

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

G-Men, Green Men, and Red Land: Extraterrestrial Miscreants, Federal Jurisdiction, and Exceptional Space

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0pf6q408>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 45(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Painter, Fantasia

Publication Date

2021

DOI

10.17953/aicrj.45.1.painter

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

G-Men, Green Men, and Red Land: Extraterrestrial Miscreants, Federal Jurisdiction, and Exceptional Space

Fantasia Painter

Native American Studies scholars do not spend a lot of time contemplating little green men in flying saucers (extraterrestrials). They spend even less time contemplating the people (academics, conspiracy theorists, and science fiction writers) who speculate about what extraterrestrials might be like. But maybe they (or we) should reconsider, because the people who speculate about extraterrestrials have spent a significant amount of time invoking Native America. In an episode of the television show *Into the Universe with Steven Hawking*, for example, the famous theoretical physicist describes his vision of intelligent aliens incubated on a distant planet and arriving to Earth. He speculates,

Such advanced aliens would perhaps become nomads, looking to conquer and colonize whatever planets they can reach.... I imagine they might exist in massive ships, having used up all the resources from their home planet.... If aliens ever visit us, I think the outcome would be much as when Christopher Columbus first landed in America, which didn't turn out very well for the Native Americans.¹

Hawking foretells an apocalypse. He imagines that aliens arriving to Earth might be “looking to conquer and colonize.” He envisions them “in massive ships, having used up all the resources from their homeland,” and he worries “the outcome would be much as when Christopher Columbus first landed in America.” To underscore the gravity of such an arrival, Hawking adds, “which didn't turn out very well for the Native Americans.” Hawking's statement acts as an intriguing conclusion to the episode, so

FANTASIA PAINTER is a University of California President's postdoctoral fellow in the Department of History at the University of California, Davis. She is an enrolled member and citizen of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community.

viewers receive no follow-up on his doomsday prediction. Hawking was being flippant. He was also tapping into a genuine and powerful current in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI). Many in the field worry aliens will arrive to Earth as colonizers. They imagine alien contact will be a recapitulation of European contact with the New World, and they are terrified alien colonization won't turn out very well for the people of Earth.²

This paper intervenes in science [fiction] speculations about contact and arrival by turning to a real series of events.³ In it, I first analyze US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) files on the animal mutilations from 1974 to 1980. In the 1970s, a string of cattle mutilations grabbed national attention. Thousands of cows in twenty-one states turned up dead under suspicious circumstances. The culprits left no tire tracks or footprints, only exsanguinated cows missing trademark body parts. Many members of the public suspected, and many still suspect, that extraterrestrials were responsible. Scholars have approached the uncanny wave of mutilations in two ways: as an insight into mass panic stoked by the media, or as an episode of antigovernment sentiment underwritten by economic instability in the cattle industry.⁴

This article takes a new tack; it interrogates the role that Indian land played in the FBI's search for possibly extraterrestrial miscreants. In it, I trace how jurisdiction emerged as the limiting factor in FBI investigation into the mutilations. FBI officials initially believed they lacked jurisdiction over the mutilations all together. They eventually discovered investigative jurisdiction over the fifteen animal mutilations that had occurred on Indian reservations. Their limited jurisdiction left FBI officials in a curious position; as mutilation cases piled up nationally, FBI officials were forced to wait for further mutilations on a reservation.

Using the FBI files as a point of departure, in the second half of the paper, I highlight the logistical and ideological elements of New World colonization that science [fiction] speculators overlook when they invoke Native America to imagine a future alien colonization. At a basic level, the very existence of Indian reservations, which emerge as exceptional spaces where federal officials exercised special jurisdiction, invites science [fiction] speculators to ask deeper questions about a future political incorporation of the colonized by the colonizer on an interstellar scale. On a more profound level, the predominance of Indian land in the FBI's search for the extraterrestrial juxtaposed with invocations of Native America in SETI opens up an avenue of critique; if aliens arrive in the United States they *might* touch down on an Indian reservation (aka the rez), but they *will* touch down on occupied Indian land.

