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Residential School Gothic and Red Power: Genre Friction in *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*

Jennifer Henderson

Liistuguj Mi'gmaq filmmaker Jeff Barnaby has described his 2013 feature *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* as a “residential school revenge” story and a “heist” movie.¹ Heist and revenge plots are rare enough among narrative representations of Canada’s Indian residential school system—a devastating apparatus of cultural genocide that was funded by the federal government and operated by church denominations for over a century as part of a policy to assimilate and dispossess Indigenous peoples.² But insofar as *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* contributes to an existing corpus of residential school representations, growing since the 1990s and especially in the years during and after Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), 2008–2015, the film stands out as well for its extreme aesthetic and generic self-consciousness, its visual and aural hyperstylization, all of which undermine any promise of transparency and immediacy. Indeed, the word “rhymes” in the title indicates the film’s commitment to repetition, echo, and reinscription as modes of creation and its own densely citational, intertextual construction.³

Here I read the film’s rhyming in terms of its work with genre—its repetition and displacement—and I situate the stakes of this work in relation to genres of public discourse in neoliberal, settler-colonial Canada. Genre as a historical and formal residue, a trace, mediates the entry of residential schools into public memory at this time, providing a ready-made, recycled set of conventions or tropes which are stretched to stand in for that which does not have a proper name in settler Canada (a

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“catachresis”).⁴ In my reading, then, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* is not only a story about residential schools; it is also a commentary on that discursive process of stretching and recycling representational forms and conventions—the process through which a genre that I call Residential School Gothic has emerged in public discourse in the last three decades.

The process of settler-public reckoning with the multi-generational devastation to Indigenous communities caused by residential schooling has drawn on a particular, historical version of Gothic narrative associated with the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Gothic novel. This genre has been called into service to manage the meaning of the state- and church-directed violence unveiled for settler Canadians in the testimony of many former students. This revived historical Gothic of predatory monks and labyrinthine enclosures is a Western narrative form that, in an earlier period of transformation in governmental rationality, and more specifically, a moment of state retraction, was equipped to provide the liberal critique of tyrannical power.⁵ Now the genre serves to organize the twenty-first-century settler public’s knowledge of residential schools. I argue that in relation to residential schools, this historical Gothic produces effects of distance and containment by generating a comforting common sense constructed around the neoliberal caricature of the abusive state, and in this way limits what settler Canadians must come to terms with in their past and present social relations with Indigenous peoples and the foundations of their nation-state.

The temporality of the historical Gothic which has been called into play emphasizes the distance between a remote, feudal, Latinate past and the enlightened present, while its spatial organization affirms the division between an “inside” space of entrapment and an “outside” space of freedom. Thus, as a genre of public discourse, Residential School Gothic produces recognition of Indian residential schools as a historical injury, while at the same time containing what the 150-year project of Indigenous child removal and forced assimilation means about Canada. I argue that this generic filtering makes the hard-won recognition of residential schooling as a form of structured settler-colonial violence serve, paradoxically, as a legitimization of settler colonialism, to the extent that the latter now operates through neoliberal logics of market freedom. Through the tropes of Gothic narrative, residential schooling is shaped into a story of wrongful state action in a past era of monstrously invasive power. The construction of a settler-public memory of residential schools recirculates and reinforces a neoliberal thematics of the unreformed state as “cold monster,”⁶ a Gothic caricature which distracts from more complex power relations, justifying austerity and unregulated capitalism in the present.

Residential School Gothic enacts this process of relegitimation by means of a narrative “exoskeleton” revived from an earlier historical moment of representing liberal freedom, particularly in the novel.⁷ In elaborating the conventions of Residential School Gothic, I rely on the flamboyantly genre-conscious gestures in the film *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, which both invokes and destabilizes Residential School Gothic as a dominant form of sense-making. The film’s immanent critique points to the genre’s dangerous inadequacy as a frame for interpreting the decentered, complexly articulated, and performative aspects of settler-colonial power. From the hyperstylized

quality of *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, which makes genre palpable, a critical commentary emerges on the posture of enlightened modernity from which settler Canada accesses residential schooling today: a confident nation recalls a stable, self-identical, though unsavory, segment of the past. Settler colonialism, the film suggests, is not—or at least not just—a Gothic narrative which occurred behind the walls of a distant institution.

The qualification is important: *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* calls attention to its Gothic frame, but not in order to reject it outright as untruth. The film provides no clear assurance that residential schools “themselves” may be grasped as an objective reality outside of a generic frame or prior to some spatial and temporal organization into a genre and its associated ambiance or sensibility. The film does not pretend to be able to transcend citation. Rather, as this essay will argue, it imagines that inside the residential school an anxious, theatrical practice of settler sovereignty already exists—a brutal, Gothic performativity—and outside the residential school, the film denies the comforting certainty of a progressive, twenty-first century “reality” which now recognizes the harm of the schools.⁸ Instead, the film stages another stylized “retro” era, the Red Power 1970s, which it offers for citation to Indigenous resurgence movements of the present.

A CLASH OF CHRONOTOPES

You ever see that hill up close? They cook Indian kids up there for that zombie priest! . . . Normal zombies just eat anyone, but these religified zombies . . . they throw the kids down this hole to the cooker, and every time they clang off that chimney. . . . Why do you think so many kids go missing at St D’s?

—*Rhymes for Young Ghouls*

The film’s prologue takes place outside of a house on the fictitious “Red Crow Indian Reservation” in 1969.⁹ In the background we see “St Dymphna’s residential school” (fig. 1), improbably visible from the space of the reserve.¹⁰ A computer-generated image, the school’s Second Empire-style façade is forebodingly lit from below with an unnatural, gloomy light. Burner, an inebriated adult played by Brandon Oakes, taunts



FIGURE 1. *Castle on the hill*, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*. Image courtesy of Prospector Films.

a couple of children about the “zombie priest” at “St D’s”: the film’s fierce protagonist, his niece Aila (Kawennahere Devery Jacobs) and a boy from the residential school, her little tagalong friend Tyler (Louis Beauvais).

Although it is hard to tell whether Burner is serious, his warning about the Gothic space of St D’s seems spoken with angry conviction. Furthermore, already encrypted in the very name of the residential school is an old story about a girl’s defiance and martyrdom in the face of the threat of sexual abuse. In the Catholic tradition, Dymphna, patron saint of the mentally ill and of victims of incest, is the daughter of an Irish king, beheaded for escaping from her father’s incestuous grasp. What does it mean that the residential school has her name? The density of the school’s name and the Gothic conventionality of its visual surface in the CGI insertion seem to point to an ineluctable chain of events to come. Perhaps especially for a Canadian audience trained to recognize the conventions of a narrative of residential school experience through the public circulation of a Gothic template of entrapment and violation, a sense of dread is produced as Burner references the generic codes: the capture of innocents in a prison on a hill, the presence of predatory priests or “religified zombies.” However, other elements of the carefully composed tableau pull against this sensed inevitability.

While the pattern of eerie glow amidst deathly dark in the background of the scene spills into the foreground on the left, including onto the old black Chevy on which the children are perched, on the right side of the screen, where Burner stands outside of a reserve house, there are contrasting hints of *red*. As a title card has informed us, this is “Red Crow Indian Reservation: 1969.” The precision of the historical setting and the insistence on the color red begin the film’s investment of the color with the sensibility of Red Power, the decade-long Indigenous activist movement on Turtle Island. As is well known, that movement was ignited in 1969 by the spectacular occupation of Alcatraz Island by the group Indians of All Tribes. Their action followed the founding of the American Indian Movement the year before and it provided a model for the dramatic occupations, seizures, blockades, and demonstrations that would assert Indigenous sovereignty through symbolic action throughout the next decade.¹¹ The main action in *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* occurs in the 1970s and the film is deliberate in its development of the aesthetic and political possibilities of this 1970s setting. Within its diegesis, the film places the 1970s in a tense, unnatural juxtaposition with the campily Gothic time-space of the residential school. Extradiegetically, it offers the 1970s as an irruptive, resurgent presencing of an activist past, a citation of Red Power, for the audience’s twenty-first century—but this time, Red Power seen as a movement driven by Indigenous women’s activism rooted in what Dian Million calls “spiritual nourishment, regeneration.”¹²

In the course of the film, at the level of plot, that activism takes shape as Gothic scenario is succeeded by heist narrative. Temporarily captured and entombed within St Dymphna’s, Aila escapes to organize an audacious burglary of the school—and to effect a shift from the Gothic thematic of entrapment to the heist narrative’s preoccupation with break-in. On Halloween night, she leads a crew of costumed male friends in an operation to infiltrate the school, figuratively (and literally) jam its Gothic

machinery, and steal back extorted funds. The careful planning, daring break-in, and emphasis on the teamwork necessary to execute the robbery cite the conventions of the heist film, but *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* recreates these conventions in the context of Indigenous resistance.¹³ The promise of an escape which the money seems to hold is an escape from the Indian agent control that suffuses the film's spaces; the comedic incompetence of the heist team is offset by the decisive leadership of its female "boss," the adolescent Aila, who is set apart from her gang of "lost boys," as she calls them, by her gendered attunement to mother and grandmother teachings; and the final standoff between renegade hero and cop involves an attempted rape and Aila's rescue through the intervention of the spirit world. The residential school robbery recodes the caper at the center of the heist film as highly symbolic Indigenous break-and-enter to take back (part of) what has been stolen.

