *labor* is made surplus to a much greater degree. Latin American migrants are still needed by the US economy, whereas, as William Robinson documents, Palestinians

are almost entirely "surplus labor," who have been replaced by African and other migrants. Because Palestinians are no longer "needed" by the Israeli economy, but their land *is*, Robinson concludes that Israel is on track to intensify its genocide of the Palestinian people.[48] Thus, the Israeli wall is arguably a tool of genocide to a greater degree than the US wall (though comparisons of degrees of suffering are generally not productive comparisons, and I do not intend to dwell on this discrepancy). Nevertheless, *Sleep Dealer*'s Memo *is* an exploited laborer whose economic and physical freedom is severely restricted, but he at least has relative freedom of movement within Mexico. Sansour's character does not appear to be employed, and her movement is restricted as the surplus labor of concentration camp dwellers so often is. But a Mexican laborer is not safer in his comparative freedom; undesirable laborers such as those who require water resources for farming — Memo's father being one of them — are killable.

The specter of genocide exists at and beyond the US wall then, and we see it in Memo's father's death. In real life, this genocide happens in partnership with the Mexican government, via economic deals that choke off Indigenous ways of life, forcing many to assimilate by leaving their communities for work in cities. Forced to leave his farming community in part to support his family, Memo's migration to the futuristic, closed border wall in *Sleep Dealer* is reminiscent of this common event for Indigenous peoples, and the city represents a dystopian metropolis of rampant violence that, technological advancements notwithstanding, is surely not much different than the

[48] That is not to say Palestinian labor is not needed at all. Israeli businesses — especially construction companies — benefit from the cheap labor they can offer to Palestinians who cross illegally through the network of tunnels that circumvent the Wall between Israel and Palestine (Glanz and Nazzal).

violence of many major Mexican cities today, especially for journalists like Luz. Once again, technology has not heralded the age of utopia for the colonized.

Be it to a modern city or a futuristic dystopian one, economic migrations are part of a slow genocide by assimilation, especially in Oaxaca, where Memo is from; Oaxaca is also the Mexican state with the largest Indigenous population, as well as the state where the most migrants to the US are from (Altamirano-Jimenez 210). They are also dangerous migrations, a sort of genocide by allowing migrants (many of whom come from Indigenous communities) to die of the elements, or in the case of node workers like Memo, by the nodes they must have, the implantation of which serves as a dangerous rite of passage and a sort of technological migration. Of course, Memo's migration was in large part due to a different kind of wall: a dam, in a way its own kind of "depth barrier." The dam serves as a sort of extension to the US wall, appropriating water for US use (a long-standing practice that reduces rivers such as the Rio Grande to trickles by the time they reach Mexico; the dam in *Sleep Dealer* is different merely in the fact that the water is not stopped *before* the border, but well after it). Land and resource appropriation in Oaxaca is quite common today, as Altamirano-Jimenez details in her discussion of the ways multinational wind energy companies "lease" land for turbines and then prevent the otherwise still-usable land from being used for farming. Thus the US-Mexico border wall, which seems so solid and unmoving, is actually part of a network that renders a physical border far less important than the broader system that is designed to allow capital and resources to flow in and out (mostly out), but keep migrants on one side.

"Nation Estate," by comparison, also depicts high-tech borders as components of a much larger colonial system, however Sansour's is more focused on this system as one of assimilation that also involves a surveillance-enforced Western consumerism. The iconic sectional-concrete border wall can be seen only briefly at the end of the film, in a wide, zooming shot that begins from the main character's windows as she looks out of them. The film features its own "structured absence" in reverse, an absence of signs that are obviously Israeli or clearly marked as part of Israel's border security. This structured absence reflects reality at checkpoints throughout Occupied Palestine. Weizman details the way some checkpoints function such that they appear to be controlled by Palestinian border security, but in reality Israeli operatives move behind the scenes, directing Palestinian guards to allow or prohibit the movement of individuals.[49] However, he notes that the many Palestinians waiting to cross are not fooled by this appearance of sovereignty, and that they even create satirical humor around it, for example by calling the economy of concession stands that cater to Palestinians waiting long hours in line the "duty free" (148). So, while Sansour's character never sees an actual Israeli, and performs her tasks as if she has willingly submitted to European consumerism, the colonizers rely on surveillance technology such as the eye and thumbprint scanner to stand in for their physical presence, enabling them to retreat to their own utopia in what is now Israel. Yet the dark satire that is the film as a whole demonstrates the same awareness that a limited form of consumer choice could never result in utopia that the idea of the checkpoint "duty free" does.

[49] This is no longer the case for the most part; tactics have changed even in the last few years, and Israeli security is more visible.

It seems that given this context of the checkpoint, Israel is signified in "Nation Estate" by all of the surveillance equipment so ubiquitous in the film, a promise and threat that the colonizer is still in control. It is Foucault's Panoptic "faceless gaze" that makes discipline a type of power, and constitutes part of a system of signs. Foucault claims that this

> play of signs defines the anchorages of power; it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies. (217)

The eye scanner and thumbprint scanners together confirm the main character's ID number—and this is not coincidentally the closest thing the audience has to a name for the main character. This individual's ID, derived from certain body parts, is part of a system that controls an entire population, ensuring that each individual of a population can be identified through a proliferation of identifying documents, but controlled as a group. Further, the film is shot with many bird's eye camera views, which show the main character and others from behind in a manner suggestive of a stalking drone or surveillance camera. This is most evident in the scene where Sansour's character travels from the elevator to her apartment, passing replica buildings that are eerily rendered as too-perfect and devoid of the bustle of humanity that usually surrounds them. These angles, coupled with the aforementioned view of the main character's eye as if the

audience is viewing her from the depths of the eye scanner, all suggest that the audience is part of the surveilling gaze. The audience is thus asked to view the subject with the gaze of the colonizer, to feel the detachment from oppression that the colonizer has the luxury of feeling.

Another aspect of the US-Mexico wall that Peter Andreas highlights is instructive for this comparative cinema reading: the performative nature of border spaces. Andreas argues that the technologically-dazzling aspects of border security are less effective at stopping terrorism, smuggling, and "illegal" entry (which, if these things were stopped, would negate justification for such expensive border projects), but are rather more effective at influencing public perception. He explains that "Alarming images of a border out of control can fuel public anxiety; reassuring images of a border under control can reduce such anxiety" (9). For Andreas, border projects serve as a useful tool for politicians concerned with shoring up their power, and this is their most effective aspect. Despite the at-times dated aspects of Andreas' work (first published in 2000), this argument certainly holds up for electoral politics in the US today, and such appeals to security are at work in Israeli politics as well, though I will not detail them here. So, the border is, for Andreas, a stage for politicians to appeal to voters. If the border is performative, and has also as previously mentioned been thickened, then much of the US and Mexico is arguably a performative border space as well; the colonized take the border with them in their daily lives. In *Sleep Dealer*, the DRONES program, the satirical version of COPS that broadcasts the killing of Memo's father, emphasizes the

performative nature of the "thickened" border, as do the memories of Luz, which are mostly profiles of poor Mexicans for sale presumably to first world countries.

Performance of security is especially evident within "Nation Estate," where the performance of compliance comprises nearly the entire film. The narrator continues passive compliance even when she has reached her apartment; her smooth movements concealing any emotion she may have, as if she is still passively waiting at border-like space. As cinematic representations of "the border" then, both films seem much less (science) fictional in this light. Rather they are projections/exaggerations of existing technologies and the ideologies that support them. Yet the performance of resistance is also an aspect of both texts, calling into question the way resistance is necessary to the furtherance of border security. Both films are cultural expressions of resistance to colonialism, and yet neither offer pat solutions for liberation, but they are not necessarily meant to. Turning now to a biopolitical analysis of both films and specifically focusing on labor, we can view them as successful — insofar as success in conveying a message needs to be a requirement of a film — science fictional lenses that help us see the complexities of globalization and settler colonialism.

Labor, idleness, and flow as biopolitical concerns

The surveillance and security apparatus of biopower, on such visible display at borders, is internalized especially by marginalized populations, such that the border becomes one situated also in the mind. Both "Nation Estate" and *Sleep Dealer* satirize the visible forms of surveillance on one level, and also suggest the internalization of

biopower when focusing on the bodies of their main characters. When read together, they reveal the striking similarities — but also the striking differences — between the way migrant Latino bodies are controlled by the US at and beyond its border, and the ways Palestinian bodies are controlled in the walled off, Occupied Palestine. These differences are most striking in biopolitical terms relating to different kinds of labor, as expressed in the films by the use of metaphor.

Sleep Dealer is engaged with a performance of the body as submissive, disposable labor, a cognitive labor that is disassociated from the body and made to flow across borders. Metaphors of flow and blockage permeate *Sleep Dealer*, and they are quite explicit. Perhaps the clearest example of this involves a scene that moves rapidly between shots of the electricity of node-Internet communication, blood flowing through Memo's veins, and a water pipeline. Memo narrates over this scene: "My energy was being drained, sent far away. What happened to the river was happening to me." The border is not only internalized; it is the site of separation between parts of the body, namely energy and consciousness. These shots link the appropriation of individual labor to appropriation of resources, and also highlight the ways goods and capital — including, now, cognitive capital — are made to flow across borders, while the physical bodies of the poor in search of work are restricted, and even reduced to a drugged state.[50]

Ultimately then, though the technologies of surveillance, security, and control at the border have changed in the film, and the border has closed except to cognitive capital,

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[50] Cravey, Palis, and Valdivia note that node workers are made to exist in a drugged state, with their senses deadened by their node work; the name of the film comes from the relationship between node workers and the factories, which have the power not only to induce a trance-like state, but to put someone in a state of permanent sleep (death).

we are left with essentially the same biopolitical methods of control that existed at the time of the Bracero Program (Bracero is Spanish for "arm"), in place from 1942-1964. Andreas details how the Bracero Program, a guest-worker program that guaranteed temporary employment in the form of over 4.5 million contracts for migrant workers, severed as a source of cheap labor for agribusinesses struggling to meet production demands during World War II. Illegal immigration spurred by the program led to mass deportations, and the Border Patrol was placed in the position of deporting migrants who they then let through as braceros. The program ended in part because the public learned of the deplorable working conditions of braceros and pressured the government to end it; however, the program's end merely changed the legal status of the workers, not the fact of large-scale migration or the poor working conditions that continue today (Andreas 33-35). What might appear as a utopian technological fix to these conditions in *Sleep Dealer* in the form of remote work is still violent exploitation. In one scene, a worker dies from a power surge, and Memo and another worker are helpless in their attempts to save him; their manager covers up and downplays the incident, and clearly the workers' death will not result in any changes to conditions. Once again, the utopian promise of capitalist technologies to solve the world's problems is revealed for what it is — an attempt to justify and obfuscate continued exploitation on an international scale.

In relation to the status of labor in the film, then, laborers of the future are still disposable and working in deplorable conditions, even if the location has changed. But, less obviously perhaps, laborers are still valued only for certain parts of their body. Braceros were needed literally for their arms, cybraceros are needed still for their arms,

as we see in the placement of the nodes, but those arm movements are translated into energy in order to flow across the border. Even the mode of biopower — the perilous conferral of the status of legality or illegality and restriction of border crossing — has not changed working conditions. Cybraceros obtain their nodes illegally from "coyoteks," such that while they do not cross a border physically they still must undergo a dangerous transition. The cybracero factories may be officially legal, but just as with the Bracero Program, government (US and Mexican) looks the other way when it comes to working conditions. The only beneficiaries of this structure are still those who control the means of production, yet, cybraceros do have the potential to use their subjection to their advantage, via hacking, as Memo sees Rudy do. Still, this potential is only realized by way of a White(ned) Savior, a Latino man who has had the benefits of Western civilization conferred upon him, and who was, as we see in a scene involving his parents, raised to respect and admire Western civilization and its colonizing missions. The liberatory potential of such sabotage of labor is decidedly doubtful, and the future in *Sleep Dealer*, becomes more concretely an illumination of labor conditions in the present. Even the utopian potential of a Marxist worker revolution is foreclosed upon; it is easy to prevent any sense of solidarity developing among workers whose work may involve physical proximity but whose work stations require face masks and contact lenses that prevent easy communication and effectively blind workers to their physical working conditions. The isolation that fragments workers in knowledge/computer-based industries has made its way to the *fabrica* floor.

"Nation Estate," by contrast, deals with a border biopolitics wherein the colonizer is not interested in the labor of the colonized, but rather in maintaining the appearance of adhering to the principles of Western "human rights" while perpetuating a colonial system.[51] While the colonized are also a population whose flow across borders must be regulated and surveilled, the Palestinian body must be made a passive one, divorced from land, history, and culture, who can be observed behaving perfectly well given a modicum of comfort thanks to the trappings of consumerism. Here, flow, as mentioned previously by Handel's discussion of the RAND Corporation's Arc project, is a type of flow that restricts true freedom of movement and association. The film shows this in part by limiting viewers' ability to fully see the main character's body, and also by emphasizing the artificial and sterile nature of the Nation Estate. In this way the film effectively conveys a sense of the claustrophobia — from travel time spent on an underground train and escalator, then in the elevator, and the fact that sky can only be seen through windows in the character's sparse and small apartment — that today's Palestinian checkpoint crossers must feel when traveling. The surveilling gaze is part of a system of biopower that consumes the main character's Indigeneity, universalizing their identity

[51] Neve Gordon argues that the increasing reliance on violence to maintain Israeli control of Palestinians, coupled with their shift from colonial models to the "separation principle" that recognizes limited governance in the form of the Palestinian Authority, means that Palestinians are no longer subject to the control of the colonizer directly. The colonizer abdicates responsibility for things such as education and health by delegating it to a purposely crippled PA. One might argue that this is a distinction without a difference, that the results of a shift similar to the difference between a settler and a franchise colony (which features limited administrative powers given to favored sections of Indigenous populations) still mean that ultimate disciplinary biopower rests with the colonizer, even if they do not hold the administrative reins directly. And the technology in "Nation Estate" reflects this; no matter who is behind the camera or monitoring the biometrics, the effect of colonization and relegation to a false utopian concentration camp is the same.

into a kind of consumer-citizen, driven by acquiring the trappings of the neoliberal economy.

That is not to say there is no labor happening in the film; it is just carefully hidden, revealed at the end of the film when the main character touches her pregnant belly. If the Israeli occupation does not view Palestinians as potential laborers, but as problems that must be carefully surveilled in a state of idleness, then a woman whose body is laboring with pregnancy, who will soon "go into labor," is an especially complex problem. In a film that relies not on language but on internationally readable signs (such as the keffiyeh as a sign of Palestinian resistance), we encounter another internationally readable sign: that of pregnancy as connoting hope for the future. This is not the first depiction of pregnancy in dystopian film as a sign of hope; in *Children of Men* for example, a loss of hope for the future is precipitated by women's inability to reproduce, and the plot of the film is driven by the male main character's efforts to protect a young pregnant woman in whose womb it is suggested lies some hope for a failing society. Yet we can read further layers onto such a sign, in the context of genocide as a tactic of settler colonialism, and the idea of reproduction as resistance to such genocide.

Morgensen argues that the biopolitics of settler colonialism also entail indigenizing and naturalizing settlers. For Zionism, this involves populating the land with Jewish people, making the pregnant body of the Jewish settler a sign bearing the utopian promise of permanent settlement. Biopolitics in Israel reinforces this; a commonplace concern throughout Israel is also that Arab-Israelis are in danger of outnumbering Jewish Israelis because they have a higher birthrate. One of several attempts to combat this

include the practice of encouraging Jewish women from nearly anywhere in the Western world to give birth in an Israeli hospital, with the offer that their children can easily become Israeli citizens, even if they do not intend to remain in Israel. Yet pregnant Palestinian women on the other hand sometimes give birth in segregated hospital wings and face discrimination by doctors and medical caregivers. And the pregnant Palestinian woman is to many Zionists a sign or vector for the spread of jihad, or even potentially, especially in the minds of IDF soldiers, a pregnancy is suspicious as a possible bomb — one report describes a midwife delivering an Arab baby asking "Did you bring us another terrorist?" (Weis and Ofir).

So, on the surface, as with other easily readable signs in the film and accompanying art, pregnancy seems to be a sign of resistance to what appears from the main character's apartment window to be Israel's successful takeover of all Palestinian land but the small corner upon which the Nation Estate rests. But those other readable signs are subverted by their satirical commoditization and, as I will discuss further below, their ubiquity to the point of loss of meaning. So, what do we do with this sign of reproductive futurity, in the Lee Edelman sense of the term, that doesn't take into account the needs of the living here-and-now?[52] A resistant reading that merely inverts this opposition — meaning the pregnant main character represents the promise of return to

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[52] In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Edelman embraces "queer negativity," or the idea that queerness is not an identity but an oppositional stance against mainstream politics which takes reproductive futurity as its mantra, and argues that it is concerned with the jouissance of the present, and "is unaware of the passing of generations as stages on the road to better living" (Hocquenghem, qtd. in Edelman 31). This stands in opposition to the idea of "reproductive futurity," which Edelman defines as a tactic deployed across the political spectrum to justify moral positions in the name of future generations.

the homeland — would not challenge the rote symbolism of reproductive futurity, and it would also demand that women perform an incredible amount of bodily, maternal labor in order to perpetuate resistance. In other words, it runs the risk of reducing women's role in resistance or the hope of liberation to the function of their uteruses. In reality though, women have a history of being active in Palestinian resistance, not just as soldiers but in many support roles that involved physical danger as well; this continues today (Khalel).