The problem with Hawking's assertion that the outcome of contact might be as "when Christopher Columbus first landed in America, which didn't turn out very well for the Native Americans," is not only that it misremembers colonization and overinvests in a historical moment, a moment that Hawking believes is done and over, but also that it harbors a not-so-subtle and profoundly unscientific anxiety about the consequences of settler colonialism. In Hawking's formulation and others like it, aliens of science [fiction] speculations may not be aliens at all, but rather the threat of settler colonial chickens coming home to roost. Informed by the realities of New World

colonization, this paper launches an Indigenous critique of science [fiction] speculations that project alien contact and arrival in the future.⁵

Although it has global implications, this paper deals with speculations that invoke the colonization of the New World to imagine a future colonization of Earth by extraterrestrials. My analysis, defined by federal archives, is largely limited to the United States. Additionally, after discussing the cattle mutilation archive, I accept a premise: aliens went around mutilating cows in the 1970s on and off the reservation. While I find considerable value in thinking through the implications of cow-killing aliens, the scientific community engaged with the potentiality of extraterrestrial contact has vehemently denied that either animal mutilations or UFOs (the presumed mode of transport of the alien mutilators) are part of their purview. My conclusion, however—that scientific speculations harbor a deep-seated anxiety about contemporary and earthly settler colonialism—has far-reaching implications for SETI.

THE CATTLE MUTILATION ARCHIVES

In addition to piquing the curiosity of hobbyists and conspiracy theorists for the last thirty years, FBI documents concerning animal mutilations in the 1970s act as a curious and productive starting point from which to interrogate science [fiction] speculations. The documents (~130 pages), produced and collected between 1974 and 1980, are available in five parts through the FBI's online Freedom of Information Act library. They include letters and files sent to and from FBI officials, internal memoranda, and interdepartmental correspondence. I refer to this collection of documents as "the FBI's animal mutilation archive."⁶

This section provides a narrative overview of the archive, which is characterized not by mutilated animals, as the name suggests, but negotiation of FBI jurisdiction in the matter. Any search for the cow killers was preempted by the parameters of FBI investigative jurisdiction. As mutilations cropped up across the nation and local investigations ran cold, legislators and members of the press urged the FBI to get involved. In response, FBI officials repeatedly insisted that it simply did not have the authority to investigate, as there was no evidence of interstate transport and the mutilation of an animal carcass did not constitute a federal crime. In 1979, however, five years after the first document in the archive, the FBI changed course and announced an exception: fifteen mutilations had occurred on Indian reservations in New Mexico. It was decided that the FBI would investigate those fifteen and any others that occurred in Indian country going forward. One year later, no additional cases in Indian country had been reported and no culprits or causes were ever identified.

The archive opens with a written exchange between Colorado Senator Carl Curtis and FBI Director Clarence Kelley. Curtis wrote to Kelley "regarding the series of incidents stretching from Oklahoma to Nebraska in which cattle have been dismembered in some kind of strange witchcraft cult."⁷ Curtis attached to his letter a newspaper article clipped from the *Hastings, Nebraska Daily Tribune*. The newspaper article noted that along with cattle mutilations, there had been numerous reports of unidentified flying objects and asked suggestively, "Are UFO sightings and mutilations related?"⁸

Curtis's letter inquired into whether the FBI had instigated an investigation into the phenomenon.⁹ Kelley replied stating the mutilations did not warrant an FBI investigation. He explained, "It appears no Federal law within the investigative jurisdiction of the FBI has been violated, insomuch as there is no indication of interstate transportation of the maimed or killed animals."¹⁰ Kelley insisted local officials were on the case, writing, "This matter is currently under investigation by the Nebraska State Patrol and law enforcement officers in the counties involved."¹¹ Regardless of the senator's concern, animal mutilations, Kelley insisted, were outside of the FBI's investigative jurisdiction.

The initial exchange between the senator and the FBI director sets the tone for much of the first half of the archive: various legislators urged the FBI to get involved, FBI officials insisted that they lacked jurisdiction, and the periodicals and peculiarities surrounding the phenomena piled up. One year after Curtis's inquiry, Colorado Senator Floyd Haskell implored the FBI to intervene. Perhaps anticipating the FBI's response, Haskell underscored the likelihood of interstate transport, writing, "The fact that allegations have been made of the loss of livestock in 21 states under similar circumstances strongly suggests the very real possibility that the crossing of state lines is involved."¹²

Local periodicals also attempted to goad the FBI into action. When the Bureau of Land Management was forced to cancel a land inventory due to fears that ranchers, worried by the recent mutilations, might shoot down the bureau's helicopter, *The Denver Post* chided, "If that isn't a reason for federal involvement we don't know what is. And the question of which federal agency investigates isn't as important as the need to bring focus on the incidents that is broader than the jurisdiction of one state."¹³ However, the FBI remained steadfast. Kelley repeated to Haskell what he had relayed to Curtis; the FBI did not have the authority. Curtly, he insisted, "These actions do not constitute a violation of Federal Law coming within the FBI's investigative jurisdiction."¹⁴ The special agent in charge (SAC) at the FBI's Denver office spoke to the editors of *The Denver Post* with the same news. The SAC reportedly informed the editors, "If the FBI were to enter an investigation merely because someone felt we should, we would soon be categorized as a national police force."¹⁵ FBI officials reiterated they lacked jurisdiction.