At the level of action, then, the film stages a generic discontinuity from Gothic entrapment to righteous occupation. This discontinuity is mirrored at the level of the film's starkly discordant settings. St Dymphna's residential school, "looming over the community like a Gothic castle, Count Dracula's castle on the hill," in the director's words, produces the anachronism characteristic of the classic Gothic novel, with its citation of a remote and vaguely medieval past.¹⁴ But the "present" that lies outside the walls of St Dymphna's is also a "past" for the film's twenty-first-century audience, even if it is the more recent past of the 1970s as seen through the lens of yet another genre, the exploitation film, with its shock aesthetic, lurid violence, and interest in scenes of rebellion and mayhem.¹⁵ Accordingly, the film's Red Crow Indian Reservation is a pot-laden, blues-heavy landscape of abandoned cars, plywood interiors, Navajo wall hangings, and tables piled with empty stubbies. The soundscape is Joe Carter and Leadbelly; the rhythm is that of decadent addiction and people accustomed to unrelenting violence. Aila's father is in and out of jail. The family business is a grow-op, a concealed indoor pot farm tended by Aila's grandmother, Ceres. "Retro" in its own way, the time-space of the Red Crow Indian Reservation is every bit as stylized as the Gothic St Dymphna's residential school, and like the latter, it seems to come with its own set of rules and expectations.

The film's prologue makes the narrative expectations associated with the Gothic confront their genericism, as they encounter the alternate reality of the Red Power-era reserve. When Burner taunts the children with his story of priests throwing children down to the "cooker" at St Dymphna's, the film's spectators are positioned alongside the children in being uncertain whether to take this as teasing or as a serious warning. But it soon becomes clear that the Gothic scenario conjured by Burner's words is far off the mark because danger and violence are much closer to hand. We might have guessed this from observing the way the Gothic background in the opening tableau seems to bleed into the foreground of the Native reserve. Immediately following Burner's warning, an accident transpires. Aila's mother Anna (Roseanne Supernault) and father Joseph (Glen Gould) stumble out of the house, climb into the ghostly black Chevy, and (unknowingly) reverse it over the little nighttime escapee from St Dymphna's, Aila's friend Tyler.

Tyler dies in this accident. Moments before, he had responded to Burner's warning with the question, "What are zombies?" and his question hangs over the event. As Cutcha Risling Baldy suggests, Indigenous peoples of the Americas know only too well a broader, ongoing landscape of "zombie-pocalypse."¹⁶ Tyler's question is ultimately about the time-space of Indigenous genocide and the inadequacy of a narrative genre that overspecifies its location and duration. If Burner warns of the "religified" zombie priests at St Dymphna's, this reflects the normalized, exceptionalist geography of settler-colonial reckoning with residential schools. Beyond the school walls are waves of senseless death, brutality, extortion, and repeated incarceration.¹⁷ The first act of violence in the film occurs not in the gloomy school on the hill, but senselessly and as part of the everyday rhythm on the reservation, while the logic of Gothic narrative would make it attributable to the intentions of a distant, perverse other.

Subsequently, Anna, who was driving the car, hangs herself; Joseph is incarcerated. Now effectively orphaned, Aila observes in voiceover, "The day I found my mother dead I aged by a thousand years." Apart from Aila's choice of disguise on the night of the heist—she "suit[s] up" in an "old lady" mask—her aging is invisible, although in certain scenes she is able to commune with the dead. For Aila to "age" on the day of her mother's death is both a scarring and an accession to what Mark Rifkin has called the "discrepant temporalit[y]" of Indigenous ontology.¹⁸

In my reading, then, the Prologue's stagey residential school façade and its story about "zombie priests" reference a narrative genre which cannot speak of wider conditions—neither the reserve's everyday violence nor its militant energies—a genre which *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* invokes and deconstructs. Residential School Gothic, referenced in the Prologue, reproduces the assumption that settler-colonialism's violence is locked up in a school on the hill. The work of the Prologue is to register the discrepancy, to stage the antagonism, between the already-known of this genre of public discourse—its narrative logic and its social imaginary—and what lies outside of it in the film, in the alternate time-space of Red Power.

In suggesting that *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* alludes to Residential School Gothic as a genre that circulates in public discourse, that can be invoked through a few key tropes and yet implies a whole narrative modeling of the world that is familiar to spectators, I am drawing on the work of the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin. For Bakhtin, narrative genres, or what he called chronotopes (time-spaces), provide the often-unnoticed machinery, the codes and conventions, which organize the social experience of time-space. Different chronotopes construct distinctive features of time and space and fuse these "indicators" into a concrete whole in which they seem to have an "intrinsic connectedness."¹⁹ Thus, for Bakhtin, in any given narrative genre, time and space are interrelated; while time is made visible and tangible in the genre's conventions of space, space, in turn, is "charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history."²⁰ In classic Gothic novels like *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) or *The Monk* (1796), for example, the possibilities for plot are dictated by the convention of a particular kind of architecture—the dim, mysterious, labyrinthine castle or abbey, expressing the persistence of the unknown and unimaginable sins of the past in its dark depths.

That architecture is itself situated within a geography of Anglo-Protestant superiority that operates according to a rhetoric of moral-cultural distance. Thus, these novels are set in medieval Italy and Spain, at a considerable remove from the late-eighteenth-century England of the novels' publication. The heroines, who are trapped in suffocating enclosures and threatened by representatives of nonbourgeois, pre-Reformation moral and sexual perversion, are not merely entrapped in a physical sense; they are also held back from the "advance" of time, if time is imagined in terms of norms of progress and development. As a chronotope, then, the classic Gothic intertwines features of space and time which produce a plot organized around inside and outside; an interior connected with death, stasis, and perversity and an exterior connected with the release from a certain spatial and temporal density, into the forward march of "homogenous, empty time."²¹

The genre I am calling Residential School Gothic is a contemporary revival of this chronotope for the purpose of making sense—making a tolerable, because culturally familiar, sense—of the genocidal violence of Indian residential schools. As Dylan Robinson has noted, a "large portion of the settler Canadian public remains aggressively indifferent toward acknowledging the history of colonization upon which their contemporary privilege rests." Writing in 2016, a year after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report, Robinson attributed this indifference, in part, to the "civic distance the non-Native public feels toward the TRC's processes."²² But that "civic distance" is not only attributable to the "literal distance" from non-Indigenous public spaces at which TRC events tended to take place, as Robinson notes; I am proposing that it is also an effect of the mediating work of Residential School Gothic, the genre which, projecting settler-colonial violence to a distant past and specific sites, leverages residential schools as exceptional, Gothic time-spaces within otherwise progressive Canada.