I turn to a radical conception of the body and subjecthood in the settler colony for an answer. Brenna Bhandar's work is instructive as a theoretical basis for reading "Nation Estate," and in order to understand the fallacy of "recognition" more deeply in the context of settler colonial biopolitics. Bhandar argues, drawing on Fanon, that "recognition" is not fully possible given colonialism's goal of land appropriation, because it is endowed with the notion of property ownership, but property ownership can only be fully conferred upon white males, the locus of modern subjecthood ("Plasticity"). Even when recognition is conferred in a limited manner upon Indigenous groups, it is done according to the standards of European property ownership, and paradoxically relegates indigenous claims to a sort of pre-historical occupation. Indigenous people's rights to land thus cannot be modern, even though property ownership and possession are plastic in themselves, especially for Israel, whose schemes of wall-building and settlement expansion in Palestine make the occupation itself plastic. Bhandar introduces the idea of a "plasticity" inherent in the Hegelian dialectic of recognition, arguing that the racialized body of the colonized is a site of instability "that has the capacity to explode and shatter existing forms of reason and sense" (229-30). Bhandar then goes on to state that the

colonial technologies that produce the highly compartmentalized spatial occupation of Palestine are one site in which colonial/modern property relations can be decolonized, such that they "do not rely on static conceptions of identity, place, or belonging" (238). This is essentially a call for decolonizing biopolitics in the settler colony, for "cultivating political subjectivities and practices while in a state of dispossession, while also never abandoning the demand for the right to return" (248).

So, as with other signs subjected to cognitive estrangement in the film, the sign of pregnancy can be resistantly read instead as a rejection of the sterilized atmosphere of the spatial individualization and divorce from land and culture that the main character faces, as a deliberate complication of the tidiness of her glorified refugee camp. The many apparatus of surveillance that seek to regulate the main character's body are representative of "recognition" in a non-liberatory manner, of the conferral of the minimum of rights as conceived by Western humanism. The main character's pregnancy is a symbol of the excess that Brenna Bhandar speaks of when she explains that in the settler colonial context, the body serves in the dialectic of recognition as a site of instability. The body, she writes, “engages the realm of the illicit, and turns to improper, unexpected acts and practices that open a space for political transformation and rupture” (230). Pregnancy is an especially unstable bodily condition for the colonizer seeking to assert biopower over the life processes of colonized subjects, and the pregnant body as a battleground for biopower is an issue of security and surveillance as well, given the paranoia of concealment typically assigned to the bodies and clothing of Arab women (who are assumed to be Muslim even though this is not always the case). Pregnancy is

not reducible to the revolutionary act; it is rather one in a series of moments of inducing instability into this refugee camp, and of understanding how "recognition" imposed by the colonizer under the rubric of modern subjecthood is itself an element of genocide. Sansour is insisting on what Bhandar calls "cultivating political subjectivities and practices while in a state of dispossession" (248); she is decidedly not white or male, and the plasticity of her pregnant body shows that she does not seek "recognition" and a comfortable Westernized life, but rather liberation.

Sovereignty and the technology-tradition dichotomy

Reproductive labor is essentially foreclosed upon in *Sleep Dealer*. Luz, as Memo's love interest, fulfills her La Malinche role by betraying him, selling stories of his life without his knowledge. It does not seem likely that their relationship will continue romantically, as Memo is alone in the final scenes of the film. These scenes of him carrying water and watering his garden are also the most hopeful; Memo engages in a different type of labor — the pastoral, a labor of perpetuating existing life, which is still a romantic gesture in a nostalgic sense, especially when it is a labor that is Indigenized and evokes a simpler, but happier, time.

Given Bhandar's assertion that recognition of Indigenous rights entails relegating Indigenous peoples to a pre-historical condition of land occupation ("Possession"), I address another pre-historic ideal that "Nation Estate" and *Sleep Dealer* invoke, and complicate. This ideal is that of the pastoral, which becomes a pastoral romanticization of

Indigeneity as a "simple life," a life humans had before civilization complicated it.[53] Once again, I compare two images/scenes: Sansour's olive tree cracking the floor and walls of the Nation Estate, which is part of the image stills accompanying the "Nation Estate" (fig. 3); and the closing scene of *Sleep* Dealer, which shows Memo farming at the border, using his node-covered arms to water newly-planted seeds (fig. 4), followed by a shot of his seeds sprouting (fig. 5), which is then shown on the node memory screen, presumably because Memo has uploaded it. Not shown here, but also part of the closing moments and this discussion, is a brief shot of a fighter plane flying across the border, and over Memo's crops, suggesting that Rudy has hacked into and is flying this plane. Both main characters' actions in the two moments shown here seem to suggest that farming is an act of resistance, and maintaining Indigenous knowledge is key to ensuring that resistance coheres around shared values.[54]

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[53] The pastoral ideal can also be invoked in colonizing missions, though this kind of simple life is one of Humanist enlightenment (the most relevant example being the aforementioned kibbutz movement), an exalted form above the pre-modern Indigenous romance.

[54] These images recall the first chapter of this dissertation, which highlights the importance of Indigenous science and technology in relation to agriculture, and argues that postcolonial science fiction shows how Indigenous environmental sciences can offer solutions to climate change.

Fig. 3 Olive Tree from Sansour, Larissa. *Nation Estate- Photo and Video*.

Fig. 4 Memo watering crops (film still) from Rivera, Alex. *Sleep Dealer*.

Fig. 5 Crops growing (film still) from Rivera, Alex. *Sleep Dealer*.

But this would be an oversimplification, one that risks a slide into pastoralism as previously mentioned, rather than an engagement with the ways Indigenous epistemologies can transform technological futurisms, especially for "Nation Estate." Returning to the idea that Sansour has cognitively estranged signs of nationalism can help us escape this oversimplification. Larissa Sansour claims not to be positing solutions for decolonization in her work, but rather an opportunity to counter prevailing Israeli narratives about the occupation through science fiction:

> Israel has been successful at creating facts on the ground. I'm interested in finding positive ways of dealing with this. How can Palestinians protest their rights by spreading facts on the ground? Why not create a parallel universe, using a language that's never been used? (Brooks)

The film and accompanying art are, for Sansour, a way to start new conversations beyond the images of violence that international audiences have, she believes, become desensitized to. But, as with many artistic disavowals of political intentionality, her assertions are somewhat undercut by her use of satire as a mode in the first place; satire is a political genre. Sansour's work is thus a sort of solution in itself insofar as it is using science fiction to educate viewers about an increasingly intolerable colonial structure. Fiction starts conversations, which have the potential to inform geopolitics.

One of the major opportunities for new conversation lie in the ways the signs of resistance and nationalism in the film (especially the keffiyeh pattern and olive tree) are

estranged, such that the very idea of a nation state for Palestinians is implicitly challenged. These signs of resistance have implications for the One-State versus Two-State solution argument. Clearly, one Nation (E)state affords some level of peace and life's modern "comforts" such as ready-made meals, but at what cost, especially if, as per Morgensen, hollow gifts of sovereignty are actually tools of assimilation, and therefore genocide? Salaita is again instructive here in his application of Indigenous Studies' delineation (mentioned also in Chapter 2) of two different kinds of nationalisms in relation to Palestine and other colonized peoples, thus creating the term "inter/nationalism." The "nation" as opposed to the "nation-state" defines a group of people associated with a land area, and "a collective that works in the interests of community rather than of corporations and plutocrats." Therefore inter/nationalism puts such nationalisms "into conversation or, more ambitiously, into collective practice" (xvi). In short, inter/nationalism — an Indigenous epistemology of governance — combats globalization at its seemingly insurmountable global scale, seeking connections in shared struggle and articulating the possibilities for decolonization.

In short, "Nation Estate" acknowledges the necessary connections to be successful in shared struggle that *Sleep Dealer* closes with, adding nuance to a seemingly facile pastoral ending. There is little place for nationalism in *Sleep Dealer*; Mexico is depicted more or less as a failed a state where citizenship confers no benefits or protections, and there are few indications that government functions at any level. If Memo is indeed Indigenous, however, then we might read his dedication to his corn crop as a commitment to a culture outside statehood. By contrast, "Nation Estate" makes this commitment

explicit: Palestinians are a people with a defined culture in peril of cooptation and assimilation, one that appears in the context of the film to have been essentially abandoned by the international community and may not even be able to rely on it for liberation. Such liberation must come from within.

It seems that, while still not offering a proscriptive "solution" to the question of Palestinian sovereignty, Sansour's film reveals the hollow nature of sovereignty conferred by a colonizing nation-state, in the form of a nation-state for Palestinians. This is not a solution, evidenced by the fact that the limited autonomy offered Indigenous peoples in North America has not resulted in justice for genocide and land appropriation committed here; a dystopian technique of genocide in the form of a camp masquerades as sovereignty. It is a "solution" that can only result in failure because the injustice of land appropriation has not been addressed. We see this heavily implied in one of the images accompanying the film, where the main character stands at her now-broken window, wearing an angry expression that contrasts to the calmness she exhibits throughout the film, as searchlights on the wall outside comb the face of the Estate (fig. 6). Her hands are balled into fists, her pregnancy is deemphasized by the remaining glass, and her seeming fearlessness in the face of the floodlights. She is returning the gaze of the colonizer upon this future Israeli Jerusalem through the broken glass, and suggesting here future actions will be not involve the obedience and compliance that she performs in the film.

Fig. 6 Window from Sansour, Larissa. *Nation Estate- Photo and Video*.

In the case of *Sleep Dealer*'s closing scenes, farming does seem to be a pastoral utopian end in itself, a romanticization of the *milpa* that is then commoditized and shared with the outside world by Luz's node memory. It is the sort of romanticization that Memo nearly ends his relationship with Luz over, and represents a sort of rejection on the part of Memo of a false pastoral utopia represented by Luz's memories; the pretty stories of the simple days of Indigenous peoples are not for sale. Memo is not seen to be actively resisting anything; rather he is leaving it to Rudy, who has fled further into Mexico and whose fighter plane may be flying over the border in the closing moments of the film. What hope we do have out of this dystopian future is represented not by Indigenous epistemologies, but by hacking Western technologies. As Jeffries notes, Memo's nodes make him at once exploitable by capital but also ironically well-equipped to resist his exploitation, and this hacker-resistance aesthetic plays on the utopian ideals of the information revolution. For Jeffries this creates a politically ambiguous vision of the

future, making *Sleep Dealer* a sort of cautionary tale to counter the techno-optimism of "gadget-driven narratives of human emancipation" (35). We are left, it seems, with neither a sense of techno-optimism nor techno-pessimism, but a welcome and provocative cautionary tale that suggests the ultimate neutrality of technology; it is instead the human use of technology that is a source for optimism or pessimism. But Indigenous epistemologies are relegated still to the past, while the future is in accessing Western technology and hacking it, skills that Memo learned from a Latino man who learned his skills in a Western setting, with a conservative family who encouraged Western views.[55] So, though the focus on Indigenous epistemologies in *Sleep Dealer* does not seem to be able to escape pastoralism, it still involves an ambiguous acknowledgement of the use of technology by Indigenous peoples for violent resistance.

Conclusion

My reading of "Nation Estate" argues that Sansour rejects the nation-state model of global capitalism — a model that increasingly requires technologies of biopower to control populations — both in its form as a settler colonial nation-state, and as a liberal solution to problems of indigenous sovereignty. *Sleep Dealer* also implicitly exhibits little faith in nation state formations to ensure economic and social justice, though this is more of an undercurrent. Still, the primacy of the nation-state model can be countered in part, as Salaita and others such as Daniel Heath Justice (whose ideas about Indigenous nationalism are discussed in Chapter two) detail, with the Indigenous epistemology of

[55] See Chapter five of this dissertation for an example of an Indigenous (in this case Afro-Caribbean) epistemology of hacking in Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber.*

nations as first and foremost groups of people accountable to themselves, rather than governments controlling populations. This would likely result in smaller national entities, enabling greater self-governance and autonomy for individuals — and would account for the fact that utopian formations would look different for different populations, as Jameson famously argues in *Archaeologies of the Future* against the more commonplace idea of a universal utopia based on European values. Certainly both films also challenge the commonplace of Marxist ideology, as outlined in Chapter one, that utopia will be a result of continual progress of European society, and question whether any "progress" has been made at all for the majority of the world's people still living under colonialism.

But the settler colonial dystopias that both "Nation Estate" and *Sleep Dealer* depict and critique are inherently violent against those in search of self-determination, and disinclined to dismantle themselves peacefully. By focusing on settler colonial biopolitics at the border, both films also account — subtly and tentatively so — for one of the biggest blind spots in Western utopian fiction: the question of how to arrive at utopia, and whether violence will be necessary to combat the violence of colonial nation-states.[56] Both films complicate the assertion that securitized border walls produce more terrorism, in part by challenging what counts as terrorism, or more specifically, by legitimizing resistance when it is the last resort of the colonized. In "Nation Estate," this

[56] The majority of canonical Western utopian fiction has long been concerned with visions of the ideal society, not questions of how to arrive at it and what measures might be necessary. One of the few instances of a Western utopia that deals with this question is William Morris' *News From Nowhere* (1890), which responds to this charge by acknowledging that the revolution was violent, but situates that violence squarely in his utopian society's history. The possibility of revolution in the present time of a Western utopian narrative is virtually non-existent.

is suggested in one single image depicted above, where the sterility and isolation of the claustrophobia-inducing environment make what appears to be a violent outburst from the main character in the form of breaking a window completely justified. In *Sleep Dealer*, the extrajudicial killing of Memo's father by Rudy, who is then remorseful, becomes a catalyst for actions inspired by a futuristic Indigenous resistance movement (which goes by an acronym similar to that of the Zapatistas) that also blows up dams. If it really is Rudy flying the fighter jet in the final scene over the border, then the implications of such an act are certainly not peaceful ones.

They do however encourage a distinction that is rarely made in news media between violence against people and vandalism as property destruction. In neither case is violence directed at individuals, but rather at oppressive corporate and state formations. Of course, questions of who might be unintentionally injured by such actions are not addressed. But what if in light of these endings/images that suggest the necessity of vandalism, we consider Fanon's assertion of the necessity of violent decolonization? If "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon," one that "sets out to change the order of the world" in a chaotic manner, is decolonization not the first step to attaining utopia? Should we even try to imagine utopia without imagining and working toward decolonization first? In the case of both films, imagining utopia certainly seems premature.

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Chapter 4: Decolonizing the Utopian Promise of Biomedical Sciences: Gerald Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus*

Biomedicine, the practice of medicine focused on how biology and physiology are applied to medical practice (which is how most medicine is practiced today in any culture), is a major concern of the scientific imagination. Often, science fiction imagines biomedical devices such as implants and prosthetics, in part in an effort to understand how humans as tool users are changed by the technologies they use, as well as to interrogate how uneven access to technology perpetuates inequality. Biomedicine also includes the subfield of genetics, or the study of genes and heredity. Genetics, one focus of this chapter, is concerned with the study of human Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA), colloquially considered to be the building blocks of life; it is usually studied for medical benefit, though it is also a developing science that can establish ancestry.

Genetics (and its related field, genomics, which focuses on the entire genome of an organism rather than specific genes) is a contested discipline, as a Western life science that contradicts and conflicts with indigenous understandings of life and science. This is in no small part thanks to the monopolization of biomedical research and the resulting medicinal products in the hands of a few global multinational companies, a phenomenon that Kaushik Sunder Rajan describes in *Pharmocracy: Value, Politics, and Knowledge in Global Biomedicine* (2017). Focusing on biomedical politics and exploitation in India as an anthropologist, Sunder Rajan argues that these hegemonies change conceptions of "health," commoditizing it at the expense of the poor, who in India in particular are

subjected to clinical trials for drugs they cannot themselves afford when they come to market.