FBI officials likely hoped the string of strange crimes would wane into obscurity. However, the archive suggests mutilations and media coverage were on the rise. When Curtis first inquired with the FBI about the potential of an investigation in 1974, he reported cattle mutilations from Oklahoma to Nebraska.¹⁶ In 1975, Haskell asserted that the Colorado Bureau of Investigation had verified mutilations in nine states and one hundred thirty cases had taken place in Colorado alone.¹⁷ In 1976, an article in *Oui Magazine* declared that more than fifteen hundred cattle in twenty-two states had met the same grim fate: dead, missing body parts, and drained of blood.¹⁸ While government officials insisted the circumstances and evidence pointed to natural phenomena, the people on the ground remained unconvinced. Citing precise incisions and atypical circumstances, everyone had (and still has) their theories. In his first letter, Curtis offhandedly suggested witchcraft was to blame.¹⁹ Additionally, periodicals

collected in the archive proffer as suspects Satan-worshipping cults, motorcycle gangs, deep government scientists, rogue scientists, and, of course, UFO-piloting aliens. In the archive, there is even brief mention that the mutilations might be a part of ancient Native American rituals. The phenomena and the growing public unrest were likely hard for FBI officials to ignore.

In 1979, FBI officials, prompted by an inquiry from Senator Harrison Schmitt of New Mexico, discovered they had the jurisdiction to investigate mutilations on Indian reservations. Schmitt first appears in the archive as the author of a letter written in December 1978 to Attorney General Griffin B. Bell. Schmitt requested that Bell reconsider the FBI's authority. Schmitt wrote, "While an individual cattle mutilation may not be a federal offense, I am very concerned at what appears to be a continued pattern of an organized interstate criminal activity. . . . I am requesting that the Justice Department re-examine its jurisdiction in this area."²⁰ Along with his letter, Schmitt sent a stack of files on the subject. The stack included seven news articles, twenty-eight reports from the New Mexico Livestock Board, and eight incident reports written by Gabe Valdez, a New Mexico state police officer. A month later, Schmitt also sent in a third-party memo that noted at the bottom, "****In response to your question about whether any of the mutilations have occurred on federal land, Officer Valdez informs me that eight mutilations were discovered on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation, and seven on the Santa Clara Pueblo."²¹ The FBI eventually agreed to investigate those fifteen mutilations.

The eight narrative reports written by Valdez that the senator provided paint an intriguing and disturbing account of the cattle mutilations as witnessed at the local level. On December 15, 1976, Officer Valdez reported that he had investigated twenty-three cattle mutilations in the last sixteen months. Valdez had encountered some strange evidence in addition to the typical scene (mutilated cows). In one report he wrote, "A suspected aircraft of some type has landed twice, leaving three pod marks positioned in a triangular shape. The diameter of each pod print was 14 [in.] . . . from the two landings were smaller triangular shaped tripods. . . . Investigations at the scene showed that these small tripods had followed the cow."²² Additionally, a radiation test taken three days after the incident "revealed twice the normal background reading."²³

In another report, Valdez noted that the cattle sustained "bruised marks and broken bones," which led Officer Valdez to hypothesize "that these animals are picked up by aircraft, mutilated elsewhere and returned and dropped from aircraft."²⁴ Officer Valdez also contemplated the fact that the perpetrators only mutilated particular cattle. He wrote, "Investigations shows that all mutilations are to native cattle. In Rio Arriba County approximately 15,000 head of steers imported from Arizona, Mexico, Texas, etc., have not been mutilated."²⁵ In the strangest report of the bunch, Valdez wrote that on July 16, 1976, he observed approximately seventy-two head of cattle belonging to Manual Gomez after sundown with an ultraviolet light. Under the light Valdez "identified ten young cattle marked with a 'substance on the left forecart [*sic*] of their body."²⁶ The eerie firsthand accounts may finally have compelled the attorney general to intervene.