Although Bakhtin's examples of narrative chronotopes are literary genres, his approach extends the possibilities for thinking with and around genre by suggesting that a chronotope is a "means for a collective orientation in reality, aiming for completion"; that is, it is a narrative model that is public.²³ As part of its existence in the social world, a chronotope is anonymous in its origin and widely dispersed. It is also historical: it emerges from particular historical conditions, usually as a means of imaginarily resolving contradictions within those conditions, but then it survives as a form, carrying forward "isolated aspects" of those conditions, "worked out" and "reflected" in a narrative genre.²⁴ "[A]t first productive" within a particular historical context, Bakhtin writes, genres or chronotopes "continue stubbornly to exist beyond the point at which they had lost any meaning that was productive in actuality or adequate to later historical situations," providing a dense texture, a complex simultaneity of historically encoded forms, to any contemporaneity.²⁵ The circulation of Residential School Gothic in Canada today attests to the persistence of the classic Gothic of the late-eighteenth century, but also its peculiar usefulness to the ideological resolution of contradictions in settler-colonial Canada today.

As I have suggested, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* immediately signals a sense of the inadequacy of Residential School Gothic as a narrative model, juxtaposing the

reported, fantastical violence occurring within the space of St Dymphna's with the random violence outside of its walls. That the film situates this "outside" in a stylized, recognizably Red Power era suggests a rejection of the possibility of a standpoint located outside of any kind of spatiotemporal organization and its associated ambience and sensibility. Violence is not confined to St Dymphna's, and neither is the conventionality of genre. Lying beyond the Gothic school setting is neither nature nor contemporary immediacy, but rather another "retro" chronotope Barnaby has created by modifying and fusing codes from the heist and exploitation genres. The world of the Red Crow Indian Reservation, operates within a different affective register from the Residential School Gothic scenes, according to a different organization of narrative expectation and time-space perception—a different set of rules.

Part of adolescent Aila's role as a voiceover narrator is to articulate the rules for survival in what she calls the "Kingdom of the Crow." The rules have to do with a defensive hardening of the self in the name of survival: for example, rule #4: "Don't act like a bad-ass if you can't fight." A pot-selling, graffiti-spraying, butt-kicking girl living among distracted men and boys, Aila's signature gas mask and skull-prowed bicycle speak of her mastery of these rules. "She's going to eat people after the apocalypse," Burner observes. But what makes Aila the hero of *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* is her capacity for long-term strategy, which depends on her singular, growing attunement to those spiritual forces and presences in her community which would not be accessible if the world beyond the Gothic school were to be represented through the rationalist lens of realism.

When Tyler is killed through senseless, lateral violence on the reserve, rather than through the sadistic violence of the "cooker" at St Dymphna's, the correction of narrative expectations at first seems to affirm just such a rationalist epistemology that is set against the dark fantasy of zombie priests. However, as it turns out, the space of the reserve (coded "red" in the opening tableau) does not match the sequential time and unified space of realism either. An undead Tyler reappears, still wearing his St Dymphna's uniform; he moves freely between the space of the school and the reserve, as he does between the dead and the living. At the end of the film, when he fires the decisive shot, saving Aila from an attempted rape, he then asks her, "What do we do now, boss?" Crucially, the boy recognizes that Aila is the lead strategist, even though his action in that moment has positioned him as her savior.

The film keys Aila's leadership to her ability to perceive the persistence of the dead and this receptiveness emerges as a capacity anchored in the film's Red Power chronotope, rather than its Gothic one. The chronotope of the Red Crow Indian Reservation turns out to be a densely sedimented time-space, alive with the dead. The realm of the undead is shifted, therefore, from where we might expect it to be—the register of "zombie priests"—to resilient Mi'kmaq, who, like Aila and her coterie of "young ghouls," know something of what it means to be "aged by a thousand years."

As the complexity of the Red Power chronotope is gradually unfolded, we learn with Aila to pay attention to the teachings of Mi'kmaq mothers and grandmothers. Aila's sketches and graffiti reproduce her own mother's drawings of female warriors, figures of rage and justice-dealing. From her grandmother, the pot-growing Ceres

(played by the Mi'kmaw activist and elder, Katherine Sorbey), Aila receives a Mi'kmaw story that tells of violence and self-destruction in a post-apocalyptic time. It is a "traditional" story, Ceres explains, which mothers tell children before they are taken to residential school.²⁶ If Aila seems fierce enough to "eat people after the apocalypse," it may be because from her tutored, transgenerational point of view—the view of an angel of sorts—she can see that the apocalypse has already happened.²⁷ The transmission of cultural and political knowledge between female generations, a knowledge that is as undead as the resurfacing fist of Anna, the mother, shooting up, *Carrie*-like, from her grave in a startling moment in the film, is what powers Aila.

Aila thus inhabits a complex time-space of the Indigenous feminist Red Power 1970s that is both retrospective and anticipatory in relation to twenty-first-century Indigenous resurgence on Turtle Island. Before analyzing Aila's chronotope further, however, I will develop a more detailed description of the genre, Residential School Gothic, against which Aila's 1970s is set.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL GOTHIC AND NEOLIBERAL CULTURE

Rhymes for Young Ghouls addresses the contemporary moment of limited reckoning with settler-colonial violence in Canada, but as I have noted, not through the depiction of a present-day setting.²⁸ Rather, the film stages the fossilized generic conventions of Residential School Gothic, through which the historical wrong of residential schooling is both represented in our time and made to represent—in the sense of cover and contain—the piece of Canada that was tainted by colonial violence. The hegemonic articulation of what "we now recognize" about Canada's past—specifically, the horror of residential schools, the acts of violence done to children behind their high stone walls—is mediated by specific Gothic conventions. These conventions not only contain the "wrong" in question behind the walls of Gothic structures, protecting settler Canada from a more thorough and troubling reckoning with the legacies and continuities of settler colonialism. The Gothic mode of dramatizing residential schooling actually reaffirms the central presuppositions of a late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century liberalism which defined itself against the "backwardness" of perverse and tyrannical power. In this reaffirmation, the attempt to reckon with what is regrettable in Canada's past reproduces elements of a triumphal liberal and Protestant imaginary. Historical reckoning and atonement, then, revive the very rhetoric of projection and self-justification which accompanied the enforcement of liberal "progress" in Canada.

As literary and cultural historians have observed, historically the Gothic novel is a "Whig literary form" that is subject to conservative turns and modifications.²⁹ In telling a story of liberation from the dangerous hold of the past and from excessive and illegitimate forms of power, it makes sense of change as modernization. Its key tropes—the topos of the claustrophobic, labyrinthine, imprisoning structure; the vulnerable, entrapped heroine; the evocation of a vanquished past via signifiers of feudalism and Catholic religiosity—activate a narrative in which the horrors and abuses of tyrannical, repressive power are exposed. The heroine, as Alison Milbank puts it, "escapes diachronic and synchronic imprisonment": she is released not just

from the repressive hold of abusive and outdated authority, out of a decaying past into the possibility of forward movement, but also from a physical manifestation of the grasp of that deathly past in a building, an institution, an enclosure.³⁰ The suffocation of incarcerating “insides” are contrasted with “outsides” encoded as spaces of free circulation and exchange.

The inside/outside motif of this historical Gothic may be read as telling a specific kind of story about power in a moment of bourgeois revolutions, power that it makes imaginable only as repressive. Late-eighteenth-century Gothic already dealt in anachronism, dressing up the massive changes of its own moment in the clothing of an earlier “Gothic cusp” between the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment;³¹ hence, its distancing devices include historically, geographically, and culturally remote settings of Latinate Europe, and narratives populated by sadistic monks and nuns whose depravity speaks of their education in the cloister, as in Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*. Specifically, the historical Gothic is a Protestant as well as a liberal genre, in that its anti-Catholic rhetoric is a critique of despotic, arbitrary power which it sees as emblemized by the power of the Papacy to terrorize and extort through the idea of purgatory. More generally, however, this Gothic is the vehicle for a critique of power that is seen to repress the natural, providential order of civil society, the market, and *homo economicus*, liberalism’s freely self-governing and rationally calculating self.