Furthermore, these power relationships in biomedicine — for which Sunder Rajan coins the term "pharmocracy" — are postcolonial:

> This is a structure of imperialism that … takes shape in a conjuncture where most nation-states are formally decolonized and self-determining. Yet it contains structures of Euro-American corporate hegemony underwritten by the … state that show uncanny echoes of precolonial formations of mercantile imperialism that were driven by the expansionist interests of [for India] especially Dutch and English trading corporations. (194)

This is all certainly true, but I offer additional nuance: colonialism was not singularly concerned with resource extraction and extraction of Indigenous medicinal knowledge — Western science as we know it was coproduced alongside colonial expansion. Western scientists' scientific knowledge — including medicine — has arisen in the context of colonial expansion, as illuminated by science studies scholar Jenny Reardon and others (and as detailed in the introduction to this study); the field of biomedicine is thus multiply steeped in colonial history. Postcolonial exploitation especially in the field of genetics is commonly known as "biopiracy." The current settler colonial ethos of genetics research itself, as a neoliberal and globalized industry that overlaps intensively with the

pharmaceutical industry, is an argument for the idea that colonialism has not ended, merely changed in its entanglement with late capitalism.

My concern throughout this study is with a different type of colonial relationship than that between Britain and India — which was a franchise colony and is now a postcolonial state — that is no less a continuation of imperialism and colonialism: that of settler colonialism. For this chapter, I am concerned with the ways biomedicine and genetics are articulated alongside the utopian settler colonial imagination, and resisted by colonized peoples not only materially through international legal venues, but also through an indigenous scientific imagination that forwards an alternative utopian vision. This vision also makes use of dystopian tropes to articulate not only survival, but active presence and continued flourishing. This imaginative resistance recognizes and sees through the two utopian promises that are entwined in the fields of biomedicine and genetics: that human genetic research can accurately reveal ancestry, and that these revelations dating to the ancient history of humanity will lead to unimaginable medical breakthroughs.[57] In other words, heritage and advances in medicine are held by genetic sciences to be inextricably linked, and scientists justify exploitative research on Indigenous populations because of what they view as the urgency of revealing the secrets of human DNA. This creates a new form of the utopian idea of manifest destiny over the human genome: it must be fully understood (or conquered if you will), and the rights of indigenous peoples whose DNA is coveted as somehow genetically pure because of their

[57] Another branch of this research involves genetics research into indigenous plants used by indigenous peoples for medicinal purposes, which can be exported presumably at profit to the rest of the world.

isolation as populations are secondary to this imperative. And — just as colonialism portends to be for the good of humanity when in reality it benefits the colonizer — arguments that justify exploitation of Indigenes in the name of medical advancements for the benefit of humankind tend to actually benefit a select few who can afford them. The “boutique medicine” industry that markets custom-made medical treatments for the wealthy benefits from such advancements, while doctors treating patients in countries such as India must decide, as Sunder Rajan notes, to either subject patients to treatments that may not work in hopes of their survival, or letting them die (18).

That isn’t to say that genetics is to be simply rejected as useless or racist science. Alondra Nelson looks at a different aspect of genetic research, one which is much more positive in its effects though it still involves a group of colonized people. In *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation After the Genome* (2016), Nelson acknowledges that medical breakthroughs have so far been false promises. However, she focuses on what she calls the social power of DNA, or “the special status afforded to DNA as the final arbiter of truth of identity" (4), as opposed to cultural experiences, for example. While this social power has its obvious drawbacks — especially because it can be exploited by unscrupulous companies to create false connections and enable these companies to prey on those searching for their roots, and it can also foster arguments classified as “color-blind racism” — it is increasingly used by African American activists who direct reconciliation projects that link individuals and communities across the Atlantic. It has also been used for example in reconciliation projects in Latin America to reunite families in Argentina separated by violent dictatorship. Thus, the “social life of

DNA is unmistakable; the double helix now lies at the center of some of the most significant issues of our time" (8). The idea that DNA is a metaphor with social power, one that is stronger than any physical attributes and implications it carries for medical research, is a key idea for understanding the science fiction that I study here. DNA as a metaphor *can* heal even though it is sometimes commoditized, and *has* healed individuals and communities more effectively thus far than genomics itself as a healing science.

But different racial groups encounter genetics research and DNA testing differently, even though they may be in the same settler colonial space. Kim Tallbear (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate) takes a moderated tone between the warnings of Sunder Rajan and the optimism of Alondra Nelson that balances promising news and exploitation. In *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*, Tallbear gives an extensive overview of the field. She expresses the dual aim of educating Indigenous peoples about the perils and potential of this emerging science, and offering solutions to those interested in decolonizing genetic research. She explains that talk of DNA or genetic memory is replacing the powerful metaphor of "blood" in Indian Country, though DNA is, like blood, also used as a metaphor for cultural belonging and the "more-than-biological." But DNA for Indigenous peoples must be analyzed within a different socio-political context than the one understood by popular discussions of genetics; that is, in the context of "a web of known family relations, reservation histories, and tribal and federal-government regulations" (4), and also the scientific and historical fact that genomics continues problematic co-productions of racial distinctions as biological.

Tallbear warns tribal nations against relying too heavily on DNA testing to determine tribal membership, arguing that these methods are not yet reliable, discount cultural belonging, and reinforce problematic conceptions of race as biological. However, genomic research does have potential to *expand* indigenous sovereignty, and Tallbear makes some recommendations for this:

> Research questions need to be conceived from indigenous standpoints … innovative methods need to be developed to account for indigenous moral and epistemological frameworks. Indigenous peoples need to sometimes direct and fund research, and resist it effectively when it is not in their interests. Furthermore, research projects need to be organized and rooted in institutions in which both economic development and institution building accrue to indigenous peoples and their governance and scientific institutions (176).

Tallbear and others call for and practice decolonization in biomedical sciences and Indigenous engagement with them beyond the metaphorical, and anthropological science by extension.

This chapter looks at science fiction that accentuates Tallbear's work toward decolonizing the biomedical scientific imagination, and that is attuned to both the utopian promise and dystopian peril of biomedical and especially genetic sciences. It mirrors other chapters which seek a balance between utopian promise and dystopian peril of other sciences, such as agricultural sciences in Chapter 2 and information technology in

Chapter 5. I first provide a brief overview of the biomedicine in mainstream science fiction, and then read *The Heirs of Columbus* (1991) by Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), as an example of an Indigenous sf approach to biomedicine. I show how Vizenor uses science fictional and utopian tropes to show that science informed by Indigenous philosophies not only furthers Indigenous survivance — a concept used throughout his work to denote an active sense of presence beyond mere survival — but also leads to medical advances free of capitalist exploitation.

The promise of easy genetics-based medical breakthroughs has largely not come to pass, but that does not diminish its utopian nature. Sunder Rajan explains that in the process of commoditizing DNA and genomics sciences, the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries attracted venture capital through hype, or through the promise of advances that have largely to date been unrealized, in no small part because the genome is much more complicated than originally thought. Such hype, Sunder Rajan argues, inverts the "temporal order of production ... away from the present building toward the future and instead toward the future always being called in to account for the present" (116). The promises of hype don't have to be realized in the future, they do not have to be "true," but "credible." This hype then, I argue, is profoundly capitalist-utopian in the sense that utopia is "no-place;" it does not exist and never will, but is still an idea that justifies investment, something to place faith in. And the continued capitalist-driven exploitation of colonized peoples around the world in the name of such breakthroughs makes Vizenor's more than two-decades-old novel more relevant than ever.

The state of biomedicine in mainstream SF

The biomedical scientific imagination as represented by popular science fiction is primarily concerned with understanding how biomedicine and biotechnology are changing what it means to be human. Much of this involves technologies that are broadly marked as posthuman, from implants to prosthetics. Posthumanist scholars such as Donna Haraway (whose feminist science and technology studies heavily influence Tallbear) engage directly with science fiction, citing Sam Delany, Octavia Butler, and others. The general argument of posthumanist scholars such as Haraway and Rosi Braidotti is that we have never been autonomously human and individualistic in the tradition of Secular Humanism, which privileges the able European male body.[58] For posthumanists, the human body does not end with the skin, and is more connected to living and non-living things (such as tools) than is generally acknowledged. Biomedical themes in sf also engage and challenge the hegemonic power of pharmaceutical and other medical companies, who, as Sherryl Vint explains, "forcefully present visions of the future that serve themselves and their products, using the language of those who seek to articulate alternative futures" (11). Sf often challenges this coopted utopian vision in the medical field by conveying a creeping dystopian sense of loss of individual freedoms despite the promise of technological advances that will not be evenly distributed in our capitalist future.

While these engagements are insightful and necessary, often the colonial relations of power and its coproduction in culture and science go unexamined. A good example of

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[58] For more on posthumanism in a postcolonial context, see Chapter 1.

this is the Hollywood blockbuster *Elysium* (2013), which takes the liberal stance against unequal distribution of medical breakthrough technology, but requires a white savior (played by Matt Damon) to rise from the sprawling impoverished multi-ethnic Los Angeles, in order to bring down the profoundly unequal establishment. As discussed in Chapter One, even popular science fiction from the political left (as opposed to liberal-centrism), such as China Miéville's Bas Lag trilogy, is more concerned with egalitarianism from a class standpoint than a racial one that specifically accounts for the ways colonialism created and perpetuates racialized inequality. Thus, decolonizing approaches to concerns over egalitarianism in biomedicine warrant academic study.

Amped (2012) by Daniel H. Wilson (Cherokee) represents one such approach for biomedical sf. This fast-paced, made for Hollywood-style dystopian novel tells the story of Owen, a young man who discovers he has unwittingly been made a super-human weapon, thanks to the brain implant his father gave him in order to quell his epilepsy. When the political tide turns against implanted humans in an obvious racial allegory, Owen discovers and prevents a plot to violently overthrow the government on the part of a group of disaffected implantees (who are themselves being manipulated by an evil, implant-free politician). Grace Dillon holds out Wilson's work as an example of the increasing popularity of Indigenous science fiction in the mainstream, saying that "the movement's popularity grows from an emerging sense that Western science has lost something vital by isolating itself from spiritual origins in a quest to achieve objectivity" (6). *Amped* conveys a message that is digestible for popular culture: that is, technology

has great potential for both good and evil — it can lead to utopia or dystopia — and humanity must grapple with these potentialities together.

However, Wilson allegorizes Otherness in a way that obscures race: amps — which are largely children with disabilities and disabled veterans — are healed, but then Othered. Despite not being racially distinct, amps at various points are racialized: they are forced into camps in a style reminiscent of Japanese internment camps; they are labeled as terrorists, implicitly racialized as Arab; they are less than human, uncontrollable, made savage in their trailer-park/reservation, and therefore playing on tropes of Indigenous people; they are opposed by groups called Pure Humans, effectively African Americanized by anti-miscegenation groups.[59]

Yet two moments stand out as unique, if not without their own problematics. The first is the casual description of the originator of the amp, Jim Howard, a disabled veteran who served as a military biomedical engineer: "Jim has a strong chin and high, weathered cheekbones. On the drive over, he told me he's a full-blood Cherokee but his hair went pale after his life hit a rough spot. I don't have the gall to ask what that was. I imagine it involved a war" (55). This moment cues discerning readers as to the intentionality of the covertly Indigenous feel of the novel.[60] Jim's paleness serves as a metaphor perhaps for

[59] Further, Wilson's gender politics leave something to be desired. All but one support character is male, and the only superhuman amp who is a woman kills herself. Women are only allowed supporting and fragile roles in *Amped*, and while this improves in *Robopocalypse* (which is actually an earlier novel), we are still left with the sense that heroism is a masculine endeavor.

[60] Wilson is not marketed as a Cherokee writer—the only clue to this in *Amped* and his other popular novel, *Robopocalypse,* is the headshot on the novels' dust jackets, where he is wearing a t-shirt depicting Indigenous art, and is standing in front of a partially visible Cherokee totemic symbol. *Robopocalypse* deals more overtly with Indigenous themes

the assimilation he underwent in the military, and he could be likened to Gabriel, the Westernized scientist of Cherokee descent who is the main character of Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle*, discussed in Chapter 2. A character who is a scientist educated in the Western tradition, however, certainly combats stereotypes of Indigenes as anti-scientific or trapped in a pastoral-utopian way of engaging with their environments. Though the emphasis on Jim as "full-blooded" might play into readers' notions of legitimacy of Indianness in blood quanta, Jim is still far from the trope of the noble Indian. Just as Indigenous sciences are as capable of error as Western ones, Jim is fallible; his relationship to science is one of recognizing how his research was used for harm, and of correcting this by changing his career path to helping those affected by it. This is then in contrast to Gabriel, who at the close of *The Back of the Turtle* still has not decided the direction his life will take, and whether it will be to use his knowledge to undo the destruction he has helped cause.

Yet there is little evidence that an Indigenous approach to science informed Jim's later rejection of the military and focus on helping amped people who take refuge in the trailer park that becomes the center of peaceful amp resistance. Of course, the setting of this Oklahoma trailer park is one that is implicitly Indigenous, given that it could be a place on or near a reservation and fits the general class status of many Indigenous peoples in the region. And the idea of invasion of the trailer park and its need for the community to band together and protect it mirrors colonial invasion in some respects, but this is not

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such as sovereignty and survivance, as it is set in part on an Osage reservation, which is innately well-equipped to survive a robot apocalypse. However this AI-centered novel is outside the scope of the concerns of this chapter.

detailed. And it is likely that Wilson's Indigenous background informs the way he depicts science and technology as tools that can be used for good or evil, especially given understandings of balance that Thomas King (who is also Cherokee) makes a theme of his fiction, which I discuss more in Chapter 2. For Wilson, Indigenous cultural priorities are perhaps most evident in the focus on healing children and those disabled by an increasingly chemical society. This carries broadly North-American Indigenous scientific and cultural undertones, given the disproportionate incidence of birth defects and other health complications in Indigenous North American communities that can be traced to the concentration of pollution and nuclear waste from corporate and government activities on Tribal lands; these undertones become overtones in Gerald Vizenor's work.

The second moment, or series of moments, involves the novel's simple message, as plainly stated at several points, including the novel's conclusion: "Humankind needs technology. It's the one thing that we do better than any other animal. We communicate, cooperate, and make tools to extend our reach. Every new tool changes us … Our technology is what makes us strong. And it's what makes us dangerous" (274). Though Wilson does not directly invoke the Anishinaabe notions of *biimadizinwin* — what Dillon defines as healing and return to balance from the ruins of Native apocalypse, as outlined in the first chapter of this study — it is clearly implied here. A central point of this dissertation is to illuminate through science fictional examples that Indigenous and non-Western peoples have sophisticated sciences and philosophies of science, and that their scientific imagination will be central to solving humanity's greatest problems. Technology has great potential to help and to harm, and Wilson is clearly concerned

about keeping these potential forces in balance for the purposes of healing in his dystopian narrative.

Gerald Vizenor and decolonizing genetics in SF

Gerald Vizenor, a prolific Anishinaabe author and scholar, demonstrates a keen understanding of *biimadizinwin* in the ruins of Native apocalypse, one that is explicit in a text geared towards an Indigenous audience, as opposed to Wilson who writes for a popular one. Vizenor is known more widely as a speculative fiction writer, or as a writer in the genre that Grace Dillon calls "Native Slipstream." Native Slipstream, as with the slipstream genre more generally, defies generic conventions, but most commonly "replicates nonlinear thinking about space-time," including by presenting alternative histories to combat colonial ideologies. This style typically includes "sardonic humor and bittersweet hope," and Dillon deploys Vizenor's own concept of survivance — again, roughly defined as an active sense of presence and rejection of victimhood — to describe the genre's central theme (2-5). *The Heirs of Columbus* (1991) certainly answers this need for alternative histories to combat colonial ideologies, written as it was in response to the quincentennial of global celebrations of Columbus' voyage. *Heirs* is also another installment in his series of speculative/slipstream fiction and indigenous myth-making called the Heirship Chronicles. Episodic and playfully postmodern in nature as much of his fiction is, *Heirs* follows nine "mixedbloods" (the total number "is a tribal secret," but nine of them are named and followed in the narrative) who document their ancestry to a

shaman-bear woman who seduced Christopher Columbus. As a retelling of the historical figure in a trickster mode, this Columbus is of Mayan and Sephardic Jewish descent.

Thus this shaman and Columbus began the bloodline of the Heirs. The Heirs do not claim specific tribal membership, in part because the Heirs have a history of being banished from other reservations — as do many of Vizenor's other characters, in a commentary on the sometimes corrupt nature of Tribal governments who respond to political dissent by banishment. However, they generally espouse Anishinaabe creation myths such as that of Naanabozho, and at various occasions encounter the Anishinaabe cannibal known as the wiindigoo. Among the Heirs are Stone Columbus, their leader, who is likened to Métis resistance leader Louis Riel, and Felipa Flowers, a lawyer turned liberator of stolen indigenous artifacts. Together, the heirs create a new casino nation on three ships named *Niña, Pinta*, and *Santa María*, which after several years of financial success is destroyed in a storm that also kills Stone, who must be resurrected. Subsequent episodes involve a magical realist court battle over Felipa's liberation projects; one of these projects is a retracing of Pocahontas' journey to England in search of her remains, but Felipa is murdered on this trip, in revenge for the heist that was the subject of the court battle. Most important to this study are the episodes in the latter half of the book, involving the utopian reservation after it is rebuilt at Point Assinika and begins developing genetic therapies. The therapies aim to heal colonial trauma especially in Indigenous children, but are also open to all peoples. Point Assinika's scientists also help the Heirs defend themselves against US and other government infiltrators with by

developing a potent “war herb” that can be understood as an allegory of a nuclear or bio-weapon.