In March of 1979, US Assistant Attorney General Philip Heymann authorized and directed FBI officials to investigate the fifteen cattle mutilations that had occurred on Indian reservations in New Mexico.²⁷ The FBI's commitment to investigate the fifteen mutilations offered hope to those looking for answers. However, the provincial involvement of the FBI all but ensured that nothing came of the inquiry. In a report from the FBI's Albuquerque office to the director in Washington DC, the SAC expressed doubt about the plausibility of such an investigation. He wrote, "Further investigation of these mutilations is an impossibility because of the fact that the carcasses of the animals have been destroyed. The only purpose which could be served in making inquiry about these matters would be to compile a record of what investigations determined in the past."²⁸ A later memo noted that even compiling records on the fifteen cattle was impossible because the mutilations on Indian lands had not been thoroughly investigated, as "no law enforcement agency was assigned investigatory responsibility and as a result, no adequate evidence collection or record making was undertaken."²⁹

The FBI ended up waiting for another mutilation on an Indian reservation, which would never come. The final page in the archive was filed nearly a year after the attorney general greenlighted the investigation. A memo from the SAC in Albuquerque to the FBI director concerning the final report, it reads, "A perusal of this report reflects it adds nothing new."³⁰ Ostensibly dedicated to FBI files on animal mutilations, but primarily concerned with the FBI's lack of authority over state crimes, the title of the archive belies its content, which instead documents the FBI's inability to create investigative files on the mutilations. Although the attorney general eventually discovered FBI jurisdiction over mutilations that occurred on Indian reservations, it was too little, too late. In the end, the FBI failed to investigate a single fresh case. The FBI's investigation provided no answers. Although the archive offers few answers for those looking for proof of extraterrestrial visitors, it does reveal much about the settler-colonial present that extraterrestrials encountered, or will encounter if and when they arrive.

ALIENS ON INDIAN LAND

In the archive, Indian reservations emerged as an admittedly mundane space of exception, and here I mean to invoke Agamben's theorization of the term *state of exception* as a site of concession in the rule of law.³¹ "Where" became the primary question; "who" and "how" became secondary. Where is an atypical question for science [fiction] speculators (and for the FBI). To many speculators, it seems that aliens will constitute an unambiguous and immediate global threat. Films like *The War of the Worlds* (1953) and *Independence Day* (1996) and scientists like Hawking, as mentioned earlier, depict colonial aliens arriving with laser guns blazing. Mass panic, catastrophic events, and dramatic music ensue, and the exact location of touchdown pales in significance to alien arrival to Earth. Implicit in these speculations is the idea that alien arrival will bring us all together as a human race, even if it is only to face our collective demise;³² the "where" will not matter.

If, as we are assuming, extraterrestrials were responsible for cattle mutilations in the 1970s, unaddressed issues surrounding the “where” of alien arrival begin to come into focus. On a basic level, the United States appears unprepared to navigate the complicated jurisdiction surrounding alien misdemeanors. Our aliens arrived without fanfare. We don’t know when. They killed and mutilated cattle. We don’t know why. Because of jurisdictional constraints, federal officials were unable to investigate, and officials would have encountered the same jurisdictional barriers if aliens had been stealing, loitering, or graffitiing (crop circles).

On a more productive level, the jurisdictional kerfuffle FBI officials faced clarifies a logical oversight permeating science [fiction] speculations: the colonization of Native America is ongoing. FBI officials were only able to search for our aliens on Indians reservations. The reservation, itself an institution produced by colonization, emerged as the would-be arena for the encounter between the citizens of Earth and nefarious extraterrestrials. To add complexity to the “where” of it all, we note that aliens will not only encounter Indigenous space in the reservation. Our cow-murdering aliens encountered the reservation and they encountered occupied Indian land. Science [fiction] speculations have not prepared us for either. Science [fiction] speculators that invoke the colonization of Native America to imagine a future colonization of Earth by extraterrestrials miss not only how the colonization and ongoing occupation played out on Indian land, but also how settler colonialism acts as a deeply seated structure of feeling.³³ Speculators have yet to confront the logistics and ideologies of their own positionality.