In the context of this historical Gothic’s emergence, a story about entrapment and violation by a priest in the secret catacombs was a story about the dangers of arbitrary power and its potentially suffocating claims on the vibrancy of a new market order. This is the Gothic that reappears in Residential School Gothic, a contemporary genre which can include some of the preferred, ostensibly transparent modes for representing residential schooling, including testimony, documentary, and reenactment. The insinuation of the Gothic into these modes and its centrality to the construction of a public memory of residential schooling generally says something about the neoliberal culture of wrongs recognition in Canada. It also says something about the resistance to interpreting residential schooling as an instrument in a wider, unfinished settler project to complete the erasure of Indigenous populations as politically sovereign peoples. Residential School Gothic works precisely at the intersection of neoliberalism and settler colonialism, as part of the legitimation and sense-making of a settler colonialism which now operates, in part, through neoliberal governance.³²

As Elizabeth Strakosch has observed, in the context of neoliberal governance the state foments “self-critique” and a “rhetoric of withdrawal” even as, far from contracting and retracting, it extends its reach, striving to foster market conditions through techniques of individualization and responsabilization which accompany austerity in spending.³³ Strakosch asserts that the rhetoric of neoliberal governance stresses the state’s weakness in a context of globalization. Yet, I think what is more apparent, now that the state has supposedly retreated, is a rhetorical focus on the wrongful state action of the past, and, within this historical view, a ritualistic caricaturization of the twentieth-century welfare state as the “coldest of cold monsters.”³⁴ Within the common sense anti-statism of neoliberalism, the very intelligibility of the state is reduced to the picture of a suffocating Leviathan, a carceral “total institution.”³⁵ The settler-public

memory of residential schools is shaped, at least in part, by this neoliberal common sense with respect to the wrongs of “big government” and the freedoms of the market versus the intrinsically repressive nature of the state. Insofar as it focuses on wrongful state action in a past era of overextended state power, the process of reckoning with the history and meaning of residential schools is situated in close proximity to the discourse of state “self-critique” that legitimates neoliberal governance in the present.³⁶

The genre of Residential School Gothic produces the synthesis, making residential schools aggregate neoliberal concepts. It marshals energies connected to a wider culture of redress for historical wrongs³⁷ and connects them to the neoliberal critique of paternalist government and bureaucratic regulation and enclosure. In Residential School Gothic, that enclosure is colored with a construction of colonialism as a distant, immoral crime against innocents, as Indigenous peoples are imagined via the figure of the culturally and historically unmarked child, the equivalent of the Gothic’s entrapped heroine. The continuity of present settler-state legal and political institutions with those of the recent past is suppressed by the genre’s tropes of historical remoteness, Catholic perpetrators, and buildings which contain the forces of perversity and tyranny.

Cumulatively, Residential School Gothic representations are reassuring in that they speak of a remote, finite, and contained violence which occurred behind impenetrable walls and at the hands of perverse others. Once made to signify within the historical Gothic, residential schools could come to crystallize the idea of state capture and regulation, and they could effect both a temporal division between now and then, and a spatial one between colonialism-as-perverse event within the institution and freedom outside of it. Residential School Gothic keeps the process of settler-public reckoning within a neoliberal imaginary, as an enlightened Canada discovers a dark repressive past that accounts for certain developmental failures and points to the need to unblock developmental trajectories.

The way in which Residential School Gothic organizes the iconography of residential schools’ recognition in Canada today is too vast to demonstrate adequately here; a few examples will have to suffice. The Gothic enclosure is a central feature of texts seeking to produce public knowledge of the residential school system. Many texts deploy physical evidence of the school structures—archival photographs of their imposing exteriors, often built in the architectural styles of Second Empire or Collegiate Gothic—to showcase the materialization of policy in actual places. Usually, the photographic archive used is the visual documentation sent back to the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) for annual reports published during the schools’ operation. The DIA photographs capture the schools from a distance just sufficient to make them seem impressive, a composition which the Prologue of *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* cites in its CGI-insertion.

Photographs of school exteriors are a central sign in online exhibits such as the Legacy of Hope Foundation’s “Where Are the Children?” and as Naomi Angel and Pauline Wakeham note, journalism about the residential schools or the TRC is almost always “accompanied by black-and-white archival photographs of students in classrooms or posed in front of institutional buildings.”³⁸ The Royal Winnipeg Ballet’s

2016 production, *Going Home Star—Truth and Reconciliation*, featured a three-dimensional miniature model of a residential school on the stage as a haunting obstruction in the midst of the dancers. Photo-essays and documentaries have examined exterior and interior school ruins.³⁹

This iconography draws the schools within the orbit of the genre that has a distinctive preoccupation with enclosures: the castle, the monastery, the ancient abbey, with their labyrinthine catacombs and crypts signifying the dangers of what lies within and beneath. A narrative representation like the National Film Board's 2012 docudrama, *We Were Children*, goes further in developing the interior space of the residential school as a Gothic topos. The film dramatizes the experiences of survivors Glen Anaquod and Lena Hart, intercutting interviews with reenactment by actors on sets. The dramatized scenes include the boy's entrapment within a secret, claustrophobic cellar.

To think about the mediating work of genre is not to deny the reality of residential school survivors' experiences. It is to ask what is rendered inaccessible to analysis and to critical reckoning with the past and present of settler colonialism, by what is emerging as the most conventional imagery and narrative patterning of residential school experience. Residential School Gothic is not a falsehood, but rather a catachresis, a figuration that grounds understanding within a ready-made, recycled set of conventions. As *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* seems to suggest in exaggerating those conventions and juxtaposing them with another stylization of the world, rather than imagining that there is a representation of residential schooling that could bypass convention and citation—confirming our present as the moment which can access the truth in its immediacy—the task is to explore the limits of the Residential School Gothic chronotope and the possibilities of another one.

Rhymes for Young Ghouls draws attention to the catachresis, the stretched metaphor of Residential School Gothic,⁴⁰ and suggests that this generic redeployment is part of a dense intertextuality and long history of citation involving the historical Gothic. One scene in particular performs the catachresis with a comical anachronism that relies on the spectator's familiarity with late-twentieth-century Canadian culture, its thematization of child abuse in institutional settings, and the nationally broadcast NFB docudrama miniseries which gave the issue an unmistakably Gothic cast.

Broadcast nationally in 1992, *The Boys of St Vincent* (fig. 2) dramatizes the institutional child abuse at Mount Cashel Orphanage run by the Congregation of Christian Brothers in St John's, Newfoundland, an institution that in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the subject of criminal prosecutions, civil proceedings, and a Royal Commission inquiry. The early 1990s was also the moment of some of the first criminal convictions of residential school staff and some of the first civil suits, as Indigenous groups acted on a decision to mobilize, politically, around residential school impacts as a contributor to the undermining of Indigenous sovereignty.⁴¹ The soon-to-be national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Phil Fontaine, told his story of being abused at the Oblates of Mary Immaculate School on public television in October, 1990.



FIGURE 2. Gothic precedent, *The Boys of St. Vincent*. Image courtesy of Ciné Télé Action/CBC.

But as *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* implies, in a moment of pointedly anachronistic citation, residential schools were not recognizable as a wrong in the settler-public sphere until they were named through the figurative extension of the Gothic narrative condensed in *The Boys of St. Vincent*, a narrative that was not about settler-colonial violence. Cultural genocide had to be named via a Gothic narrative of child abuse at a Catholic institution, a preexisting narrative chronotope for articulating the abuse of power for a Canadian audience. This is the substance of the joke in *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* when Aila, berating her hapless male friends for their carelessness in losing money needed in order to pay off the Indian agent, tells them, “You’re gonna end up at *St Vincent* like the rest of the lost boys.”⁴² The reference to the 1990s Canadian docudrama, in this scene set in the 1970s, is a reminder of the discursive weight against which, and indeed *through* which, residential schools are named and interpreted, using the available storehouse of popular language. St Dymphna’s residential school, this moment implies, is and is not “St Vincent.” But the trope of “St Vincent” (already a code for Mount Cashel, the Catholic orphanage) is efficient in many respects—it invokes a whole already-known regarding young innocents and predatory Catholics, itself sedimented with the scenarios of the historical Gothic novel. At the same time, it is inadequate as a name for St Dymphna’s residential school. The threat to Aila,

her friends, and their Mi'kmaw community is much more pervasive than the one contained in St Dymphna's. Ailá's anachronistic and catachrestical referencing of *The Boys of St Vincent* would be funny, almost, if it were not for its partial truth.

THE LAW IN THE KINGDOM

The law in the Kingdom decreed that every child between the age of 5 and 16 who is physically able must attend Indian Residential School.

Her Majesty's attendants, to be called truant officers, will take into custody a child whom they believe to be absent from school using as much force as the circumstance requires.