In what follows I argue that the novel advances a conception of Indigenous scientific philosophy that does not reject the utopian promises of advanced Western biomedicine, but that instead argues that genetics research in particular should be concerned with healing genetic trauma — accounting for historical and current exploitation in colonial and capitalist history. King consistently troubles the boundary between metaphor and scientific fact, and well he should. The idea of "stories in the blood" is a contested concept in genetic science; it has been recently suggested, via a study of Holocaust survivors, that trauma can actually be passed down to subsequent generations (Thomson). This extends to the traumas of settler colonialism; such stories affect both physical inheritance and cultural stability.

Yet such ideas can lead to racist assumptions, which is why for the purposes of this study I also show how the novel suggests Western biomedical sciences be conducted in partnership with Indigenous sciences would maintain sight of the spiritual and psychological aspects of healing, especially the role of humor. Such a partnership also helps avoid the trap of genetic determinism, or the idea that one’s genes — as opposed to one’s culture — determine human behavior, including individual gender expression. Genes can influence, as they may when it comes to inheriting trauma, but they do not determine. With this focus on biomedical sciences in the novel, I seek to enhance the extant literary criticism of how the novel argues for thinking about indigenous sovereignty and cultural practices and values as vital on an international, global scale,

and in times of increasing capitalist/settler colonial domination, as represented in the global celebrations of Christopher Columbus that Vizenor was directly writing against through his comic depiction of Columbus. In many respects, given recent developments in global biomedicine that privilege indigeneity as "pure" forms of genes worth of study, aspects of Vizenor's novel are even more relevant today than they perhaps were in 1991. Further, with a Pan-Indian understanding of Indigenous scientific healing practices, Vizenor's novel lends credence to the argument advanced by scholars of Science and Technology Studies that the coproduced nature of science and culture should not be forgotten in global anticolonial conversations. Finally, in the novel's final episode involving the wiindigoo and a moccasin game, Vizenor deals with classic ideas about achieving utopia and violence that I will briefly touch on by way of conclusion.

Representing colonial-scientific exploitation in *Heirs of Columbus*

How does Vizenor represent the entanglement between (Western) sciences and Indigenous sovereignty in the face of colonialism? To explore this question, I return to Kim Tallbear, who details many instances in the last two-and-a-half decades in which indigenous tribes were duped by researchers who promised medical benefits in exchange for genetic sampling. To name a few, this includes breaches of consent forms signed by the Havasupai and Nuu-chah-nulth First Nation in the 1990s and early 2000s that saw their samples shared around the world and used for research they were not informed about and did not benefit from. Vizenor wrote the *Heirs* between 1990 and early 1991,

and it was published in August of 1991. Such exploitations on the part of genetics researchers and companies were in their infancy when Vizenor wrote *Heirs*, making the uneasy alliance between Western and indigenous scientists (or shamans) at Point Assinika perhaps even more worthy of study today.

But scientific exploitation of indigenes is nothing new — anthropologists have been exploiting indigenous groups around the world for personal gain since the inception of the "soft sciences," and Vizenor demonstrates keen awareness of this in his notes and drafts, which I was able to access in the course of my research.[61] Vizenor collected several articles about anthropological exploitation of Indigenous bones, political and legal battles over their repatriation, and even one San Francisco Chronicle article from 1988, entitled "Genetic Link Found in 8,000-Year-Old Brains of Indians." The "shriveled" brains found in a bog in Florida offered "an unprecedented look at the kinship structure of a vanished people" which could curiously be linked to living Indigenes despite their "vanished" status. The article goes on to detail another report from the same dig in a more anthropological vein, which provides the asinine conjecture that broken bones "may reflect a 'tendency to adult violence,'" citing a spear point in a hip bone. He also was aware of anti-racist backlash in the scientific and anthropological communities against emerging genetic sciences more broadly: one article in his papers points out that "science is used to justify oppression, discrimination, and cutbacks in social programs," and "to rationalize fierce nationalistic attitudes, such as policies that limit immigration to

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[61] This research was made possible by an R.D. Mullen Research Fellowship from the journal *Science Fiction Studies*, to study Vizenor's papers at the Beinecke Library at Yale University. His papers yielded great insight into his creative process and the scientific and cultural inspirations for the novel, as I demonstrate in subsequent sections as well.

America" (Krieger). Those quoted in the article go on to argue that genetic sciences are a "new eugenics" that is simply not legitimate science, and roundly reject it.

Like much of Vizenor's work, *Heirs* is dedicated to satirizing anthropology as a racist science. One of the earlier episodes, which centers around repatriation of stolen artifacts, the legal testimony of Almost Browne, one the heirs who is also called trickster, and who regularly puts on laser light shows of famous historical and contemporary figures of colonialism and resistance to it: "We are engaged in a spiritual war with anthropology, they have taken the most prisoners, but the death of their methods is the rise of the tribes and the liberation of our stories" (83). For Vizenor, the idea of repatriation seems to have come from a legal case in London of several South-Asian Indian artifacts that were housed in a vault there. A newspaper clipping dated 5/7/1990 of this case is among Vizenor's drafts and notes for the novel (Bennett), along with several cases of Native American attempts to repatriate art. The judge in the fictional case, Beatrice Lord, allows all manner of spiritual and holographic-art evidence in this courtroom parody, ultimately deciding in favor of the Heirs. Perhaps this represents a sort reimagining of such courtroom proceedings in a utopian mode; the anthropologists and collectors driven by greed have lost the day.

Tallbear argues in her own way for the death of these methods, given that many techniques of anthropological research have been adapted by genetics researchers in the last two-and-a-half decades, and especially since the beginning of the Human Genome Diversity Project — a fact that would surely have come as no surprise to Vizenor in the 1990s. True to the melding of DNA research and anthropological conjecture in the

aforementioned article about Indian bones and brains, she observes that researchers in both fields tend to be at best academic career-driven and at worst profit-driven, and treat indigenous groups as test subjects, raising issues of sovereignty, and excluding indigenous peoples from profits and medical benefits (both now and projected into the future) resulting from such research. Tallbear's work responds to other anthropologists who call for decolonizing anthropological research. She does this in large part by focusing her "gaze" on genetic scientists and companies themselves, foregrounding through her standpoint as a Native American anthropologist how this Western-dominated science has affected and may continue to affect Native Americans.

Vizenor then does not stop at a utopian reimagining of courtroom battles that enable the death of anthropological sciences — he imagines the death of colonialist scientific methods in the genetic sciences as well, and anticipates many of Tallbear's recommendations about decolonizing genetic research through Indigenous participation. In the novel, companies and independent scientists are invited by the Heirs to Point Assinika, in hopes of conducting research banned elsewhere. And rather than expressing a sense of altruism in their reasoning, the Heirs acknowledge that the companies come knowing that they can make billions: "The heirs would heal with their genetic inheritance and leave the rest to the price wars of the wise and ancient civilizations" (122). The new nation makes ironic use of the idea that Western civilization is "wise and ancient" yet driven by avarice — the desire to make *billions* — they coopt this avarice and outsmart the "wise and ancient," all the while undermining the scientists' masculinity and

objectivity are routinely undermined as they work — an aspect of the novel I will return to shortly.

Vizenor recognizes the structures of colonial dominance at work in the drive to capitalist profits. One article among Vizenor's papers discusses the legal battle of a man who argues that he is owed a share in profits of medical advancements related to the study of his biological material, suggesting that Vizenor was aware of larger conversations about ownership of biological material. From this knowledge, Vizenor not only anticipates how the biomedical and genomics industries would later emulate these structures in a colonial context, including through programs such as the Human Genome Diversity Project, and its successor, The Genographic Project, early versions of the exploitative programs that Tallbear details — he also parodies them. We see this when Teets Melanos (who came from another tribe to Point Assinika for healing) and Binn (an heir) collect nail clippings and skin for genetic material meant to assist the tribal-led research. The clippings and skin are described as possessing stories, and in addition to aiding the scientists, they "tumble them in olive jars" in order to read the stories of individuals much like a palm reader would (141). Rather than use them for profit and the benefit of those who are not being studied, however, the two use this as a form of trickster-like entertainment, enhancing the healing experience of the salon. Their tumblings become magic tricks: "the jar turned blue; the sides were warm, and when she opened the jar blue fireflies lighted the salon. She heard birds, wisps of music, the wind, nothing more" (143). Perhaps this could be likened to the hype surrounding the promises of the genetics industry, a playful representation of the nature of truth in scientific claims,

or a metaphor representing the commonplace in discussions of sf that any science that is sufficiently advanced as to not be currently attainable can be likened to magic. Yet Vizenor moves beyond parody elsewhere in the text. A further analysis of the materiality and metaphoric use of DNA in *Heirs* will suggests that Point Assinika represents a new model of DNA research to replace colonial-capitalist methods.

Indigenous science and partnership — Foregrounding spiritual and psychological healing

As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation and Chapter 2, Gregory Cajete (Tewa) — author of *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* — argues that Indigenous sciences are robust in their own right, and the place-based medical knowledge (in terms of plant medicines and environmental factors of illnesses) of countless tribes can help combat diseases. He calls for indigenous scientists to be seen as partners alongside Western scientists, shifting the view of indigenous peoples as objects of study to peoples with their own valuable knowledge to share with Western sciences and beyond.

Was Vizenor engaging with these ideas in *Heirs*? Vizenor's papers reveal that he had a keen interest in biomedicine for more than a decade before writing *Heirs*, and he even attended several conferences related to biomedicine and psychology in the early 1980s. Notes from these conferences show that he had been thinking about the fact that "biomedicine is practiced by nearly all cultures," and that psychological approaches to healing are legitimate ones, including those that involve placebos. One article in

particular demonstrates that Vizenor was aware of discourse in Indigenous communities about the legitimacy of their biomedical sciences as compared to Western ones — arguments along the lines of those Cajete makes. The undated Newsweek article discusses a new Western technique to use ice water to slow heart rates, which he compares to a Native healer whom he saw doing this. Vizenor also displays a concern for chemical pollutions that cause deformities, and collected several articles on this topic. His concern with healing such deformities in the novel may have also come from his experiences at UC Santa Cruz, where dangerous chemicals near the section of campus that he was briefly Provost of became the subject of much of his collected correspondence from the time immediately before Heirs' publication. His concern for his students may have transferred into the focus on healing children.

Thus, rather than reject the promise of genetic research in light of what Vizenor knew through his research was its potential for racist, eugenics-style misuse, Vizenor anticipates arguments that would later be developed by Cajete and others who sought to bring Indigenous knowledge into Western academic discourse. He does this first by researching the current state of genetic sciences extensively, as revealed in his papers through notes he took on several books and his saved newspaper articles. Then with this rather scientifically accurate understanding, Vizenor science fictionalizes and indigenizes genetic science, in part by focusing on spiritual and psychological healing knowledge. The reservation at Point Assinika becomes "the first nation in the histories of the modern world dedicated to protean humor and the genes that would heal" (119) — emphasizing throughout the necessity of humor as a process of healing and of change. David M.

Higgins demonstrates this is a common theme throughout Vizenor's work: the "self-defeating spiritual sickness" unique to white America (53), and that infects Indigenous peoples in turn in various ways, including the adoption of what Vizenor calls "terminal creeds," such as blood quanta, cannot be healed merely through science. Spiritual sicknesses must be healed with spirit.

The antidote from a genetics perspective, Vizenor seems to suggest, is the "stories in the blood," or the stories and healing practices of shamans; though they are rooted in cultural belonging, they have the potential to heal any who come to the reservation, even white Americans. Lest a psychologically based science be considered inferior to a physical one, we need only remember that genetic sciences have largely been a failure to date on delivering on the hype that such research will lead to healing therapies (as I discuss above in relation to the work of Sunder Rajan). The fact that this hype has largely remained science fictional 25 years after its publication intensifies the satirical quality of Vizenor's imagination. The potential healing power of genetics not just as a physical science — which is entirely possible though perhaps not yet today should be held in balance with DNA *as a metaphor* for cultural belonging and healing historical trauma, which has been proven to advance community healing, as we see Alondra Nelson's aforementioned work with DNA testing in the African Diaspora.

How does Vizenor depict these healing powers specifically? Stone explains that the secret of the healer genes is "held in the stone" (128), and he has heard them thanks to his genetic heritage, do not realize their full potential without the help of Western

science.[62] The Western scientists who flock to the reservation, including Pir Cantrip — described as "exobiologist turned genetic engineer" and who later is revealed as a Jew who survived a Nazi concentration camp — translate the genetic signature into a fantastical, but (for the most part) recognizably Western-scientific language. He explains that they have "isolated the genetic code of tribal survivance and radiance, that native signature of seventeen mitochondrial genes that could reverse human mutations, nurture shamanic resurrection, heal wounded children, and incite parthenogenesis in separatist women" (132). Further, he offers a glimpse at what an indigenized science of genomics might looks like, naming the four proteins in DNA and exclaiming:

> These four letters are held together in a signature by their opposites, the biochemical codes are bound by their own opposition, and here is where the shaman and the trickster touch that primal source of humor, imagination, and the stories that heal right in the antinomies of the genetic code. (134)

Here, Vizenor links the structure of DNA to the idea of *biimadizinwin*, of balance in nature between creative/life-giving forces and trickster/destructive forces, as I argue King does in chapter 2, extending DNA metaphors and emphasizing how Western scientific concepts are not automatically opposed to Indigenous ones.

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[62] Perhaps this is a reference to the belief in the animacy of stones that many tribes hold as scientific fact. In *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*, Elizabeth Povinelli explores how Indigenes reject the distinctions between life and non-life, and applies this concept to combatting what she calls “settler late liberalism” and its deployment of biopower. In the era of climate change, a new relationship with life and non-life is called for to avoid structures that pit different kinds of life against each other.

Indeed, it is suggested that these ideas have been understood by Indigenous peoples in other forms long before Western scientists "discovered" them. Cantrip later continues:

> The genome narratives are stories in the blood, a metaphor for racial memories, or the idea that we inherit the structures of language and genetic memories; however, our computer memories and simulations are not yet powerful enough to support what shamans and hand talkers have inherited and understood for thousands of years. (136)

In these passages Vizenor's visionary myth-making shines as explicitly science fictional, emphasizing DNA as metaphor but at the same time not discounting the utopian potential of its physical healing power. Vizenor does not reject the utopian hope offered by genetic sciences as mere hype; he instead places faith in it provided it can remain accountable to Indigenous scientific ideas and cultural expressions of sovereignty.

Cantrip and the other Western scientists at Point Assinika also demonstrate an understanding of the spiritual healing power of these metaphors and memories. Once the Western scientists do their work isolating genetic codes, they hand those in need of healing off to the tribal shamans, who alone engage in the actual act of healing: "only shamans and tricksters were able to stimulate the trickster opposition in the genes, the ecstatic instructions, and humor in the blood. The scientists delivered the genetic signatures, the tribal healers touched the wounded and heard their creation stories" (144).

Note here how the two promises of genetics — heritage of cultural stories and healing — are linked, not because of the physicality of the genetic makeup of DNA, but because of the stories the shamans use in conjunction with the DNA to heal. And their first patients are children who deformed, poisoned, or otherwise damaged by environmental and social factors, many of whom come from reservations around North America. These children are not only healed physically, but spiritually through the stories that give them a better understanding of their heritage. It is not so much of a stretch for Western readers to acknowledge that Indigenous peoples have a strong spiritual component to their healing — but it is quite another matter to depict Indigenous healers/shamans as medical scientists in their own right, as understanding of and contributing to the inextricable physical and spiritual components of healing, and as partners with Western scientists in these efforts. Thus, Vizenor is truly imagining *Indigenous science fiction* here, as opposed to speculative fiction more broadly (the category where Vizenor is often placed, and which carries an air of postmodern complexity as opposed to science fiction).

Perhaps now is a good time to take a step back and assert that, as with most science/speculative fiction, Vizenor is not literally imagining the future of genomics research — indigenized or otherwise — but rather engaging in a playful, utopian act of myth-making about the hope and hype of genomics research at the intersection of indigenous sovereignty and survivance. Vizenor did not know in 1991 that, as Alondra Nelson points out, the material health benefits of DNA would largely not materialize up to the present day. But while he still seems to have placed faith in future breakthroughs at least to some extent — and at the same time to have understood what Kim Tallbear

argues decades later that sovereignty in this field would entail such research being indigenous-led (or co-led in partnership) and funded — Vizenor picks up on the utility of DNA as a metaphor, when the field was in its infancy. DNA as community connection, as stories that come down through generations and serve to unite and guide individuals within a community. The shamans heal with stories; DNA is one of those stories, and Vizenor's novel about a tribe leading the way in genomics research is also meant to be one of those stories.