Colonization Is and Will Be Logistical

Our cattle-mutilating aliens landed on the rez. The very existence of the reservation, a product of colonization, suggests that if alien contact, colonization, and settlement is anything like New World colonization, it will proceed through bureaucratic, jurisdictional, and legal processes. Science [fiction] speculations regularly invoke the colonization of the New World to imagine a potential colonial extraterrestrial arrival. They imagine, as Hawking does at this paper’s opening, the colonization of the New World through shallow and trite bellwethers: Columbus’s discovery of the New World or Cortez’s overthrow of the Aztec empire. This practice actively obfuscates the realities of the colonial process and makes for flat, if not faulty, projections.

The invocation of Columbus and his ilk is concretely and conceptually flawed. Alien arrival will decidedly not be “much as when Christopher Columbus first landed in America.” Columbus was, after all, not the first European to set foot in the New World. He was also terrible at math, and as result of his mathematical shortcomings he was very, very lost when he happened on the New World. “Bad at math” and “lost” are two qualities that science [fiction] speculators can safely assume our alien colonists will not possess. Even if speculators are invoking Columbus as a metonym for contact and all that followed (demographic collapse, colonization, settlement, and the occupation of Indigenous land), they foreclose more nuanced discussions about the details. Like Hawking, speculators often offer no follow-up on their doomsday

prediction beyond “which didn’t turn out very well for the Native Americans.” But contact happened, and happens in stages and zones.³⁴ Colonization played out, and plays out differently everywhere.

Given the processes of colonization are long-term, science [fiction] speculators might ask more productive questions about the immediate and long-term logistics. One topic that science [fiction] speculators might consider—one suggested by the archive—is jurisdiction. Science fiction has playfully touched on the logistics of extra-terrestrial jurisdiction. For example, the film *Men in Black* (1997) sidesteps the question of jurisdictional incorporation by looking past the moment of initial contact and arrival to a future where a well-funded but unofficial government organization (a deep state) exists and has seemingly exclusive jurisdiction over extraterrestrial immigrants in the United States. On this note, science [fiction] speculators might also consider how US immigration law will come into play. What would it look like to rethink immigration, extradition, and eventually the nation-state in conversation with the extraterrestrial?

In *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (2005), the main character, Arthur Dent, abruptly learns that Earth is being bulldozed for an interstellar highway. Dent discovers that Earth is subject to a jurisdiction and a bureaucratic process that Earthlings had no knowledge of previously. Likewise, although with less levity and no resolution, in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) Klaatu informs Earthlings that they can join an interplanetary organization “for the mutual protection of all planets and for the complete elimination of aggression,” policed by a race of robots, or be reduced to a cinder. While these science fiction pieces employ jurisdiction as a narrative premise, as of yet speculators have not gone further in any meaningful way.³⁵

In order to understand the logistical mechanisms by which Earth will, or might be, incorporated into an interstellar or intergalactic jurisdiction by colonial aliens, science [fiction] speculators might genuinely ask about the colonization of the New World. If aliens will arrive as European-like colonizers, then we should look to Native American political and legal history. The processes by which European Americans have asserted jurisdiction over Indigenous nations and nationals might help us imagine interplanetary colonization. Science [fiction] speculators might consider the insidious and systemic nature of the Marshall Trilogy, for example, the US Supreme Court decisions that circumscribed Native American sovereigns as domestic dependent nations; or *US v Kagama* (1886), which limited the juridical power of Native Nations over certain crimes regardless of the nationality of the perpetrator and victim; or *Oliphant v Suquamish* (1973), which decided that Native sovereigns had no criminal jurisdiction over non-Natives.³⁶

That the FBI could only investigate on the Indian reservation speaks to the logistical nature of colonization centuries after contact. Science [fiction] speculations invoking Columbus to imagine colonial aliens have missed the realities and mechanics of the colonization of Native American land entirely. The first moments of arrival and contact may define an epoch. There may even be dramatic music, big explosions, or alien germs, but if alien arrival is anything like the colonization of the Americas, that will only be the beginning. Speculators have yet to ask what happens in the days, the years, the decades, and the centuries after contact.³⁷ What happens the day after the apocalypse?