A person caring for an Indian child who fails to cause such a child to attend school shall immediately be imprisoned, and such person arrested without warrant and said child conveyed to school by the truant officer. —The Indian Act, by will of Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada

—*Rhymes for Young Ghouls* title card

The title cards that open *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* cite the revised Indian Act of 1927 with the addition of some invented flourishes that seemingly promise that the action will take place in a remote land of Gothic romance.⁴³ Yet at the same time, the decree's singling out of the figure of the "truant officer" as a delegate of sovereign power seems incongruously worldly and specific. From depicting St Dymphna's as the initial site of despotic rule, the film's focus insistently broadens to include the sweeping powers of criminalization and incarceration that settler-colonial law granted to "Her Majesty's attendants." The powers of the truant officer to categorize and capture as portrayed in the film are key to its deconstruction of Gothic time-space and analysis of power. The film reveals that St Dymphna's structure is actually porous: its threat of entombment is *delocalized* so that it extends far beyond the institution's walls and the constituency of school-age children to encompass the reserve and its adults.⁴⁴ The meanings of "truant officer" and "school" turn out to be extreme euphemisms. As the title cards suggest, the film's truant officer, or, more accurately, Indian agent, is a figure on the border of the marvelous and the mundane who hovers between the perverse, predatory violence of the Gothic and the delegated, institutionalized, routine violence of modern settler-colonial law. The name of this agent, "Popper," plays on "Poppa" or "Papa." This name also invokes the capital "F" father, the Pope, serving as a reminder that the narrative position of the sadistic Gothic villain is being occupied by an Indian agent.⁴⁵

Although he is like the Gothic genre's monks or priests in being associated with the claustrophobic enclosure, Popper's relation to St Dymphna's is one of convenience or instrumentality.⁴⁶ St Dymphna's is only his headquarters. He operates with impunity inside and outside of the school, extorting a "truancy tax," an equivalent of the Catholic indulgence, from those adolescents, including Aila, who would keep themselves out of the residential school. He incorporates the citation of scripture into his violent beatings when that purpose serves him. In one scene, he reads the famous "vengeance and retribution are mine" verse from Deuteronomy to Ailá's father, Joseph, having taken him into his office at St Dymphna's for a beating. Jesus looks on, with

bleeding heart, from a portrait on the wall. The scene invites a reading of an allegory of the settler state's relation to religious institutions and discourses, a relation of deployment through which, as a matter of expediency and economy, the state drew on a ready-made zeal and apparatus for transforming others.⁴⁷ The Church's manipulative symbolics of human submission before a Father who alternately dispensed wrath and merciful love would then be something like a settler-colonial state *supplement*. Popper doesn't *need* the voice of god—he would proceed with Joseph's beating even without it—but it provides an apparatus of justification, a kind of aesthetic rightness to the violence, like a costume.

The film conceives of the Indian agent as the privileged delegate of arbitrary and brutal rule, rationalized as disciplinary and costumed in the garb, or discourse, of a church "Father." The scene is about the trappings of "the Queen's Right in Canada," the paraphernalia and performativity of settler sovereignty which, as Strakosch, drawing on the work of Aileen Moreton-Robinson, has suggested, needs to be seen as a "*practice of liberal power rather than as a preexisting quality inherent in the settler state-object,*" if the inevitability and completeness of settler sovereignty are to be challenged.⁴⁸ Popper's power is less stable than that of the Gothic villain: he may at times sound like a priest, ventriloquizing the voice of god, but he's not identical to that role. It is only a kind of stage prop. By implication, to recognize him as a villain only when he is in St Dymphna's, surrounded by Christian paraphernalia and citing scripture, is to put an essence, a stable core, where there is only a strategic instrumentalization of Church authority. The beating scene is a dramatization, a rehearsal of settler sovereignty, which anxiously supplements its own contingency by drawing on the voice of god.

Because Gothic religiosity was resourced, or tapped into, in residential schools policy, in the liberal state's contracting out of the running of the schools to the churches (and preponderantly, the Roman Catholic Church), it does not do to mobilize Gothic narrative today as a way of reckoning with the violence of settler colonialism. The Gothic critique makes a suspiciously ready-made sense in the twenty-first century, renewing the idea of the despotic and arbitrary power of the Catholic other, and distracts from the continuity of settler sovereignty as a "practice of liberal power." *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* reminds us that the powers delegated to Indian agents were designed to replace Indigenous governments, undermine autonomous economies, and dismantle social systems.

Thus, as the film demonstrates, the chronotope of Residential School Gothic, with its focus on "popish" crimes against children committed behind the walls of institutions, can say very little about the way that Popper and his thugs police everyday life on the Red Crow Indian Reservation. They surveil the reserve for any infractions of settler-colonial law, in particular the strict regulations on the fishery. They attack Joseph and Aila for going out onto the water in their boat, for in effect practicing Mi'kmaw sovereignty through a small-scale "fish-in" that is characteristic of the kind of actions—the occupations, the standoffs—of 1970s Indigenous militancy.⁴⁹ More particularly, the action condenses the defiant salmon fishing of the Listuguj Mi'gmaq who insisted on an inherent right to fish and to govern their own resources,

famously facing a brutal, large-scale Sûreté de Québec raid in 1981, which Barnaby witnessed at the age of four. The Listuguj Mi'gmaq organized themselves to block a second, attempted raid a few weeks later.⁵⁰ In Barnaby's film, Aila and her father likewise fight back.

“I THOUGHT YOU SAID MI'KMAQ DIDN'T WEAR HEADDRESSES”

Asked about the 1970s setting of his film in an interview, Barnaby explained:

Back then, in the '70s, the idea [was] that it was on the tail end of the civil rights movement in the U.S. and you were starting to see First Nations people take a cue from that and articulate themselves in terms of having a place and identity, that trickled down into building a personality that just flat out was not going to be oppressed. It's set in 1976, which is the year I was born, and it was with the idea that these people, at that time, set the rest of us free. . . . It was the perfect time to set it because the oppression was still there but Native people were starting to draw lines in the sand.⁵¹

For Barnaby, the metaphor of lines in the sand is powerfully dramatized by a moment in what was, for him, a formative documentary film, about the Sûreté de Québec raid on his own community, *Incident à Restigouche* (1984), by the Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin. In the documentary, an elder enacts for the camera a symbolic assertion of sovereignty through the gesture of scratching a line on the ground.⁵² In *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, the gesture is dramatized in a way that stresses the resonance of trans-tribal symbols in the era of Red Power. An increasingly politicized Aila comes upon a scene of memory in the forest, a scene which allows her to recall by observing her mother, under cover of night, teaching her child-self how to paint a feather headdress framed by the shape of a star, with an exacting attitude that indicates the potency of the lines they are producing together. When Aila questions the appropriateness of the Plains First Nations' headdress for Mi'kmaq, Anna explains that the symbol “makes some people feel powerful,” and that in their context, “two Indians” painting one constitutes a dangerous, provocative act.

The memory of being instructed by her mother in the painting of the symbol comes near the end of the film, after Aila has found Ceres dead—probably killed by the Indian Agent and his thugs. The scene reminds Aila of what these women, her mother and grandmother, have taught her about long-term survival. The headdress is part of a Red Power aesthetic of sovereignty and if Aila is positioned in this scene as recalling it through the involuntary visitations of memory, for the film's twenty-first-century Indigenous audience the “retro” nature of the Red Power symbol also may produce the sense of something reappearing out of time and yet also strangely in time. Actions to reclaim the headdress as a tribally specific symbol, from illegitimate and disrespectful settler appropriations, give the headdress a renewed potency in the context of present-day Indigenous resurgence on Turtle Island, in which it is not so much a trans-tribal symbol as a sign of struggles for reclamation and cultural sovereignty. In *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, the fact that the memory of painting the symbol already includes Aila's

own hesitancy speaks to the element of anticipation within Barnaby's 1970s: Aila's embeddedness in Mi'kmaq culture and spirituality prefigures the leadership of contemporary resurgence movements. Her mother's lesson that the headdress "makes some people feel powerful" applies now, in a new and complex way, to a different context of appropriation, the one that revived Red Power energies are addressing.⁵³