Undermining genetic determinism: The queerness of trickster-shaman genes

The Heirs of Columbus engages with a common question of biomedical sf: how is science changing what it means to be human? And to this we might also explore how *Heirs* suggests that Indigenous philosophies of science can aid our understanding of these changes. Contained within Vizenor's story of fictional Indigenous genetic sciences is an undermining of genetic determinism — both in the sense that genetics can justify racist assumptions, and that genes determine gender — that enhances Vizenor's use of DNA as a metaphor. *The Heirs of Columbus* celebrates cultural and genetic mixing in a way that directly challenges the quest for "pure" Indigenous genetics that generally preoccupy genetic scientists, as well as tribal blood quanta. Rather than needing "pure" blood for such medical advances, mixed blood is the *required trait* to create the healing genetic therapies.

From blood to cultural interaction, mixture becomes crucial to success. Not only are the main characters revolutionary mixedbloods creating a new utopian reservation,

and not only is Stone compared to the Métis resistance leader Louis Riel. Stone is also quoted in a report by Chaine Riel, a dual US government- and tribal-agent[63] — who is not coincidentally related to Louis Riel — as saying, by way of rejecting tribal blood-quanta, that "'if it's so easy to fake blood then why bother with the measures?'" Riel provides an analysis of Stone's assertion, which might strike the reader as rather audacious: "His point is to make the world tribal, a universal identity, and return to other values as measures of human worth, such as the dedication to heal rather than steal tribal cultures." Riel then goes onto explain that part of the research on the reservation has led to the development of a technique that allows anyone to have a "bona fide" genetic tribal identity of their choosing with an injection (162). Obviously this is meant as satire of non-indigenous appropriation of tribal identity, not as literal support of assimilation, but as emphasizing that tribal identity is primarily about cultural belonging and community. It also unsettles the primacy ascribed to a "pure" Indigenous genetic inheritance, reinforcing Vizenor's oft-stated claim that cultural belonging is more important for tribal identity than blood quanta.[64] Rejecting ideas of blood quanta entails also rejecting the colonial rule that seeks to impose them. Vizenor makes such rejections positively utopian in an anticolonial mode, when the tribal mixedbloods found a sovereign tribal nation, celebrating the very idea of "mixed blood" by imbuing it with special healing properties.

To further undermine genetic determinism alongside the masculinity of Western science, the scientists of Point Assinika must cross-dress, because as Stone Columbus

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[63] That is, Riel is an agent for an outside tribe or perhaps confederation that is not named, but might compare to the Indian Gaming Federation.

[64] For a discussion about culture and more specifically story-telling as the basis for tribal identity, see the section on Thomas King's *The Truth About Stories* in Chapter 2.

says, "Regrettably men are no longer that interesting unless they dress as women" (131). Yvette Koepke and Christopher Nelson take a deep dive into the multiple meanings and metaphors of "cross" and crossing-as-mixing in the novel, by reading the materiality of DNA into various aspects of the novel. For example, they point out that, much like mitochondrial DNA was probably independent organisms absorbed into larger organisms, so were the independent scientists and others who were absorbed into the Heirs' new tribe (11). The cross-dressing scientists support Koepke and Nelson's argument that "*Heirs* challenges not just the power of civilized, scientific thought motivating colonialist discovery, but the stable uniqueness of identity carried by the concept of [genetic] 'signature'" (4-5).

But Vizenor demonstrably does not argue that cultural difference is immaterial; rather, given his insistence on balance of opposites — the place "where the shaman and the trickster touch that primal source of humor, imagination, and the stories that heal" (185) — that opposition can heal and spark humorous creative tension, the products of which can be such things as androgynous biorobots. Koepke and Nelson thus conclude that "the centrality of opposition recognizes tension but does not therefore accept fragmentation or alienation. Rather, Vizenor uses a genetic model to incorporate opposition into function" (27). Scientific partnership, it then follows, may not need to entail some sort of flawless mutual understanding, but rather a concerted attempt at creation within opposition.

I add to this excellent reading an additional layer of the queerness of DNA both as a material substance of crossing — in the case of mitochondria, of a blurring of the lines

between human and animal — and as metaphor of opposition and crossed pairs (chromosomes). First I must define the "trickster" side of the antinomies of the DNA code. Vizenor offers many conflicting definitions of the "comic holotrope" of the trickster in his work and elsewhere; in the *The Trickster of Liberty* he devotes an entire prologue to lampooning the impulse by anthropologists to capture the trickster as in a definition, insisting that it is "comic nature in a language game, not a real person or 'being' in the ontological sense (x) — as such I hesitate to offer a definition here. Louis Owens, a colleague whose work Vizenor often cites, argues that "the trickster tests definitions of the self and, concomitantly, the world defined in relation to that self" (248). But one thing is asserted clearly by Vizenor: the trickster is androgynous. As Vizenor puts it, again in *The Trickster of Liberty* "an androgyny, *she* would repudiate translations and imposed representations, as *he* would bare the contradictions of the striptease" (x, emphasis mine). In other words, the trickster is queer.

It should come as no surprise that the figure of cyborg, defined by Donna Haraway in the "Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985) as an "ironic political myth" concerned with the "tension of holding incompatible things together," bears more than a passing affinity with the trickster figure (2269). Haraway's foundational work on posthumanism, including her "Cyborg Manifesto" has been in the background of this chapter up to now, in part because Haraway was an advisor to Kim Tallbear, and her work is deeply informed by Haraway. When it comes to the way queerness is deployed in the novel as an aspect of healing, Vizenor's cyborgs share more than a passing resemblance to Haraway's cyborg myth, because Point Assinika in *Heirs* is so clearly a space where the definition of

“human” becomes skewed from the traditional, Secular Humanist sense of individuality and sentience. To be cyborg is to not only blur the boundaries between human and animal, and animal and machine; it is also to take "pleasure in the confusion of boundaries" and "responsibility for their construction," and to defy the constructions of gender imposed by capitalist and patriarchal society (2271). The point of Haraway’s construction of the cyborg is to call for a new socialist feminism that accounts for the global nature of capitalist and patriarchal oppression — a utopian vision in itself — though the figure of the cyborg has also become a symbol of the queer nature of our connections with our technologies and increased awareness of the fact that gender is not determined by sex organs.[65] Panda, then, the queer biorobot that the scientists create, can be read as a product of knowledge stemming from creative opposition between genetic sciences and Indigenous philosophies — including the blurring of boundaries between what is considered sentient or animated, as Stone does when he claims the stones hold the stories of his blood.

Returning to the DNA metaphor: if, as is explained in the novel, Columbus’ inheritance is from mitochondrial DNA — which can only be inherited maternally, then the Heirs could not have inherited the genetic signature — unless Columbus is himself queer, and indeed when he has intercourse with Samana, the bear-shaman-woman, he is described as becoming a woman (40). Columbus becomes transgender, while Samana is both transgender and trans-species. Koepke and Nelson argue that the crossed, (what I name queer) nature of Columbus challenges his primacy as the discoverer of the new

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[65] I have argued this elsewhere in "Making Gender Trouble in Early Queer SF: Sam Delany's 'Aye, and Gomorrah.'"

world, and that along with the cross-dressing of the scientists and other moments, the text unsettles "the masculine authority of science and imperial conquest as well as bloodline" (18). But this also means that Columbus and Samana's DNA itself is *also* posthuman — blurring boundaries between human and animal from an Indigenous perspective — and queer in the spirit of trickster androgyny. [66]

To argue that DNA is a trickster-queer and posthuman metaphor may seem a forced reading given that Vizenor's notes do not reveal he had any knowledge of what would later become a widely accepted fact that genetics do not connote gender determinacy, or that he had Haraway's "Manifesto for Cyborgs" in mind while he was writing. However, this merely adds to the anticipatory nature of *Heirs*, and is an argument for its continued relevancy after decades of genetic research has offered more questions than answers about DNA. Colonialism is a self-replicating structure, and Vizenor saw its patterns even in the early days of the ascendancy of genetic sciences in the popular imagination. Vizenor's Heirs and the scientists at Point Assinika not only make what it means to be "human" queer, they also link a project of unsettling colonial scientific practices to one of queering them. Rather than being paralyzing, lack of genetic determinism and a confusion of mixed blood occasions creation, medical breakthroughs. In this sense then, DNA is itself trickster, confounding scientists with its indeterminacy (both androgynous and unreadable in other ways). When made into a metaphor that

[66] The queerness of mitochondria—as cells that may once have been other animals—reveals that we have never been autonomously human anyway in the Humanist sense. Add to this the queerness of the fact that human bodies hold in them large communities of bacteria that we could not survive without, meaning our bodies must be penetrable by other organisms for survival.

espouses the healing power of "pure," inviolable identity, DNA is in danger of becoming a terminal creed—an inviolable belief that threatens entire societies.

An international and Pan-Indian utopia threatened by terminal creeds

Before examining the role of terminal creeds in the context of the science fictional aspects of *Heirs*, I must make an argument for naming Point Assinika specifically utopian. Utopia is, as detailed in the introduction to this study, a fraught idea for Indigenous peoples, given the genre's historic justification of colonialism as able to impose an ideal, Western society on a global scale. Further, Western thought typically labels Indigenous societies utopian in the derogatory sense of pastoralism and primitivism. I contend utopia is appropriate for several reasons, including the fact that Vizenor was aware of contemporary utopian discourse; his papers contain reading notes for a book on utopianism and Marxism, that he read in preparation for his novel *Griever: An American Monkey King in China* (1986). While *Griever* criticizes oppressive Chinese applications of Marxism — which could be called a terminal creed itself — Vizenor also reveals in the interview that he espouses a Marxian revolutionary spirit and views his work as furthering revolution (Bowers et. al. 45). Further, Vizenor also knew of the contradictory definition of utopia from Latin as both "no-place" and "good place," and Point Assinika is not on any map of the world, surely a deliberate move on his part.

Second, Point Assinika is not a utopia meant to demonstrate Indigenous philosophies and ways of living as utopian in-and-of-themselves. Rather, David J. Carlson argues that *Heirs* offers a "etherized globalization," one that advances "utopian

possibilities for what globalization could mean" if it were freed of the structures of settler colonial and imperialist domination (27, 28). Indeed, Vizenor's papers reveal that he took an international and Pan-Indian approach to composing *Heirs*. He drew inspiration for several major plot points in the novel from current events all over the world, and even politics in the UC system. Some topics of these articles were: the aforementioned legal battle over a South Asian-Indian artifact in London; Yugoslavs claiming descendancy from ancient Egyptians, likely inspiration for the retelling of Columbus' lineage; Jewish settlement in New Mexico in the 16th century to escape pogroms, an influence for many Jewish elements in the novel, including Pir Cantrip as a Jewish survivor of a concentration camp; and South African BDS efforts at his university, which touch on issues of international relations and struggles for sovereignty that may have influenced the sovereign assertions of Point Assinika and its commitment to international relations. Use of these events and global political issues generally reflects Vizenor's commitment to sovereignty and rights beyond Indigenous struggles, as evidenced also in his nonfiction. But they also infuse a global element directly *into* Point Assinika, an Indigenous space that would not be possible as a myth without the elements of international resistance Vizenor used to create it. Utopia is thus a comfortable label for Point Assinika as an internationally-derived myth, and as product of an Indigenous science-fictional imagination rather than a pastoral or primitivist utopia; Point Assinika by its very nature then engages in the project of decolonizing utopia.

But — true to the more contemporary vision of utopia advanced by Le Guin and others — utopia must constantly change and challenge its beliefs in order to avoid

stagnation, and this is where Vizenor's idea of terminal creeds becomes essential. Vizenor's fictional oeuvre is infused with his campus-based political activism and journalism, which was greatly influenced by his interactions with the American Indian Movement (AIM). AIM began in the late 1960s, remained very active through to the 1980s, and is still active today. Vizenor's papers imply that his activism primarily consisted of intellectual support of pan-Indian efforts in the form of essay and newspaper article writing, and organizing cultural events for various Indian communities, academics, and students. His journalism appears to have frequently criticized AIM leaders for espousing terminal creeds, and was criticized by them in return. A number of his writings criticize AIM leaders Russell Means, Clyde Bellecourt, and Dennis Banks, though he tends towards humor with his criticism. Writing for the Minneapolis Tribune in 1978, Vizenor names Banks "the radical promoter [who] is performing his wounded-wing act for white audiences with no less mythical power than an evasive killdeer near a brackish pond." He calls Banks disingenuous in his insistence that he is a political prisoner, and believes he should be brought to justice for crimes having nothing to do with political activism (crimes for which Banks would indeed later serve time). AIM leaders were aware of Vizenor's criticisms and responded in turn. In one article Vizenor sent to his mother in 1973, Bellecourt accuses Vizenor of not doing right by his students: "[Bellecourt] said that colleges seek the man with the most education rather than the man closest to the culture regardless of education" ("AIM director"). Underlying such a

comment is of course an accusation that Vizenor is essentially not Indian enough, and that he has lost touch with his community.[67]

This implication that Vizenor was essentially not Indian enough is exemplary of Indigenous capitulation to assimilation efforts through blood quanta etc. that Vizenor resists in nearly every work of fiction and non-fiction he has produced; and is an example of a "terminal creed." Terminal creeds are a key theme of *Bear heart*, where they represent beliefs that, when held as inviolable, are destructive over time, such as the idea of nationalism that coheres in a federally recognized tribal government rather than a group of people with a shared culture. Any culture may hold these creeds, but Vizenor takes AIM leaders to task in *Bearheart*, when Belladona Darwin-Winter Catcher, a character who clearly represents an AIM leader is poisoned for her dogmatic adherence to terminal creeds primarily involving facile pastoralist views of tribal culture, and performing these ideas for white audiences in a way that reduces tribal culture to mysticism.

In *Heirs,* such criticisms of terminal creeds are much lighter and less specific to individuals; they are also international in their scope. Casino gambling as the answer to thriving sovereign tribes — more specifically the greed displayed by hoarding the profits of casino gambling — can be considered one such terminal creed the novel addresses. Vizenor's 1999 collection of essays, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian*

[67] Vizenor has been criticized in the academic community as well for subverting sovereignty movements, and failing to address the nationalist interests of tribal peoples in favor of individualism, as Christopher Schedler and others detail, and I do not mean to imply that these criticisms are without merit, but rather illuminate Vizenor's response to them.

Survivance, provides considerable insight into the scientific and political current events that drove him to write *The Heirs of Columbus*. In the chapter titled "Casino Coups," Vizenor observes that "gambling is human, an ancient practice" (147), but warns of the corrupting influence of sudden wealth provided by casino gambling — presumably by those whom he labels "tribal fascists" in the novel. At the same time he lauds casino gaming's potential, stating that "the ironies of panindian casino reparations could become the wages of sovereignty" (139). One major point of the essay is to argue for sharing of the profits with local, non-tribal governments to alleviate economic tensions. He also suggests these monies could be used to negotiate "the liberation of hundreds of stateless families in the world. The liberation of Kurdish, Tibetan, Haitian, and other families, for instance, would sustain the moral traditions of tribal cultures. The relocation of these families to reservation communities would situate an undeniable tribal sovereignty and earn the international eminence of a government" (148). He also points to the long tradition of Anishinaabe chance games, specifically the moccasin games, which play an important role in *Heirs*, as evidenced by the repetition of the theme that "Games of chance would heal the wounded and the lonesome" (124).[68] Health, for Vizenor, is not just physical of course; it is about community as a cure for spiritual afflictions such as loneliness, about the spiritual element of healing that includes myth-making, and that indigenous communities place great faith in.

[68] Such games of chance and the games in casinos are not necessarily the same thing, Vizenor points out elsewhere, including in his most recent novel, *Treaty Shirts: October 2034—A Familiar Treatise on the White Earth Nation*; casino games cannot all be justified by an appeal to tradition.

The intertwining and interdependence of a diversion that is generally considered morally dangerous (and the profits that come with it) with the health needs of not only Indigenous North American peoples but peoples from settler colonial states and other indigenous peoples, is a provocative move. Vizenor is holding the potential for good and ill of casinos in balance, once again via the balance of the trickster and the shaman. He is also challenging reservation governance to think beyond its borders in novel ways, to challenge the settler colonial state and its global domination while being wary of terminal creeds. For Uzendoski, Point Assinika argues for: "reforming international law from indigenous perspectives" in order to, among other things, center the human right to health. He continues, arguing that *Heirs* "frames tribal nationalism as immeasurably strengthened by international alliances and instruments" (46). Perhaps in turn, human rights advocates are in need of the trickster spirit of indigenous myth-making in an age where its staid institutions such as the United Nations seem to have the moral high ground but little else — their own ineffective terminal creeds of Western Humanism.