Deeper Colonial Problems

While we don't know when our murderous aliens arrived, we do know they did so without a global announcement. They did not overthrow any governments, claim the Earth as their own, or spread alien diseases. Instead, they killed more than a few cows. Even if science [fiction] speculations were to draw on a more accurate and nuanced understanding of contact, colonization, and settlement—and they should strive to—it would not and will not address the root of the problem. Science [fiction] speculations rely on and reproduce a thinly veiled and deeply entrenched anxiety about the illegitimacy of European-American claims to land. As Kathryn Denning, a single voice of reason in the field, writes,

My own assessment is that certainly the direct contact historical analogies are likely to be useless, and indeed, most popular historical accounts are not good (and this is not accidental). Casting the Hawaiians as us and Cook as the alien, or the Aztecs as us and Cortez as the alien, or the New World as us and Columbus as the alien, is neither particularly useful, nor innocent.³⁸

It is conspicuous that science [fiction] speculators return to colonization again and again to imagine alien contact.

Science [fiction] speculations that invoke New World colonization to imagine the colonization of Earth tell us much more about how their authors imagine New World colonization than they do about the potentialities of alien arrival. In Native American studies, where raking Christopher Columbus over the coals is a time-honored tradition, we are prepared and primed to dissect the insidious ideologies that accompany invocations of Columbus. Christopher Columbus is not only a metonym for contact and all that followed, but also what Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls a historical “fact.” A historical “fact” is a simple moment, invoked in the present and laden with power, that rhetorically predetermines the historical narrative and renders complex historical processes into what appears to be an inevitable chronology and trajectory. Trouillot uses the “discovery” of the new world as the quintessential example of the phenomenon.

At best, invocations of Columbus rhetorically mark as inevitable a genocidal campaign spearheaded by Europeans, European Americans, and US citizens. At worst, Columbus acts as an alibi for those who continue to benefit from and enable occupation. By invoking Columbus, who has been dead for more than five hundred years, as a euphemistic shorthand for demographic collapse, science [fiction] speculators relegate Native people to the past, and in doing so they both perpetuate and distance themselves temporally from a very much ongoing genocidal campaign. In short, the story of Columbus obfuscates the connection between contact and the current geopolitical status of the United States. Invoking it is a way to assert that genocide is completed and an artifact of the past, often without ever uttering the term “Indigenous.”

The concept of colonial aliens—aliens “like Christopher Columbus”—not only works to relegate Native people to the past, but also enables settlers or colonists to “go Native.” In imagining an extraterrestrial contact like a European contact, speculators pose and project settlers as Indigenous (to Earth). As Shari Huhndorf has noted, going

Native is an entrenched tradition aimed at redeeming European-American society. She writes, “In its various forms, going native articulates and attempts to resolve widespread ambivalence about modernity as well as anxieties about the terrible violence marking the nation’s origins.”³⁹ In science [fiction] speculations, when the human race fights off alien invaders (would-be colonizers), the Earthlings are redeemed. At the brink of extraterrestrial conquest, colonization is found to be universal, and the European Americans avoid the same failings of the Indigenous peoples of North America. Lorenzo Veracini has gone as far as to say that there is a cultural desire for colonial alien invasion, because if aliens invade, the settler becomes indigenous instantaneously. Noting that settlers typically become native in two ways, he writes, “The Indigenous collective disappears, leaving the settler one in the position of being the default new-Indigenous group, or the settler collective fully indigenizes, thereby acquiring a type of indigeneity that makes it indistinguishable from the old-Indigenous group.”⁴⁰

But alien invasion offers another option. Veracini also avers, “Then again, there is a third option, indeed a shortcut: a new invasion—the appearance of new settlers— can immediately turn the settler into a ‘native.’”⁴¹ He writes, “Settlers are often, recurrently and obsessively concerned with the possibility of an invasion that will turn them into natives. At the same time, fantasies of alien invasion can fulfill a settler craving for immediate indigenization.”⁴² Put into Veracini’s terms, fictional colonial aliens offer a theoretical resolution to the moral aporia of settler colonialism; in these speculations, European Americans become indigenous (to Earth). At best, science [fiction] speculations harbor a not-so-subtle anxiety about the moral consequences of conquest. At worst, they reproduce colonial violence by crafting speculative worlds and futures where Indigenous peoples are disappeared and settlers are Indigenous.

CONCLUSION

Our aliens arrived on the rez. Fittingly, Indian reservations are spaces both inside and outside of the United States, both domestic and alien. As FBI officials searched for the culprits, *terra nullius* promised to give way to the great *terra incognita* beyond, and once again, Indian land appeared as the new, final frontier.