Rhymes for Young Ghouls was filmed in November 2012—precisely the month in which the movement Idle No More emerged, powerfully and dramatically, as an assertion of *sui generis* Indigenous sovereignty, treaty rights, and the importance of leadership by women knowledge-keepers, in the midst of a public culture dominated by the discourse of settler-Indigenous reconciliation as friendship and healing.⁵⁴ A group of four women held a teach-in in Saskatchewan to raise awareness about proposed federal legislation introducing "the removal of specific protections for the environment (in particular water and fish habitats) [and] the improper 'leasing' of First Nations territories without consultation." The meeting, which organizers called "Idle No More," sparked a "continent-wide" movement that saw itself as "an emergence out of past efforts that reverberated into the future."⁵⁵

It seems important that the film's production took place the month of Idle No More's spectacular emergence because of the way that the story is set in the sensed time-space of Red Power, which it frames as both "retro" and resurgent, that is, a style which is undead in our own textured contemporaneity. As this film insists with its very deliberately stylized worlds, aesthetic conventions can be the vehicles through which whole organizations of time-space perception are conveyed. Aila may be an emanation of the Red Power 1970s, but as read back through the corrective lens of Idle No More, so that the era's assumption of masculine heroism disappears.⁵⁶ Several jokes in the film turn on her friends' confusion regarding her insistence on drawing female icons. In these moments of dramatic irony, we are supposed to understand that Aila sees the future from her 1970s vantage, as well as the past. If she is a figure who anticipates a future activism, it is only because she is already spectral, or in some sense open to the dead.

Even as it demonstrates the limitations of Residential School Gothic, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* points to an alternate chronotope that is not, we learn, realist, but seems to be grounded in what Wanda Nanabush has called Idle No More's "post-Cartesian Indigenous ethos."⁵⁷ Barnaby encodes this alternate chronotope as distinct from Residential School Gothic, and this move connects *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* with a recent vein of "Indigenous popular culture creations" that experiment with atemporality, collective memory, and various figurations of the Indigenous undead who persist beyond their genocidally allotted time, including zombies and vampires.⁵⁸ The ghouls in this film are the youthful Indigenous avengers, the agents of change for whom the "rhymes" are sounded in this version of political cinema.⁵⁹ As if aware of their ghoulish status, Aila and her friends wear Halloween costumes on the night they break into St Dymphna's: they dress up as a skeleton, a crow, a bunny, and in Aila's case, an "old lady."

Before leading her friends into the school for their heist, Aila escapes from her captivity there through a back door. She has been held at St Dymphna's as a punishment for her participation in the fish-in, as Popper has threatened, by being "fitted in Dymphna's greys and put down into the darkest, deepest hole we've got." Her brief

period of incarceration in St Dymphna's allows the film to activate the Residential School Gothic chronotope with a campy awareness of conventions. The interior scenes, shot through a brown filter, establish the visual motifs of nuns and priests in long hallways, labyrinthine stairwells, and underground cellars against a soundscape of chanting monks, Latin hymns, and eerie clanging. When Aila emerges from the back entrance to meet her friends, the film underscores the genericism. Aila, facing her friends in medievaesque "Dymphna's greys," hair roughly shorn, sets the heist plan in motion with the suggestion, "Let's suit up." She will be changing from one costume, one citation, to another.

There is a politics and a reading of history in this film's interest in citation, in discordant chronotopes, in persistent remainders (whether genres or ghouls) and the sense of time out-of-joint that they produce. Reviving a 1970s aesthetic, the film seems to remember a future, and also to suggest that to be present in time, to be transformative in one's actions, is to be a kind of revenant. The film's invocation of the Red Power 1970s suggests, I think, that the time of residential schools' reckoning *antecedes* our own and is revived in the defiant energies, collective gestures, and style of Idle No More and Indigenous resurgence more generally. In its stylized chronotopes, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* signals a critical awareness of the wider discursive field in which its own representation of a residential school circulates. The film's juxtaposition of a Gothic with a Red Power chronotope suggests that deliberate anachronism is necessary in order to defamiliarize the genre of Residential School Gothic and the mechanisms through which that genre projects an enlightened, post-conflict present beyond the time-space of the schools.

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NOTES

1. Jeff Barnaby, DVD audio commentary (2014), *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, dir. Jeff Barnaby (Toronto: Entertainment One Films Canada, 2013). I use the Smith-Francis orthography, Mi'kmaw, except when referring to an individual from Listuguj, in which case I use that community's orthography.

2. Canada's TRC was mandated by an out-of-court settlement to a class action suit, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. It was a non-investigative commission without powers of subpoena, which gathered testimony from former students and staged national events to publicize its work. See Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Ottawa: Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015), http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf.

3. The film playfully references *Psycho*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (Los Angeles, CA: Shamley Productions, 1960); *Carrie*, dir. Brian De Palma (Santa Paula, CA: Red Bank Films, 1976); and *Shaun of the Dead*, dir. Edgar Wright (London: Rogue Pictures, 2004), among others.

4. For Jacques Derrida, catachresis, the rhetorical term for a forced metaphor—a figure through which a concept, a name, or a trope is extended to a zone of experience that is without a signifier—is the inescapable condition of all language. See Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 255. Barnaby's reluctance to present a "real" unmediated by genre conventions places the film language of *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* within a Derridean deconstructive understanding of language as always, inescapably, shaping experience. even, as it gives expression to, experience.

5. Michel Foucault's dating of the shift from *raison d'État* to liberal governmentality in Western Europe in the mid-18th century places that shift just before the publication of the first Gothic novels in Britain: Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). The approach to statecraft that Foucault terms *raison d'État* had already eschewed any concern with the salvation of souls but the shift to a specifically *liberal* governmentality was to a permanent preoccupation with the "delimitation of what would be excessive for a government," in other words, the need to avoid interference with the autonomous spheres of market and population: *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008) 13.

6. Ibid, 6.

7. I borrow the idea of genre as "a narrative ideologeme [with an] outer form, secreted like a shell or exoskeleton," from Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 151.

8. "We now recognize" is a phrase repeated in litany fashion in the Canadian federal government's apology for residential schooling, provided by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2008. For the full text of the apology, see Canada House of Commons Debates (Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools), June 11, 2008, <http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/39-2/house/sitting-110/hansard>.

9. The title card uses the term "reservation," although "reserve" is the term used in Canada, and later title cards reference Canada's Indian Act. I alternate between the two terms in this essay in order to reflect the film's refusal to distinguish between Canadian and American contexts in regard to 1970s Indigenous activism, residential and boarding schools, and spaces of Indigenous segregation.

10. The school is improbably visible from the reserve in the film because in fact, the federal government's establishment of a residential school system in the 1880s represented a deliberate shift away from treaty commitments to establish on-reserve day schools in favor of a system that would use distance to ensure the child would be "dissociated from the prejudicial influence by which he is surrounded on the reserve of his band," as an 1880 Department of Indian Affairs Report put it. J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 103.

11. See *Red Power: The American Indians' Fight for Freedom*, ed. Alvin M. Josephy Jr., Joane Nagel and Troy Johnson, 2d ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007). In Canada, the 1969 release of the federal government's Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy (the "White Paper") recommending the extinction of the rights of First Nations enshrined in treaties with the Crown was a major catalyst to political action against assimilation and in defense of treaty rights and Native title, as were contemporaneous resource development schemes for northern Quebec and the Northwest Territories.

12. Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), 65. Million illustrates her point about a masculinist Red Power movement that "had informed many politically but had not nourished them spiritually" through a discussion of Jeanette Armstrong's novel *Slash*, in which the male protagonist eventually comes to a "felt knowledge [which] locates his worth at home in the relations [of] families and peoples" (66).

Million's point is that Indigenous women activists and writers like Armstrong were "from the beginning challenging any new articulation of indigenism that did not recognize the relationship between Earth and women and the well-being of any generation" (122). *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* subscribes to this revisionist, Indigenous feminist reading of Red Power. Barnaby's casting of Mi'kmaw elder and language-revival activist Katherine Sorbey in the role of Ceres speaks to his recoding of Red Power. He shot his film in Kahnawake, the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) reserve near Montreal, which was home to a number of important women activists in the 1960s and 1970s, including Kahn Tineta Horn and Mary Two-Axe Earley. For Jeff Barnaby, Sorbey, Horn, and Earley embody Red Power more than Richard Oakes. As he put it in a 2014 interview: "I thought, if there was ever a point in time that this residential school was going to crumble it would have been in the 70's, it just made sense to me to have a young Native girl bring this institution of ugliness to its knees. It made sense to me because First Nations women are the language and cultural keepers, they are the epicenter of our matriarchal society. I've mostly only known strength to come from the women in my life. Which isn't to say that the men haven't been influential, but the rock steady power that doesn't waiver seems to come from women." Jamaia Dacosta, "Interview with filmmaker Jeff Barnaby on *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*," *Muskrat Magazine*, February 1, 2014, <http://muskratmagazine.com/interview-with-filmmaker-jeff-barnaby-on-rhymes-for-young-ghouls/>.