The Heirs have harnessed the power and potential of casino gambling for biomedical advancements, but they are not immune to other dangers of terminal creeds; utopia is not infallible. In the novel's final episode, a moccasin game of chance imperils the reservation and all of humanity. Federal agents thaw out a wiindigoo (who as a figure generally represents greed and overconsumption) who was narrowly thwarted in his attempt to wreak havoc on the tribe in a previous episode, and he returns to play another moccasin game. Stone knows he cannot beat the wiindigoo outright, so he takes a war herb he has developed based on the historical visions of Black Elk collected in *Black Elk*

Speaks (first published in 1932). The herb is described as both a nuclear weapon and biological/chemical one, and with it Stone turns the moccasin game into one of a sort of mutually assured destruction rooted in overconsumption of resources (not coincidentally one of the destructive forces of colonialism and capitalism together): the wiindigoo and other non-humans would survive, but then it would have no one left on earth to gamble with, and its reason for existence would be moot. The wiindigoo thus decides not to choose the correct moccasin, because according to Vizenor "even a demon needs humans" (182), and Point Assinika survives.

What are we to do with this ending that blends an Indigenous science fictional technology with traditional Anishinaabe myth? First, it is important to understand the wiindigoo. Carlson explains that the wiindigoo "might be thought of as a person who has become a monster through the failure to recognize his commonality with other people; this is one of the symbolic meanings of his cannibalism." He then briefly hypothesizes that the final episode "metaphorizes the dark side of the Columbian moment (its negative instantiation)" (37). However the wiindigoo, as an Anishinaabe figure, cannot straightforwardly represent the colonizer, nor does the moccasin game straightforwardly represent a colonial encounter with the colonized, especially given the war herb placed in one of the moccasins. There is yet another possibility based on Christopher Schedler's reading of the wiindigoo in *Bearheart*. Schedler reads the wiindigoo as a representation of terminal creeds themselves. Terminal creeds can be and are held by any group, so it is appropriate that the wiindigoo is thawed out by federal agents but is an Anishinaabe creature. As such, the wiindigoo in *Heirs* can represent a battle with terminal creeds that

creep into even a relatively stable, utopian community and the need to remain vigilant lest complacency lead to dystopia.

The war herb also lacks straightforward allegorical utility. Vizenor is perhaps playing here with the concept of mutually assured destruction through nuclear capabilities, which often comes into play in uneven global power relations; that is, global powers tend to recognize otherwise inferior states who have nuclear weapons because those inferior states can defend themselves (while causing immeasurable global harm) with said weapons. Indeed, other nations begin to take Point Assinika more seriously when they discover that the war herb may be real. However it cannot be this simple. Vizenor's *Hiroshima Bugi: Atomu 57*, is revealing of some of Vizenor's perspectives on nuclear weapons, and helps provide insight into the ending of *Heirs*. *Hiroshima Bugi* excoriates the false peace of nuclear pacifism, as embodied in Hiroshima's Atomic Bomb Dome. He shows that a pacifism resulting from unspeakable violence cannot be sustainable, in the sense that one cannot attain peace without justice. At the same time, Stone's use of the war herb surely is not a facile endorsement of nuclear weaponry as a tool for achieving indigenous sovereignty.

Perhaps then Vizenor is drawing on the apocalyptic myths of many Native North American cultures, which suggest that we live in a moment of great spiritual and environmental imbalance, and the final scene is a representation of such imbalance, and not just of the terminal creeds surrounding gambling. Perhaps also the moccasin game could be read as allegorizing imbalances between communities that can lead to violence, imbalance that can be traced to the lack of mutual recognition that the wiindigoo can

sometimes represent. It is a scene of potential violence that refreshingly does not portray Indigenous peoples as peaceful people incapable of defending themselves, one that asserts that even Indigenous sciences may be potentially harmful.[69] If the war herb could be considered a metaphor for the fallibility and imperfections of any scientific practice or culture of science — for the potential of using science for evil — then the game also might represent the urgent need to continue adapting and reformulating indigenous scientific imaginations to avoid the peril of terminal creeds.

Heirs then reinforces Thomas King's assertion (in Chapter 2) that myth-making in the indigenous tradition can be a vital tool in the era of globalization, when inter-community relations — including scientific partnerships — are more necessary than ever. Indigenous stories for King are useful in that they are continually recast and adapted, so in Vizenor's terms they might always cleave towards to survivance. Utopia will not be free of human fallibility or evil, and will need to continue to creatively combat it long after its establishment, balancing the forces of the trickster and the shaman that can be seen even in the "antinomies of the genetic code" of such fallible humans.

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[69] In an interview, Vizenor discusses violence in relation to *Bearheart*, another of the Heirship Chronicles, that seems to support my reading: "To deny violence is to create victims, ultimate victims, people who can be controlled merely by the symbolic appearance of violence. Because to deny violence, to control people, all one needs to do is suggest violence. The novel is about that, people who've denied violence and all of a sudden violence is with them, and they can't respond" (Bowers et al. 43). The interview couches this conversation in terms of balance and reconciling contradictions, and Vizenor then contrasts the general indigenous concept of balance between good and evil vs. the Christian drive towards annihilating evil.

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Chapter 5: Info-topia: Postcolonial cyberspace and artificial intelligence in *TRON: Legacy* and Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber*

In the 1990s, self-described transhumanists championed the new technological developments of the Internet and robotics, arguing that human-equivalent sentient Artificial Intelligence (AI) was nigh, and that humans would soon be able to enter a high-tech cyberspace to live alongside AI (Moravec, Rheingold). Major social issues would fade away in this new utopia. These flights of techno-futurist fancy have not been without their detractors. Tiziana Terranova and N. Katherine Hayles decried what they viewed as unwarranted techno-optimism that did not account for the complexities of the human brain and sentience. Additionally, it has been argued that even relatively modest advances in the realm of cyberspace would not have such utopian effects. Manuel Castells argues that the digital divide — the uneven distribution of technology that serves to further deepen global inequality — is so pronounced that the Internet is more likely to be a tool to leverage existing corporate, exploitative power than one to free the masses to connect across borders.

Nevertheless, science fiction inspired and legitimized the use of utopian techno-futurist rhetoric by western science and technology companies in order to justify technological advancement at all costs — and in turn legitimizes the uneven distribution of technology. Cyberpunk, in particular, still engages techno-optimism at a fictional level that parallels the 90s techno-optimism around information and computing technologies. The need to once again respond to this renewed techno-optimism for the few is the subject of this chapter. The "post-cyberpunk" novel *Midnight Robber* by Afro-Caribbean

author Nalo Hopkinson reveals, reflects upon, and challenges the techno-futurism we find in western rhetoric about information and computing technology, especially Artificial Intelligence.

Hopkinson's work, when contrasted to fiction such as the movie *TRON: Legacy*, reveals a particular aspect of the legitimizing rhetoric of techno-futurism: the ways race and ethnicity as formulated by settler colonialism are overlaid onto Artificial Intelligence, specifically the subjectivities of "native" and "slave." This overlay signals that postcolonial relations of power will not change in the techno-future without an active coalitional struggle against them. In *TRON: Legacy*, the overlay creates narrative conflict, while *Midnight Robber* interrogates the racialization of Artificial Intelligence, and works to reclaim racial difference as liberatory. Recognition that techno-futurist rhetorics informed by colonialism are alive and well in the popular imagination — as well as challenged — helps us examine the fact that colonialism is still with us even when we try to imagine a better world, and *Midnight Robber* suggests the possibility of a decolonized techno-utopian imagination.

Cyberpunk utopias as settler colonies

Cyberpunk is a science fiction (hereafter "sf") subgenre whose founding texts were published in the 1980s in response to advances in computer technology and the intensification of global capitalism by multinational companies (and anxieties about the technological decline of the US in relation to Japan). Cyberpunk is typically set in a gritty, post-industrial, technologically advanced near-future, and often depicts advanced

Internet technology as a tool for corporate control. SF in general is rooted in fantasies of colonialism, and cyberpunk is no exception. John Rieder's *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* demonstrates how sf emerged alongside colonialism to deal with the implications of rapid technological advance precipitated by the need to build a colonial empire. He argues that colonialism, especially the discourse of racism, is "woven into the texture of science fiction" (97). While Rieder focuses on sf from before the 1980s, cyberpunk is a perfect genre for a continuation of his analysis, because it imagines the globalized power relationships that postcolonialism critiques, especially with regards to the Internet/cyberspace.

An understanding of the way colonialism, and in particular settler colonialism, permeates understandings of cyberspace, begins with the very idea that "cyberspace" is a "space." Wendy Hui Kyong Chun interrogates this idea:

> Constructed as an electronic frontier, cyberspace managed global fiber optic networks by transforming nodes, wires, cables and computers into an infinite enterprise/discovery zone. Like all explorations, charting cyberspace entailed uncovering what was always already there and declaring it 'new'. … Like the New World and the frontier, settlers claimed this 'new' space and declared themselves its citizens. … Those interested in 'wiring the world' reproduced -- and still reproduce -- narratives of 'darkest Africa' and of civilizing missions ... and covertly, if not overtly, conflate spreading the light with making a profit. (243)

Why “go to” cyberspace? Because the world has already been “settled” thanks to global capitalism; thus capitalism has created a new frontier out of a collection of wires and computers. But it is not necessarily “new”; as a metaphor “cyberspace” is filled with readable signs of similarity to our colonial history that serve to orient the cyberspace visitor (or reader).

Why is cyberspace specifically a settler colonial metaphor? Settler colonialism is defined by Patrick Wolfe as having the following essential characteristics: it is premised on the utopian idea that the land to be settled is empty or *terra nullius*, and perfect for colonization; it holds that the elimination of the Native is to be achieved through a variety of means, including enslavement, removal from land, and assimilation; and it employs contradictory processes of racialization of non-Europeans that vary based on the needs of those who administer a particular area (for example, a distinction between Indigenous North Americans and African Americans was that Natives can be assimilated into the white population through breeding and education, while slaves remained slaves even if they have “one drop” of blood in them — elements of these distinctions remain in racial perceptions today). *Terra nullius* also makes cyberspace utopian from a colonizer's perspective: the hero of *TRON: Legacy* romanticizes it as a fertile territory for coding that will sustain a better society. Cyberspace becomes a space where humans can exert dominion over AI (which they sometimes create, and sometimes find). The utopian ideals inherent in *TRON: Legacy*’s cyberspace illustrate how settler colonialism is more broadly bound up in western expressions of techno-utopia.

Imaginations of a globally ubiquitous, hyper-advanced cyberspace further tend to elide the material facts of settler colonialism, by positing technological advancement with no natural limits to growth, a post-scarcity environment. Thus, the rush to innovate and create technology at all costs, in order to construct a better world — a goal that techno-futurists and neoliberals alike employ in their utopian rhetoric — conveniently ignores the fact that enormous resources are needed from current and former colonies in the global south in order to build the technologies that house cyberspace. I will return to these material facts in my conclusion, but first I will provide theoretical understanding of the racialization of Artificial Intelligence in cyberpunk.

Racializing Artificial Intelligence

The settler-colonial frontier as the go-to metaphor for cyberspace is the site of significant — though unacknowledged — work in reproducing the conditions of inequality through race that perpetuate global structures of power, in large part through racializing Artificial Intelligence. SF is rife with the fear that AI programs or robots will discover that they are enslaved and reject the control of their creators, and these fears frequently translate to ethical debates about AI (see warnings from Stephen Hawking, Bill Gates, and Elon Musk, for example [Sainato]). Indeed the trope of the revolt of the artificial slave has arguably existed throughout the centuries of sf's existence as a genre, especially the revolt of "hardware" versions. Kevin LaGrandeur explains that AIs have long been considered to be slaves who were created/produced (and are perpetually improved upon) to make the lives of humans easier, a utopian goal. Echoing this,

Gregory Hampton compares antebellum US literature and contemporary sf about robotics to interrogate discourses justifying the subjugation of African slaves, and the ways these discourses are now reproduced in terms of artificial intelligence, especially robots. AI can at the same time, and contradictorily, stand in for those disenfranchised by class and race — the Other whose revolt is at least somewhat justified, as for example, with the replicants of *Blade Runner*. However, enslaved AIs are often coded as white or as a multiracial group that includes white actors; this tends to obscure actual relations of power and center whiteness as imperiled.

Contemporary portrayals of AI in sf serve to reveal and reflect upon the continuation of oppression in the context of postcolonial power relations. AI is not just a slave in Hollywood and other western formulations, and the fears evoked are not just those of slave revolt. Rather, the figure of the software Artificial Intelligence in cyberpunk sf can also draw on another racial formation specific to North American colonization: the native subjectivity imposed on Native North Americans. This can be overlaid on the more common slave subjectivity evocative of African slavery in the Americas, in order to create a complex, contradictory subjectivity, as seen in *TRON: Legacy*. It is a collapse of different subjectivities that achieves various ends, including the commercial.

How does AI's native subjectivity become enmeshed within the more generally recognized slave subjectivity? Though the process is not uniform across all fictional representations, we can make some general observations. AI is born into cyberspace, so it is native, though its birth/reproduction is controlled by humans, as is that of a slave. Its

knowledge of its native cyberspatial terrain is unmatched by humans, often giving it the upper hand (as we see early in the genre in William Gibson's *Count Zero,* in the form of programs who are gods inspired by Caribbean Vodun, a religion coincidentally composed of West African and Indigenous American traditions). But it is also held in thrall by humans in its own space, and through its service knows the strengths and weaknesses of the system and the humans it serves. Thus the slave who knows the master and the native who knows how to rebel/resist colonization within the environment unite — albeit uneasily — in one figure. While this trope extends in some ways beyond cyberspace into the realm of artificial humans/androids (Rieder), the dual subjectivity of software AI in particular is pronounced because of the aforementioned settler colonial implications of the cyberspace in which these AI live.

Why does this contradictory subjectivity matter? It helps us to think about cyberspace not just as a place with an ad hoc overlay of settler colonial tropes meant to understand a space new to (post)humans, but as a place that also shows further how settler colonialism is woven into the texture of sf and popular culture. This expands more broadly to reveal how western culture thinks about sharing physical space in general, how the impulse to racialize is not just "colonialism speaking" (Wolfe 5) but is also a part of how we imagine technology and justify its unequal distribution. The fictional software AI is an exemplary product of power relations in the age of global capitalist technocracy. It illustrates the anxiety of the colonizer about losing control over the world systems of people and machines, enmeshed together in our posthuman age, created to serve global capital. The Internet affords increasing control over these systems, but it also affords

many technological opportunities for those who might resist it — in the form of knowledge sharing, connection between oppressed peoples internationally, and of course hacking as resistant practice. The possibility of the software AI revolt is thus collapsed with the revolt of oppressed peoples in the postcolonial era; in some contexts this possibility is cause for fear, while in others it is celebrated.

TRON: Legacy **and mainstream colonial-techno-utopia**

TRON: Legacy is exemplary of contemporary, mainstream cyberpunk and its problematic relationship to colonialism. The film opens with visionary speeches by Kevin Flynn (Jeff Bridges as the CEO of ENCOM — presumably a parody of ENRON) about a New Frontier and the New World of cyberspace. The story is set approximately two decades after the original *TRON*, and follows Flynn's son, (Garrett Hedlund). ENCOM has once again been taken over by an evil CEO, and Sam dedicates himself to subverting it, until he finds a way into cyberspace in search of his father. Sam emerges into an allegory of a former colony with slave programs on the brink of revolution, wherein the former administrative class, Clu and Tron, have become dictators. Sam is rescued by Quorra (Olivia Wilde) and taken to find his father; we learn that Kevin had hoped to build his idea of a hippie utopia where "all information was free and open and beautiful." Clu then betrayed him in a maniacally utopian attempt to create "the perfect system." Kevin, Sam, and Quorra resist the tyranny of Clu's misinterpretation of utopia, just in time to save the real world from the brainwashed army of programs whom Clu has reprogrammed to invade.

Despite its utopian intentions, *TRON: Legacy* deserves some criticism for its racial bias —primarily because of its liberal use of science fictional tropes of racialized AI, especially with regards to the AI Quorra.[70] Quorra is an "Isometric Algorithm" (ISO), a race of programs who spontaneously evolved in cyberspace outside the city. They gain sentience in the backwash of Kevin's code as it floats through cyberspace, and then decide for some reason to join the programs in the city. While the ISOs do not share real-world phenotypical traits (they are multiracial), they all bear a glowing arm tattoo that symbolizes their nativeness, as opposed to the supposedly civilized city programs. The actress who plays Quorra, Olivia Wilde, is made to appear Asian, with eyes and hair accentuated with makeup in style of cyberpunk; this is suggestive of "high-tech Orientalism," a term coined by Chun. It is almost as if she is a film version of the first hyper-sexualized, combat-ready Asian woman of cyberpunk: Molly Millions of Gibson's *Neuromancer*. Layered onto this orientalism are two other subjectivities: that of the noble savage and the expendable slave.