The centrality of Indian land in the archive suggests science [fiction] speculators should rethink their approach to interplanetary visitors. Aliens might arrive as colonizers or they might arrive as soldiers, missionaries, immigrants, hostages, refugees, tourists, or something else. Our cow-killing aliens might have been plotting global takeover or just passing through. If they did arrive as colonizers, colonizers in some way similar to the Europeans that colonized the Americas, then it is worth noting that colonization was neither instant nor inevitable. It also remains unfinished. The existence of Indian reservations stands as a testament to the complicated, bureaucratic, and protracted nature of colonization. If science [fiction] speculators want to imagine colonial logistics on an interstellar scale, they should look not to Columbus, but to Native America.

Before science [fiction] speculators can engage with the logistics of a future alien colonization, however, they must reckon with their not-so-subtle and profoundly

unscientific anxiety about settler colonial occupation. The invocation of Columbus, even as a poorly conceived metonym for colonization or as a euphemism for demographic collapse, is neither arbitrary nor innocent. Speculations that invoke colonization in the New World not-so-subtly ask, what if aliens do to European Americans, as European Americans have done to Indigenous people? The colonial aliens constructed in science [fiction] speculations in this sense are not aliens at all, but the threat of chickens coming home to roost.

Perhaps we in Native American studies ought to say it outright: a new alien invasion will not absolve settler colonists and it will not render irrelevant the fact that the continent remains occupied. From both a logistical and ideological standpoint, settlement is ongoing. As fiction writer Joseph Bruchac writes, “Indians will be a part of whatever future this continent holds—post apocalyptic or not.”⁴³ If the truth is out there, then it is (as it usually is) on the rez.

NOTES

1. “Aliens,” dir. Martin Williams, *Into the Universe with Stephen Hawking*, Season 1, episode 1 (Discovery Channel, April 25, 2010).

2. See Andrew Clark and D. Clark. *Aliens: Can We Make Contact With Extraterrestrial Intelligence*. (Collingdale: Diane Pub Co, 1999); Eric J. Chaisson, “Null or Negative Effects of ETI Contact in the Next Millennium,” in *When SETI Succeeds: The Impact of High-Information Contact*, ed. A. Tough (Bellevue: Foundation for the Future, 2000), 59; Robert Jastrow, “What Are the Chances for Life?” (rev. of Steven J. Dick’s *The Biological Universe*), *Sky and Telescope* (June, 1997): 62–63; Michael Michaud, *Contact with Alien Civilization: Our Hopes and Fears about Encountering Extraterrestrials* (New York: Copernicus Books, 2007); Paolo Musso, “Philosophical and Religious Implications of Extraterrestrial Intelligent Life,” paper presented at the 55th International Astronautical Congress (Vancouver, 2004); Robert Rood and J. Trefil, *Are We Alone? The Possibility of Extraterrestrial Civilizations* (New York: Scribner, 1981); Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men* (New York: Dover Publications, 1968).

3. *Science [fiction] speculations*—a combination of “science speculations” (academic papers) and “science fiction speculations” (novels, movies, etc.)—indicates that conjecture about extraterrestrial contact is the exact meeting place of science and science fiction. Even as many depictions incorporate scientific reasoning and science’s best educated guesses, no one knows what aliens will look like or be like.

4. Michael J. Goleman, “Wave of Mutilation: The Cattle Mutilation Phenomenon of the 1970s,” *Agricultural History* 85, no. 3 (2011): 398–417.

5. Throughout this paper, I employ the terms *Indian*, *Indigenous*, and *Native* interchangeably to signify the people and peoples indigenous to the land now occupied by the United States. I use *alien* and *extraterrestrial* to indicate beings that originate outside of Earth.

6. United States Federal Bureau of Investigation FBI Records: The Vault, Animal Mutilation, <https://vault.fbi.gov/Animal%20Mutilation>. Subsequent references to this investigation archive will be cited as “FBI Records: The Vault.”

7. Correspondence from Colorado Senator Carl Curtis to FBI Director Clarence Kelley, September 4, 1974, FBI Records: The Vault.