13. On heist conventions, see Kirsten Moana Thompson, *Crime Films: Investigating the Scene* (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2007), 44.

14. Barnaby, audio commentary, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*.

15. Classical exploitation cinema has its origins in the 1930s "educational films" that reveled in titillating spectacle, as in, for example, *Reefer Madness*, dir. Louis J. Gasnier (Los Angeles: George A. Hirliman Productions, 1936). However, the genre is more often associated with non-mainstream filmmaking of the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Recycling is one of its main strategies, as its low-budget "recycling of stock footage or images from previous films" is geared toward the exploitation of target audience and transgressive subject matter. See David Roche, "Exploiting Exploitation Cinema: An Introduction," *Transatlantica 2* (2015), par. 7, <http://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/7846>. *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* draws on elements of various exploitation subgenres, notably the pot film and the girl-gang film, perhaps especially as exemplified in the "female-outlaw-biker movie," *She-Devils on Wheels*, directed by Herschell Gordon Lewis (Universal City, CA: Mayflower Pictures, 1968). See Kristina Pia Hofer, "Exploitation Feminism: Trashiness, Lo-Fidelity, and Utopia in *She-Devils on Wheels* and *Blood Orgy of the Leather Girls*," *Transatlantica 2* (2015), <http://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/7928>.

16. Cutcha Risling Baldy, "On telling Native people to 'just get over it' or why I teach about *The Walking Dead* in my Native Studies classes," November 12, 2013 blog post, par. 16, <https://www.cutcharislingbaldy.com/blog/on-telling-native-people-to-just-get-over-it-or-why-i-teach-about-the-walking-dead-in-my-native-studies-classes-spoiler-alert>.

17. On the normalized geographies of settler colonialism, see Mishuana Goeman's *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

18. Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham: Duke University Press), 3.

19. M. M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.

20. *Ibid.*, 84.

21. The expression "homogenous, empty time" for the temporal sense associated with an ontology of liberal progress is Walter Benjamin's, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 261.

22. Dylan Robinson, "Intergenerational Sense, Intergenerational Responsibility," in *Arts of Engagement: Taking Aesthetic Action in and Beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, ed. Dylan Robinson and Keavy Martin (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 60.

23. Quoted in Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 83. My recognition of the possibilities for extending Bakhtin's concept of literary chronotope to a broader genre of public sense-making is indebted to Mariana Valverde's example in her *Chronotopes of Law: Jurisdiction, Scale and Governance* (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2015), in which she discusses the chronotopes of penal codes.

24. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time," 85.

25. *Ibid.*, 85.

26. Ceres tells the "Wolf and the Mushrooms" story in voiceover, as the film switches to an animated sequence. The story is about a wolf who eats children whom he mistakes for mushrooms, then eats his own tail. The story may be about addiction, abuse, and suicide as residential school legacies, but it is open to interpretation. Barnaby has said that he invented it; refer to Barnaby, audio commentary, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*.

27. The name "Aila," from the French *aille*, or wing, may suggest a link to Walter Benjamin's figure of the Angel of History who, propelled by the forces of so-called "progress," faces backward and witnesses the history of the modern world as a single, accumulating catastrophe; see "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 257. The name Ceres references a more ancient Western countertradition. It associates the film's grandmother figure with the Roman myth of Ceres, goddess of the harvest and sacred law, and her daughter Prosperine, who is forced to subsist in the underworld for part of every year. Barnaby's agricultural grandmother grows the marijuana which provides Aila and her uncle with an income in the underground economy. The Roman myth is a transposition of the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone, at the center of the Eleusinian Mysteries, suppressed in the Christian era.

28. On the limited nature of this reckoning, see Jennifer Henderson, "Residential Schools and Opinion-Making in the Era of Traumatized Subjects and Taxpayer-Citizens," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 49, no. 1 (2015), 5–43, <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcs.49.1.5>; Matt James, "A Carnival of Truth? Knowledge, Ignorance, and the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 6, no. 2, (2012): 182–204, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijts010>.

29. Alison Milbank, "The Victorian Gothic in English novels and stories, 1830–1880," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 151.

30. *Ibid.*, 155.

31. Robert Miles, quoted in *ibid.*, 147.

32. For a discussion of neoliberal social policy which makes Indigenous people "responsible for their own disadvantage," framing them as "market failures or as catastrophically irresponsible," see Elizabeth Strakosch, *Neoliberal Indigenous Policy: Settler Colonialism and the 'Post-Welfare' State* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015); on neoliberal "fiscal warfare" against Indigenous peoples in Canada, see Shiri Pasternak, "The Fiscal Body of Sovereignty: To 'Make Live' in Indian Country," *Settler Colonial Studies* 6, no. 4 (2016), 317–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2015.1090525>.

33. Strakosch, *Neoliberal Indigenous*, 38.

34. Michel Foucault, quoted in Mitchell Dean and Kaspar Villadsen, *State Phobia and Civil Society: The Political Legacy of Michel Foucault* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 1.

35. Erving Goffman's 1961 study, "Characteristics of Total Institutions," describing the abusive "social world of the [psychiatric] hospital inmate," was a progressive critique but would chime with neoliberal ideas in the succeeding decades. The study was based on ethnographic observation as well as published sources, notably the medieval text *The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict* and a novel by Kathryn Hulme, *The Nun's Story* (1957), through which Goffman made links between life in the cloister and life

in the mid-20th-century psychiatric hospital, as sites of separation, control, and the “disculturation” of a self “disinfected of identifications” related to the outside world. See Goffman, “Characteristics,” 13, 19. A path might be traced from the historical Gothic of a novel like *The Monk* to this early 1960s analysis of “total” residential institutions and their systematic violations of the boundaries of the self. Ken Kesey’s novel *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (New York: New American Library, 1962), set in a psychiatric institution, emerges from the same cultural space as Goffman’s critique. Adapted for the stage in 1963 (Dale Wasserman, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest: A Play in Two Acts* [New York: S. French, 2002]) and as a film in 1975 (directed by Milos Forman, [1975; Fantasy Films: Berkeley, CA]), the novel’s narrator is an Indigenous inmate called Chief Bromden. Akwesasne Mohawk actor Brandon Oakes, who played Chief Bromden in a 2010 production of the play by The People’s Light Theater in Philadelphia, was Jeff Barnaby’s choice to play Burner in *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*. Barnaby thereby linked his film to the popular culture version of the “total institution” traceable to Kesey’s novel and its adaptations.

36. Indian residential schools were named as instances of the “total institution” in a 2000 report on child abuse in a variety of institutional contexts, which also included schools for the deaf and blind, psychiatric institutions, and orphanages. See Law Commission of Canada, *Restoring Dignity: Responding to Child Abuse in Canadian Institutions Canada* (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 2000). My intention is not to contest the impacts of child abuse, institutionalization, or the state’s capacity for violence, but rather to point out that the public process of reckoning with the historical wrong of Indian residential schools in Canada was enabled, and constrained, by contemporaneous problematizations of child abuse, the “total institution,” and state interference.

37. On the culture of redress, see Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham, “Introduction,” *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture of Redress*, ed. Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 15.

38. Naomi Angel and Pauline Wakeham, “Witnessing In Camera: Photographic Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation,” in *Arts of Engagement: Taking Aesthetic Action In and Beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 97. The “Where Are the Children?” online exhibit, curated by the Mohawk photographer Jeff Thomas and constructed to accompany an exhibition which toured Canada in 2001, notably attempts to build context for interpretation of photographic evidence by inserting questions in an attempt to encourage a critical and analytical perspective. See Legacy of Hope Foundation, “Where Are the Children? Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools,” Jeff Thomas, curator, <http://wherearethekids.ca/en/exhibition/>.