We can read Quorra as noble savage in part through the "colonial gaze," which "distributes knowledge and power to the subject who looks [the colonizer], while denying or minimizing access to power for its object, the [colonized] looked at" (Rieder 7). *TRON: Legacy* illustrates the colonial gaze most obviously when Kevin tells Sam and Quorra about the day the ISOs came toward the city from the barren wastes outside it. The soft-focus scene from Kevin's memory then shifts towards a romanticized narration

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[70] The argument here is not that the producers set out to make a racist film, but that the film reveals just how embedded in the mainstream American unconscious is the settler colonial tendency to racialize the Other in ways *specific to a given situation*, even if those ways contradict racial formations in other colonial settings.

of the genocide of Quorra's people, where ISOs are shown as lights pulled into a structure that then collapses, evoking a gas chamber scene. The scene visualizing Kevin's memory and narrated by him then cuts to Quorra listening on a couch, looking both devastated and devastatingly sexy, uttering the name of this cyber-Holocaust: “the Purge.” We are to admire her beautiful legs and heeled leather boots, in a way that implies we are looking along with our hero, Sam; but she is only eye candy for us — we are supposed to *listen* instead to Kevin's voice of authority. The past is regrettable, but inevitable; the “Indian” exists only to die. As “the last of her kind,” the gaze does not see a future for her except as sacrifice.

Close at the heels of this “last Indian” trope is the “good native” trope, and Quorra shares more than a passing affinity with Disney's standard bearer for this: Pocahontas. There are even direct similarities between film shots of *TRON: Legacy* and *Pocahontas*, where both women shield white men from harm with their bodies. Kevin characterizes Quorra and the other ISOs during the same flashback scene discussed above in a way that layers on additional settler colonial stereotypes of Indigenous people: the ISOs are simultaneously “profoundly naive” and “infinitely wise” and he found them “like flowers in a wasteland” (though *they* clearly found *him*). Kevin further explains to Sam that the ISOs would have been his “gift to the world” had they survived, and this sounds suspiciously like native exhibition — a fate Pocahontas suffered — and even slavery.

And why would this “good native” be Kevin's gift to the world? He sees them in this scene, and a subsequent scene where he must tinker with Quorra's “DNA,” as a way to fight disease and advance science and philosophy in general. He calls her a “miracle ...

a digital frontier to reshape the human condition". The moment Sam "discovers" the ISOs is also the moment he discovers that he need not focus on building a perfect world in cyberspace, and can shift instead to the medical-utopian implications of ISOs on his own world. One can foresee ENCOM becoming a bio-pirate company, colonizing the very DNA of ISOs with sequencing patents that promise medical advances.

The disturbing implications of Sam's proposed biopiracy become even more problematic at the film's end, when Quorra returns to the real world with Sam. Aside from the obvious assimilation-inspired rhetoric of the Native going to the New World in an attempt to reform their savagery, as with Pocahontas, what does it mean that Quorra is able to "pass" as human at the end of the film in the real world? This strongly suggests a privileging of the (white) human over artificial/native life. There is no suggestion of attempts to re-create the conditions of ISO life, or perhaps find ISO life that wasn't destroyed by Clu; instead, it will be studied for the benefit of humans. Cyberspace is not treated as a place with a native ecology whose life should be protected, but as an "empty" space into which humans can import themselves and their technologies.

The aspects of Quorra's subjectivity that represent slavery are less emphasized but still present, and they reveal the contradictory nature of racialization in itself. Quorra serves Kevin by attempting dangerous missions in the city and also serves as a bodyguard. She also risks her life to save Sam at least three times, yet Kevin seems oblivious to his treatment of her as expendable, in part because he teaches her to read and claims to protect her, and even calls her his "apprentice." But his Zen-inspired teachings focus on how to sacrifice herself, or to "remove herself from the equation." This

imperative to sacrifice herself when necessary suggests that “apprentice” is a fancy word for slave. At one point, soon after Sam realizes that Quorra is the last of her kind, he remarks to Kevin: “She risked herself for me,” to which Kevin responds with fatherly love: “Some things are worth the risk.” Quorra is a thing and implicitly a slave, and the complete destruction of a new “race” of sentient beings is worth the safety of Kevin's son.

Midnight Robber as post-cyberpunk narrative

Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* positively explodes such problematic racialization of AI, and reimagines the colonial terrain of cyberspace. *Midnight Robber* is situated firmly in the tradition of Afrofuturism, a term coined by Mark Dery to describe “speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture,” and that “appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future” (180). Indeed, the complex nature of Hopkinson's utopian imagination provides no mere contrast to *TRON: Legacy* — a Hollywood film should not necessarily be expected to contain the complexity and nuance of a novel — but rather an example of how Afrofuturist sf can reflect deeply upon the entanglement between the utopian and the colonial. Hopkinson exemplifies a liberatory claiming of racial difference through creative expression — including through the use of creole throughout the novel — a difference that is essential to imagining a better world, while resisting facile multiculturalism. Many critics, including Jillana Enteen, have likened Hopkinson's use of creole, or what Brathwaite calls “nation

language" (260), as an anticolonial practice, to the idea of hacking. Additionally, Hopkinson's characters hack sonically, in a way that stays true to the oral traditions of Caribbean creolization of English.

Midnight Robber is set first on the world of Toussaint,[71] a utopian colony whose inhabitants are of Caribbean descent, and the society's folklore consists of heroes of Caribbean colonial resistance. Toussaint is generally a utopian society, but it is divorced from Caribbean history in key ways, so that it is no longer a culture that maintains resistance to hegemony. Toussaint's first settlers themselves engaged in colonial violence against native flora and fauna now believed extinct. They did this with the help of a supposedly benevolent super AI, Granny Nanny, whose network is known as the 'Nansi Web. Tan-Tan, the main character, grows up in this utopia, with an AI, called an "eshu," for a teacher and minder.

Importantly, some of the utopians on Toussaint reject this complacency, insisting on the importance of manual labor through pedicab driving (remaining true to this Asian and Afro-Caribbean mode of conveyance), and hacking into Granny Nanny, who speaks in "nannysong" through their own sonic Creole codes, in a culture of innovation that also rejects some of the heteronormative aspects of Toussaint. They also live in a polygamous, queer community that controls technology rather than being controlled by it, and have no need of eshus to navigate the 'Nansi Web. Beata, the pedicab runner woman, described repeatedly as large and muscled from her work, hacks in a way that reveals Hopkinson's

[71] As is the case with many other proper names in the novel, Toussaint is named after a Caribbean historical figure. Toussaint L'Ouverture was a leader of the Haitian Revolution, which ended in 1804 and was the only successful slave uprising to lead to statehood.

own interest in hacking written language to suggest oral language, through creating new words: Beata "hummed something that sounded like nannysong, but fast, so fast, a snatch of notes that hemidemisemiquavered into tones [Antonio] couldn't distinguish" (Hopkinson 9). These are neither the frail white male hacker-nerds of Hollywood nor the meticulously-groomed white male saviors seen in *TRON: Legacy*; they exhibit no desire to neglect their bodies or their fellow humans in favor of the transhumanist promises of an easy techno-utopian life.

Hopkinson leaves the 'Nansi Web and eshu behind for much of the narrative, in part to reveal that Toussaint, despite being more or less utopian, actually has colonial roots that must be confronted. Here the plot thickens: Tan-Tan's father commits murder, and for this he is banished, but Tan-Tan tries to follow him. After eshu tries unsuccessfully to prevent Tan-Tan's accidental deportation to the nearly lawless prison colony of New Half-Way Tree (actually the same world as Toussaint in a parallel universe),[72] the novel shifts from utopia to what initially seems to be dystopia, and the eshu is apparently outside the linear narrative. Tan-Tan is repeatedly raped and impregnated by her father, and she murders him in self-defense.

Tan-Tan must run away to avoid the unforgiving "justice" of the part of the prison colony where they live, and she is aided by the natives of New Half-Way Tree. The Douen adhere to the mainstream science fictional trope of indigenes as Alien Others; however Hopkinson's Afrofuturist appropriation of this trope deliberately leaves behind

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[72] Half-Way Tree is a commuter hub in Kingston that was once a site of revolutionary activity. However, it is increasingly becoming an upscale neighborhood. The naming of the prison planet as New Half-Way Tree suggests that it is a space to once again spark revolutionary activity in a society that is becoming complacent in its techno-utopia.

the trope of the noble savage or the idea that they are a race who will passively vanish in their primitive state. Bird-like in appearance, the Douen — whose name is derived from the souls of lost children in Afro-Caribbean folklore — were once also native to the original Toussaint. Their culture is one of harmony with nature, egalitarianism, and mutual aid; though not perfect, it is certainly closer to a vision of anticolonial utopia than Toussaint. Although they lack machine-based technology (which they are in the process of secretly learning for self-defense), their natural sciences are far superior to human sciences. Their resistance to encroachment by the forced settlers from Toussaint takes the form of preventing significant parts of Native knowledge and culture from being known by the settlers. Rescuing Tan-Tan is an act that puts the community at risk of elimination, because the settlers retaliate by trying to find and destroy their village. Unlike the creators of the ISOs of *TRON: Legacy*, however, Hopkinson is not interested in giving the Douen a white savior nor romanticizing their perilousness. Instead, Tan-Tan, who is anything but a white savior, puts them in further danger through repeated attempts to interact with other local colonies, and when, as a result of her actions the humans come too close to learning where they live, she is exiled.

Tan-Tan learns in exile (along with an adolescent Douen who is exiled with her) how to be a resistant figure to the oppressive leaders of the prison colony. Wearing a costume of the Midnight Robber (an Afro-Caribbean carnival figure, often portrayed as a boastful African prince — or occasionally princess — who has been captured by whites into slavery and then escaped to become a highwayman), Tan-Tan aids the destitute in the nearby colonies, including by running off the "law enforcement." The townsfolk

create a folklore around her, and stories of her escapades are interspersed with the main narrative of the novel by the eshu. In this way Tan-Tan becomes a figure of hope for the colony.

The 'Nansi Web is home to more than one complex AI subjectivity. Both the 'Nansi Web (as a cyberspatial place) and Granny Nanny (as the maternal supercomputer of Toussaint) contain utopian and colonial connotations that productively compare to *TRON: Legacy*'s human-coded/created utopia. The 'Nansi Web and Granny Nanny are colonizing technologies that aided Afro-Caribbean-descended settlers during their “Leave Taking” from earth, presumably to escape the oppressive colonial relations of power extant here. Granny Nanny was sent to Toussaint to make it habitable. Granny Nanny is named for the Obeah woman who became the matriarchal figure of escaped maroons in Jamaica. Meanwhile the 'Nansi Web recalls Anansi, a spider trickster figure from the same Yoruban traditions, where is he is considered a god. Jillana Enteen details how in the novel the 'Nansi Web's creators coopt revolutionary anti-colonial figures and traditions to create a new culture overseen by the web, including the Carnival holiday, Jour Ouvert. Enteen argues that this technology and surrounding coopted folklore has led to Toussaint becoming a stagnant utopia, with major characters such as Midnight Robber, who are affiliated with Maroon resistance, reduced to a figure without significance.

The loss of a revolutionary mindset, aided by the utopian comfort offered by Granny Nanny, is nuanced by other connotations she carries. Elizabeth Boyle, in her excellent essay on race and technology in the novel, contrasts Granny Nanny to the supercomputer trope of sf as exemplified in HAL-9000 of *2001: A Space Odyssey* and

Master Control in the original *TRON*. She argues that they are usually implicitly racialized as Black slaves, but that Granny Nanny is instead truly a maternal protector and facilitator of communication across the diaspora of the dimension veils, rather than a computer whose revolt is to be feared. In refusing this classic narrative, Hopkinson doesn't make the Granny Nanny perfect, but rather uses Afro-Caribbean stories to imagine communications technology with more nuance than simply a rebellious slave.

Granny Nanny is not reducible to a benevolent mother figure, as Anatol and others argue. She is also a master of technology that has enabled successful colonization of another planet; rather than being indigenous like Quorra, she is a colonizer. As Hopkinson explained to me in an unpublished interview, Granny Nanny helps explore the ways peoples in the Americas with African ancestry might come to terms with the fact that they were unwillingly part of a colonizing force. Hopkinson describes Tan-Tan's realization that the Douen lived here before her people did as an opportunity for her people to no longer be "comfortably innocent" of their role as colonizers, and to potentially end the destructive colonization of New Half-Way Tree.

This allegory of the complicated relationship between indigenes of the Americas and African Americans deserves further attention, especially given the context of settler colonial studies, which for all its insight tends to privilege the perspective of the settler (especially the rationale of the settler in using race to justify colonialism) over perspectives of the colonized. J. Kēhaulani Kauanui points out that this serves additionally to fragment resistance against colonialism. Kauanui argues via an analysis of Bacon's rebellion — a 1675 insurrection in Virginia where poorer white settlers allied

with slaves to attack and kill Indigenous peoples as a way to free the slaves and drive out colonial government — that an understanding of "racialization as practice *alongside* race as doctrine" (258) enables colonized groups to engage in coalitional politics.

Tan-Tan is no longer comfortably innocent of the colonial past, but she and the Douen community have also failed together at a coalitional politics, at least initially. Her role as the Midnight Robber in seeking justice in the struggling prisoners' communities led the "law enforcement" pursuing her to find the Douen, and they exile her and her young Douen companion Abitefa for this. Thrice-exiled, Tan-Tan relies both on Abitefa and on a human from the prison colony who has worked on his own efforts at building a community in exile. Tan-Tan is ultimately unable, given the prison colony's lack of medical knowledge, to abort the fetus that is the product of her father's rape; the novel closes with her giving birth, aided also by the eshu, a second and radically different AI subjectivity. We learn then that the eshu has in fact never left Tan-Tan; the framing narrative used to suggest a children's tale throughout has actually been the eshu speaking to Tan-Tan's fetus, telling it tales to ease the difficulty of its birth. The eshu explains to the fetus that Granny Nanny has used the same "nanomites" that eshu used, to ride Tan-Tan through the dimension veils and alter the fetus's development, thus creating a hybrid human-AI whom Tan-Tan can love as not merely a reflection of her rapist father. The eshu tells him in the womb: "You could hear me because your whole body is one living connection with the Grande Anansi Nanotech Interface. Your little bodystring will sing to Nanny tune, doux-doux" (Hopkinson 328).

The implications of the eshu — as narrator, as key to opening up of utopian possibilities of reconciliation between worlds, and as an inhabitant of the 'Nansi Web — are postcolonial on multiple levels, though not all of them comfortably anti-colonial. This is implied first by the deity after whom the character is named. Eshu came to the Americas via African slaves; Enteen explains the myth of the eshu as an omnipresent Yoruba trickster deity who conveys messages to and from the spirit world, and who, along with Granny Nanny more broadly, is remixed in Hopkinson's novel with Indigenous Taino-Arawak values, making the eshu in the novel the product of both Indigenous and African philosophies. Boyle argues that the eshu "is not there to represent the objectified or inscrutable slave body, but in fact becomes, like its parent computer the Nansi Web, an endlessly dissolving figure that claims its own agency" (183). So, just as Granny Nanny stands in contrast to other mainstream super-computers, the eshu is a familial, domestic AI, not the dangerous, evil slave figure suited to be the nemesis of the white male savior of mainstream cyberpunk.

Hopkinson expanded on this further in our interview, explaining that the eshu is, as were some house slaves in the Americas, one "who loves the master's child, who can't hate [Tan-Tan, despite her being] the child who will grow into the master, because she is as a child more helpless than it." The eshu may be programmed to love children, but Hopkinson also points out that humans are also biologically programmed to love children and Granny Nanny to love humans, thus evoking questions of human agency in the context of AI, which is often not considered truly AI unless it is a completely autonomous intelligence. Still, the eshu is clearly marked as a slave, as seen in the fact

that Tan-Tan's mother clearly has the slave-master's power over his life: she plans to give him a "synapse wash" (54) when he crosses her in a trickster manner by slightly disobeying her orders in favor of Tan-Tan's wishes.

At the novel's close, Tan-Tan names the newborn Tubman, and the eshu responds by describing him as "the human bridge from slavery to freedom" (329), further complicating AI subjectivity, especially because at no point does the eshu express any overt desire for his own freedom. Yet rather than the attendant fear of invasion invoked when Clu's AI army attempts to enter the real world in *TRON: Legacy*, Tubman's subjectivity as part AI, part human is hopeful, if contingently so. In this way, Hopkinson seems further to suggest that when viewing advanced AI technology through the lens of a non-western — in this case Afro-Caribbean — lens, it might appear less obviously evil and dangerous, though not less complex and useful as an sf trope.