8. Associated Press, "Are UFO Sightings and Mutilations Related? Mutilated Livestock Helicopters and UFO's source of Wonder, Worry," *Hastings, Nebraska Daily Tribune*, September 29, 1974, 8–9, FBI Records: The Vault.
9. Correspondence from Colorado Senator Carl Curtis to FBI Director Clarence Kelley, September, 4, 1974, FBI Records: The Vault.
10. Correspondence from FBI Director Clarence Kelley to Colorado Senator Carl Curtis, September 10, 1974, FBI Records: The Vault.
11. Ibid.
12. Correspondence from Colorado Senator Floyd Haskell to FBI Special Agent in Charge (hereafter "SAC"), Denver, August 29, 1975, FBI Records: The Vault.
13. Charles R. Buxton, "Cattle Deaths and the FBI," *The Denver Post*, September 3, 1975: 24, FBI Records: The Vault.
14. Correspondence from FBI Director Clarence Kelley to Colorado Senator Floyd Haskell, September 12, 1975, FBI Records: The Vault.
15. Correspondence from FBI SAC, Denver, to FBI Director Clarence Kelley, September 4, 1975, FBI Records: The Vault.
16. Correspondence from Colorado Senator Carl Curtis to FBI Director Clarence Kelley, September 4, 1974, FBI Records: The Vault.
17. Correspondence from Colorado Senator Floyd Haskell to FBI SAC, Denver, August 29, 1975, FBI Records: The Vault.
18. Edward Sanders, "The Mutilations Mystery," *Oui Magazine*, September 1976: 110–22.
19. Correspondence from Colorado Senator Carl Curtis to FBI Director Clarence Kelley, September 4, 1974, FBI Records: The Vault.
20. Correspondence from Colorado Senator Harrison Schmitt to Attorney General Griffen B. Bell, December 21, 1978, FBI Records: The Vault.
21. Memorandum from SFDOM to New Mexico Senator John Ryan, January 31, 1979, FBI Records: The Vault.
22. New Mexico State Incident Report by Gabriel Valdez, December 15, 1976, FBI Records: The Vault.
23. Ibid.
24. New Mexico State Incident Report by Gabriel Valdez, July 31, 1978, FBI Records: The Vault.
25. Ibid.
26. New Mexico State Incident Report by Gabriel Valdez, March 17, 1978, FBI Records: The Vault.
27. There are two incidents where legal code is cited in the archive. Neither is authored by the FBI, so it is unclear where exactly the attorney general located the FBI's jurisdictional flexibility vis-à-vis Indian land. The two citations are as follows: (1) Title 18, US Code, Sections 7 and 13, concerns violations of state law on Indian or federal lands; and (2) US code 1152 and 1153, [something missing here?]
28. Correspondence from FBI SAC, Albuquerque, to FBI director, March 6, 1979, FBI Records: The Vault.
29. Correspondence from FBI SAC, Albuquerque, to FBI Director, August 1, 1979, FBI Records: The Vault.
30. Correspondence from the FBI SAC at Albuquerque to the SAC to the FBI, July 14, 1980, FBI Records: The Vault.
31. See Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (University of Chicago Press, 2005)

32. Robert Jastrow, "What Are the Chances for Life?" (rev. of Steven J. Dick's *The Biological Universe*), *Sky and Telescope* (June 1997): 62–63.
33. See Raymond Williams, "On 'Structures of Feeling,'" *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1977); and Mark Rifkin, "The Frontier as (Movable) Space of Exception," *Settler Colonial Studies*, 4, no. 2 (2014): 176–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2013.846393>.
34. See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008).
35. These films also use doubling to highlight the nature of the speculation. In the opening scene of *Men in Black*, the fugitive extraterrestrial poses as an "illegal alien" crossing the US Mexico border. In *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, local officials bulldoze Dent's house to make way for a local highway just before Earth is destroyed to make way for an interstellar one. These films play on the ways that our lives determine our extraterrestrials. We cannot help but to project what we know.
36. See Walter Echo-Hawk, *In the Courts of the Conqueror: The 10 Worst Indian Law Cases Ever Decided* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2010).
37. Science [fiction] speculators have spilt considerable ink debating whether or not we should join an intergalactic club, if one exists. We can spend some brain power on the proceedings of colonial contact. See Michael A. G. Michaud, *Contact with Alien Civilizations: Our Hopes and Fears about Encountering Extraterrestrials* (New York: Copernicus Books, 2007).
38. Kathryn Denning, "Impossible Predictions of the Unprecedented: Analogy, History, and the Work of Prognostication," in *Astrobiology, History, and Society: Life Beyond Earth and the Impact of Discovery*, ed. D. A. Vakoeh (New York: Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg, 2013), 301–12, 307.
39. Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 3.
40. Lorenzo Veracini, "On Settler Colonialism and Science Fiction (again)," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013): 268–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2012.10648836>.
41. *Ibid.*, 268–69.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Joseph Bruchac, *Killer of Enemies* (New York: Tu Books, 2013), 359.