However, as with Tan-Tan for the Douen, we should not consider Tubman as a straightforward savior. Hopkinson explained to me that she ended the novel realizing that she had participated unwittingly in the privileging of racially-mixed people in narratives where bi-racial people can be perceived by whites as saviors somehow more likely to "reconcile" the two races. She instead wanted to focus on the importance of Tubman as a "communications bridge" between worlds, as a sort of opening up of conversations between peoples in the African diaspora, not as a savior but as a facilitator. He is a way for Tan-Tan to communicate with others what she has learned about their people's colonial past, the dark side of utopia that is New Half-Way Tree, and enable communication between natives and non-natives. Hopkinson's narrative thus shows that

as a mixed-race and mixed-species child of arrivants to New Half-Way Tree and colonizing AI technology, Tubman will have to negotiate his privilege with care.

Conclusion: Decolonizing information science and technology in the posthuman age

Afrofuturism is a site for imagining, among other things, the decolonization of science and technology. Hopkinson's Afrofuturist reimagining of cyberspace and Artificial Intelligence is in line with the growing body of work that challenges the hegemony of western ways of thinking about and practicing science, as Bonaventura de Sousa Santos persuasively argues. De Sousa Santos shows how non-western peoples had been practicing science long before "the west" existed, and that in a world of great human suffering and on the verge of environmental collapse, the west must engage in a reciprocal relationship of information and knowledge exchange if humanity is to survive.

Through sf, postcolonial writers can, as Hopkinson does, reuse and remix hegemonic technological tropes for anti-colonial purposes, in ways that go beyond such technologies in order to interrogate, for example, the environmental politics of colonialism. The dazzling depictions of limitless high technology common to cyberpunk, including information and communications technologies like the Internet, is the site of such remixing that this article has focused on. Too often, techno-utopianism (of mainstream cyberpunk and mainstream science alike) does not take into account the ways raw materials needed for computer technology flow along similar routes as the colonial era, nor does it account for how exploitative these resource extractions remain.

Cyberpunk such as *TRON: Legacy* quite often celebrates technology as if it had no material or environmental costs.

Contrast this to *Midnight Robber*, where cyberspace is, for Hopkinson, a complex trickster space inspired by Afro-Caribbean tradition, a space that aids the lives of her utopians but at the same time can get them caught up in a web of dependence and historical amnesia, and whose environmental costs Tan-Tan must reckon with. Hopkinson's narrative challenges specifically the way that neoliberalism — as the latest iteration of colonialism — tramples on the rights of Indigenous peoples in its relentless pursuit of the resources that fuel these technologies. She calls on readers living within hegemony to come to terms with the fact that they are being lured by false techno-futuristic promises, and that oppression lies behind the techno-utopian rhetoric they find in science and popular culture.

Also appropriated by Hopkinson is the trope of the dangerous, implicitly racialized AI and the host of fears that underlie it. The most straightforward underlying fear is of course the fear of the Other, seen in the racialized AI. Then there is a more complicated fear, outlined in LaGrandeur's argument concerning the danger of the artificial slave: fear of the AI elides with a fear of losing our subjectivity because of our close proximity to our high-tech creations, along the lines of the master-slave dialectic. He observes that:

> we do not perceive the slippery nature of the dialectical relationship between them and us ... between master and servant; we do not keep in mind that we are, in

> terms of systems theory, always and already enmeshed in a networked relationship with our prosthetic inventions. (234)

The Other is not just racialized, but anything not-us from the perspective of the white, technologically sophisticated hero. As representative of hegemony, he fears that he cannot control the fact that humanity is already posthuman, already enmeshed in our technologies, and knows that these technologies intensify already-existing global power structures while at the same time imperiling them. Indeed, a major aspect of the west's defense of its power is cyber security, and the fear of the cyber terrorist or cybercriminal from outside the west — especially Africa, Russia, and China — is often exploited. *TRON: Legacy* amplifies these fears in its Pocahontas reboot, enlisting the help of the noble savage to stop an evil cyber dictator.

Hopkinson, by contrast, backgrounds the master-slave dialectic, suggesting that we might instead look at information and computing technology through the epistemological lens of Afro-Caribbean philosophy and values, showing that we need not reflexively racialize AI with colonial subjectivities in an attempt to justify the racial domination that western technosciences engenders, nor reflexively fear those who might use the west's own technological creations, for example, by hacking against it. Boyle argues, focusing on Tan-Tan as a character whose body decorporealizes in transit through dimensions, that *Midnight Robber* offers "a more fluid but ultimately sustainable model of racial and gendered identity that can sustain itself in spaces of technology, while remaining connected to material and narrative spaces of production" (190). While Boyle

does not directly allude to sustainability in terms of the environmental degradation that accompanies pursuit of science and technology, her argument applies in this context too. Fundamentally reimagining technology and humans' relationship to it goes hand-in-hand with a more egalitarian production and distribution of said technology.

Hopkinson's utopian hope thus foregrounds embodiment and physicality — without erasing racial difference — while keeping in mind our posthuman, postcolonial, and environmentally precarious world. She literalizes LaGrandeur’s point about the master-slave dialectic by having Tan-Tan give birth to an AI-human hybrid: the fear of the master-slave dialectic has come to pass, but it offers the chance for increased communication rather than loss. Together Tan-Tan and Tubman might reconcile with the colonial past of Toussaint and the colonial present in New Half-Way Tree, appropriating the technology of the eshu and 'Nansi Web to establish communications with the many marginalized communities of both worlds (including the hacker-pedicab clan and the exiled prisoner communities). Hopkinson, then, suggests that non-western epistemologies enable us to acknowledge this already-existing enmeshment between human and machine, and appropriate it in the style of Afro-futurism to decolonize the utopian imagination.

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Conclusion: To Imagine Utopia is a Radical Act

Depression and despair are the conditions of dystopia. They are endemic to Western society, as Mark Fisher argues in *Capitalist Realism,* taking as an example the British students he taught. This in part because depression is a natural response to several aspects of daily life: economic instability, and the loss of community and social support networks that comes with changing economic conditions — conditions that require increased worker mobility while simultaneously depressing wages. He finds his students in a state where they can concentrate on nothing but seeking pleasure in a world they know they cannot change; they are one of many immobilized "casualties of capital." Instead of recognizing depression as natural, Fisher bemoans what he sees as the medicalization of depression as a chemical imbalance, and calls for "repoliticizing mental illness" on the part of the political left (37). I would add that because those with any left-oriented political outlook find it difficult to see a better future for ourselves and those who might come after us, including our students, depression is also endemic on the left.[73] Impending environmental collapse, coupled with the dismantling of government in the age of neoliberalism, such that government enables greater concentration of capital rather than protecting people, compounds a sense of despair even for those who believe we live in a world we *can* change.

Depression is a natural response to our dystopian, apocalyptic world, and activists who refuse to turn a blind eye to the horrors of the world are, it seems, particularly

[73] Fisher himself suffered from depression, a fact that he made the centerpiece of some of his later work.

susceptible to it. The inability to imagine a better future is ingrained in us by Western power structures; utopia is so often considered a derogatory term on all sides of the political spectrum, unrealistic dreaming.[74] And it is especially dystopian for people of color and colonized peoples in the West, those on whose backs the utopian promises of colonialism were built (and the new forms of oppression that continue to sustain the false utopia of capitalism). Tynesha "Lovely" Davis was a Black Lives Matter activist, poet, and college friend of mine when we studied together at Buffalo State College. She wrote her master's thesis about what she called "power intoxication" in dystopian fiction, arguing that it was also endemic to Western society. Over the years, Davis became depressed by the injustices of capitalism and neoliberal governance — injustices visited upon her personally as she struggled to find stable employment despite having an advanced degree. She specifically saw the injustices she fought against as dystopian, and her scholarship informed her BLM activism. She closes her master's thesis with a quote from *Metropolis*, one that contains utopian promise from within a dystopian world: "What if one day those in the depths rise up against you?" But Davis could not see a way out of those depths, and took her life on July 29, 2017. This dissertation is dedicated to her.

Newer generations of activists who are now coming into their own as leaders understand that they live in a technological dystopia, and the discourses of science fiction are familiar to them thanks to popular culture. Thus it follows that the utopian

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[74] The dystopian imagination is far less taboo as we see in the proliferation of blockbuster Hollywood films, provided such depictions do not represent a viable alternative to capitalism and colonialism.

imagination could be a powerful tool as new cultures of political resistance cohere in the age of Trump; it could be a tool for those in the (a double meaning: to be downtrodden but also to despair) seeking the language and inspiration to rise up. China Miéville argues that we should imagine utopia "as hard as we can," because "[i]f an alternative to this world were inconceivable, how could we change it?" (n. pag.). Yet Miéville also cautions not getting too caught up in hope, to maintain both hope and despair together in an acknowledgment of the dystopian world we live in. Instead, we should view utopias as "Rorschachs" that help us understand the intentions both our potential allies and enemies. I would add that *to imagine utopia is a radical act* in no small part because of its power to combat depression and despair. To imagine utopia is to take a step toward preventing the loss of those radical dissidents that the capitalist system wants to see dead, and by extension entire communities the system tries to culturally and physically eliminate. Utopia as survival mechanism.

Imagining utopia is not merely an act for fiction writers and academics. We must imagine utopia even in light of that imaginative act's possible failure to prevent such loss, and even though such imaginations may not be labeled utopian as such, given the negative connotation of "utopia."[75] The utopian imagination builds community from shared visions of a better world. I see it in the words of Paul "Cheoketen" Wagner that opened this dissertation, who appealed to Natural Law and Indigenous sovereignty in arguing that adherence to Natural Law could lead to life in "paradise." I see it in the

[75] Once for example, a white ally at a rally to stop a fossil fuel project that has been dubbed "Tacoma's Standing Rock" told me that she would tear up all the streets and plant trees if she could. Utopian visions need not be labeled utopian to be such; they are often radical enough without inviting the further scrutiny such a label would bring.

community that he was speaking to, an intersectional community that has built up around resistance to fossil fuel projects in Tacoma where I live, even though they often speak of dystopia but rarely if ever utopia. Though they may not use the word "utopia," often members of this intersectional group speak of what a fossil-free Tacoma would look like, what alternative commerce and businesses would be welcome in the area, what new rules and regulations should be implemented, and what public spaces should look like.

This study espoused three main goals, which together help illustrate the potential for a deeper, more explicit engagement with Indigenous Futurisms as a useful discourse for organizing in our dystopian moment. First, I identified the need for Indigenous dystopian fiction by considering the gaps and elisions in popular 20th century speculative fiction from the political left. These gaps are most prominent when it comes to accounting for how capitalism — which views people and the environment as resources to violently exploit — is structured on colonial relations of power. While anti-colonial and anti-racist, much of this fiction does not depict Indigenous peoples as actively resisting this structure today, and also does not understand Indigenous philosophies and sciences as potential solutions to the capitalist drive to exploit and destroy. My first chapter illustrated this through readings of China Miéville's *Iron Council* and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, and my fifth chapter continued this in the context of information technologies through a reading of Disney's *TRON: Legacy*.

A second goal was to examine several works of Indigenous Futurism that would also be called critical dystopias, that is, works that use the dystopian genre to interrogate

our current moment. How did they depict the world as technologically-driven dystopia? For some, it is a dystopia that is also apocalyptic, with the environment on the verge of collapse — as I outline in Chapter 2. Thomas King’s *The Back of the Turtle* and Nanobah Becker’s “The Sixth World” depict a near future-world on the edge of environmental collapse, thanks to human-caused climate change and, especially in the case of King’s novel, attendant environmental racism. In both, corporations enjoy hegemonic control of natural resources and people, while Indigenous peoples’ voices are suppressed. In the case of Larissa Sansour’s “Nation Estate” and Alex Rivera’s *Sleep Dealer*, the subjects of Chapter 3, dystopia is one of panopticon-like surveillance and biopolitical control in addition to resource control, where the lives and movement of Indigenous peoples and people of color are tightly restricted. All of these works relate dystopia to capitalism, and demonstrate some understanding of capitalism as historically rooted in colonialism, but in Chapter 3 dystopia is specifically settler colonial in nature, and the walls and surveillance mechanisms of states lead to contemplations on whether utopian community could be bounded by a nation state at all.

As a third and final goal, I detailed these works' presentation of alternatives to the dystopian world they illuminate — their techno-utopian hope. This was most explicit in Chapter 4, because Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus* stands out among the texts I study as being explicitly utopian, depicting an Indigenous reservation that, in partnership with Western scientists, discovers how to use genetics research to heal generational trauma. Vizenor emphasizes not only the importance of scientific partnership in his critical utopia, but also the importance of Indigenous medical practices that are less

tangible to Western medicine, such as storytelling. We see utopian promise throughout the other chapters as well, often in the endings of the novels and films I study. Thomas King and Nanobah Becker in Chapter 2 also suggest that utopian hope can be found in scientific and community partnership between Indigenous communities and other communities, including Western ones. For Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer* this partnership comes in the form of hacking and communication across boundaries and borders. And for Larissa Sansour in "Nation Estate," utopian hope is hinted at amidst extreme confinement in the form of resistance and survival of future generations.

In Chapter 5, the second goal of illumination of pressing social problems once again meets the third goal of imagining alternatives. I argued that in *Midnight Robber*, Nalo Hopkinson first helps us understand the way slavery imagery is perpetuated in the popular imagination of the West, through the figure of Artificial Intelligence. In doing so, we see how capital fears losing control of the networks of people and machines it has subjected on a global scale, and how this leads to dystopian power inequalities. With regards to the third goal, we then see echoes of *Sleep Dealer's* emphasis on hacking and communication across boundaries and borders in *Midnight Robber*, but it is hacking remixed with Afrofuturism and Inidgenous Futurism, in part in the form of an artificial intelligence that is a clever trickster figure rather than a slave whose potential revolt should be feared.

Indigenous Futurism offers utopian hope from within our thoroughly dystopian moment. But does such hope translate from the page or the academic paper into actual

organizing? Further study is warranted in regard to whether and how Indigenous Futurism (and Afrofuturism, for example the Black Speculative Arts movement) are used as artistic inspiration for contemporary social movements. Without overstating its purpose or role, the potential power of Indigenous Futurism can be seen in the music of A Tribe Called Red, the Canadian electronic band that has supported several Indigenous movements through their music, including Standing Rock and the movement for missing and murdered First Nations women in Canada. A Tribe Called Red is known for combining trap beats and other electronic conventions with Indigenous call-and-response chanting, drumming, and even throat singing. One could say they take a genre well known for invoking the techno-future and remixes it to create a sonic embodiment of Indigenous Futurism, until recently more commonly a film and literary genre.

Their newest album, *We Are the Halluci Nation*, is a collaboration with many other artists, and also American Indian Movement leader John Trudell (who passed away during the collaboration). On the eponymous track of the album, Trudell lyrically explains that the Halluci Nation is composed of people in tune with themselves and with their environment: "Our DNA is of earth and sky/ Our DNA is of past and future."[76] The album ties together the main threads of this study — understanding our dystopian moment as also a colonial one, and imagining a better, decolonized future — with the difficulty of coping with depression and despair resulting from genocide, evident in their

[76] There are fruitful parallels to be drawn here in future research between the music of Indigenous Futurism and the Afrofuturist music of artists such as Sun Ra, whose experimental music with synthesizers influenced generations of improvisational jazz musicians. Sun Ra inspired pride in African heritage in his music, as a way to counter the suppression of African contributions to world culture, and is considered a foundational figure in Afrofuturism.

song, "How I Feel." The song and music video addresses the alarmingly high rate of suicide among First Nations people, acknowledging the depression of youth especially and suggesting they can work through it through strength in community.

Still another of their songs, "Stadium Pow Wow," was remixed with lyrics by Prolific the Rapper to create a music video with footage from Standing Rock at the camps' height in 2016, and is exemplary of many electronic-style groups that included a coalition called the People's Climate Music. A Tribe Called Red's music and music videos not only imagine resistance and survival, but thriving in a better future, as most evident in one of their music videos, "The Virus," featuring Black Bear (a band that performs traditional First Nations music) and American rapper Saul Williams. It is set in a sweat lodge in 2047 on Turtle Island, where an intersectional community of people of color takes turns sharing stories of colonization and survivance in the face of genocide. The opening and closing shot of the video depicts the outside of an underground sweat lodge, with nature verdant and thriving around it, hinting that people of color united in a successful resistance to a colonialism now situated firmly in the past.

The Halluci Nation that A Tribe Called Red imagines could certainly be compared to the decolonized utopian space of Point Assinika in Gerald Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus.* If, as Walidah Imarisha argues, "all organizing is science fiction," what other ideas for decolonized utopian spaces might obtain from these imaginations? Could the utopian promise of new pan-Tribal nations be echoed in other formulations? Perhaps some would take the form of temporary communities such as the Occupy movement, or reflect the revolutionary and intersectional nature of the insurrectionists in China

Miéville's New Crobuzon, itself inspired by the French Revolution. There must be a place in these dystopian times for more than a hopeful glimpse at the end of a dystopian tale — ideas for new inter- and intra-community formations that cultivate and sustain a hope that then feeds into activism.

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