39. See for example, the photo-essay by Métis scholars Aubrey Jean Hanson and D. Lyn Daniels, “If These Walls Could Talk: The Physical Traces of the Schools,” *The Walrus*, August 17, 2015, <https://thewalrus.ca/if-these-walls-could-talk/>.

40. Tomson Highway’s 1998 novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1998),] with its knowing, campy highlighting of classically Gothic scenes and imagery, is an earlier text that underlines the Gothic catachresis in its representation of residential schooling. *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* is decidedly not docudrama in the same way that *Kiss of the Fur Queen* is not autobiography. They are, perhaps, instances of an Indigenous camp which highlights Gothic conventions, drawing on them with an aesthetic self-consciousness that is political and points beyond a liberal analysis of power. Although an in-depth deconstruction of Residential School Gothic cannot be undertaken here, other films by Indigenous filmmakers about residential school operate in a distinctly different mode, such as Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin’s 1971 documentary *Christmas at Moose Factory* (National Film Board of Canada), which foregrounds children’s voices, artwork, and, as Jane Griffith points out, “warm stories of home life.” See Jane Griffith, “Off to School: Filmic False Equivalence and Indian Residential School Scholarship,” *Historical Studies in Education* 30, no. 1 (2018): 77, https://historicalstudiesineducation.ca/index.php/edu_hse_rhe/article/view/4519/4833. Loretta Todd’s 1991 documentary *The Learning Path* (Tamarack Productions/National Film Board of Canada) is

a meditative work that works within the Gothic topos of ruin, offering footage of Cree elder and survivor Eva Cardinal returning to a now-abandoned school. Cardinal's return visit is intercut with archival photographs and fleeting recreations of a nun "drift[ing] through the hallways and rooms." Todd has explained that she wanted to recreate the complex mixture of terror and familiarity associated with the nun's image for survivors, and clearly the film engages with the intimate and complex particularity of the potentially Gothic figure of the nun. See Lawrence Abbott, "Interviews with Loretta Todd, Shelley Niro, and Patricia Deadman," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 18, no. 2 (1998) 335–73, http://www3.brandonu.ca/cjns/18.2/cjns18no2_pg335-373.pdf.

41. On this strategic decision, see Jennifer Henderson, "Residential Schools," 13–15.

42. Of course, Aila's warning about becoming "lost boys" is also a reference to J. M. Barrie's play *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1904) and its many adaptations. The boys in Peter's band have been removed to Neverland, where they "play Indian" for all eternity. Aila's reference to the "lost boys" at "St Vincent" conjoins the epistemological violence of this primitivist fantasy of Indianness as "not growing up" with the violence of institutional child abuse.

43. In the Indian Act itself, it is not "the law of the Kingdom" but the "Governor in Council" and "the Superintendent General" (both are appointed by the Crown's representative in Canada, the Governor General) who are the subject of the actions.

44. The porosity of the school works both ways, in that the "lost boys" of St Dymphna's sneak out and back in; similarly, Aila is taken, escapes, and breaks back in with her friends to carry out the heist. As if to highlight the porosity of the enclosure, the "young ghouls" make the castle's catacombs, in this case its plumbing pipes, explode into the upper, sanitized layer, dispensing sewage on the showering Indian agent in a scene that is part Hitchcock citation, part a performative reversal of the civilizing mission.

45. The church against which Martin Luther rebelled in 1517 "was a centuries-old organization led by a bishop in Rome, one of the few bishops in the Christian world still formally styling himself by an ancient title once common for a Christian church leader, Papa ('father')." Diarmaid MacCulloch, "The World Took Sides," *London Review of Books*, August 11, 2016: 25. The name "Popper" also associates the film's Indian agent with the slang term for ayml nitrate, the recreational drug of 1970s gay nightclubs. Popper is connected to the reserve's drug trade through his extortion of a "truancy tax" from its adolescent traders as the condition for their freedom from St Dymphna's.

46. Popper does seem to have been formed at St Dymphna's, however. Along the lines of Mathew Lewis's monk, his depravity is a reflection of his education in the cloister. But a flashback scene emphasizes Popper was formerly a white peer and fellow student of the Mi'kmaq boys at the school and felt uneasy in this situation. He is rescued from a beating at the hands of Mi'kmaq boys by Joseph, Aila's father, whom he will later terrorize—an allegory of repressed settler indebtedness to Indigenous peoples for aid given at the moment of contact in the face of settler helplessness.

47. The staffing of the residential schools by the churches was a calculated government decision. In 1883, when the federal government took steps to create a residential school system, the government-commissioned Davin report recommended state funding for already-established church-run schools on the grounds of economy and expediency: economy, since church-staffed schools would tap into the type of "enthusiastic person, with . . . a motive power beyond anything pecuniary remuneration could supply," and expediency, since the existing church-run schools already had proven to be what Davin called "monuments of religious zeal and heroic self-sacrifice." Nicholas Flood Davin, quoted in *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2015), 157.

48. Strakosch, *Neoliberal Indigenous*, 64. Strakosch draws on Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "Writing Off Indigenous Sovereignty: The Discourse of Security and Patriarchal White Sovereignty," *Sovereign Subjects: Indigenous Sovereignty Matters*, ed. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2007).

49. In the United States, the “fish-in movement” was launched in the mid-1960s as state and local law enforcement escalated attempts to restrict tribal fishing activities; the struggle reached the federal courts in the 1970s. First Nations in Canada’s Maritime provinces and in the province of British Columbia asserted treaty rights to catch and sell fish in the face of strict federal government regulation in the 1970s and 1980s. The case of the Nova Scotian Mi’kmaw man Donald Marshall arrived at the Supreme Court in the late 1990s.

50. From that catalyzing moment, the Listuguj Mi’gmaq worked to establish the Listuguj Mi’gmaq First Nation Law on Fisheries and Fishing, which was passed in 1995. See Centre for First Nations Governance, “Making First Nation Law: The Listuguj Mi’Gmag Fishery,” March, 2011, http://fngovernance.org/news/news_article/making_first_nation_law_the_listuguj_migmaq_fishery.

51. Dacosta, “Interview with filmmaker Jeff Barnaby.”

52. *Incident à Restigouche*, directed by Alanis Obomsawin (1984; National Film Board of Canada). Barnaby has said that Obomsawin’s documentary about events he witnessed firsthand as a child, when “the outside world comes knocking at your door and they come armed to the teeth and looking to bust your head,” was formative. The film “encapsulated the idea of films being a form of social protest.” See Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, “Jeff Barnaby Recalls the Incident at Restigouche,” *George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight*, aired January 3, 2014, <https://www.cbc.ca/strombo/videos/web-exclusive/jeff-barnaby-the-incident-at-restigouche>.

53. See Chelsea Vowel, “The do’s, don’t’s, maybes, and I-don’t-knows of cultural appropriation,” January 30, 2012, âpihtawikosisân (blog), <https://apihtawikosisan.wordpress.com/2012/01/30/the-dos-donts-maybes-i-dont-knows-of-cultural-appropriation/>.

54. As the Michi Saagig Anishnaabeg writer and activist Leanne Simpson has written, the discourse of reconciliation, insofar as it is “focused only on residential schools rather than the broader set of relationships that generated policies, legislation and practices aimed at assimilation and political genocide,” can act as a force that “co-opts the individual and collective pain and suffering of our people.” Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011), 22.

55. 53. The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, “Idle No More: The Winter We Danced,” *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2014), 20.

56. On Idle No More as a “movement led largely by grassroots Indigenous women” with long experience of work on cultural and physical survival conducted under the radar of band-council politics, see Wanda Nanabush, “Strong Hearts of Indigenous Women’s Leadership,” in *The Winter We Danced*, 342.

57. Ibid.

58. Sara Henzi, “Indigenous Uncanniness: Windigo Revisited and Popular Culture,” in *The Routledge Companion to Native American Literature*, ed. Deborah L. Madsen (London: Routledge), 478. Henzi discusses Richard Van Camp, Sherman Alexie, Drew Hayden Taylor, and Eden Robinson, among others. A notable film intertext for the undead in Barnaby’s film is Lisa Jackson’s 2009 short video, *Savage*, in which Indigenous children have been turned into zombies at residential school. They break into a dance sequence which is reminiscent of Michael Jackson’s “Thriller,” and which, as Kristin Dowell notes, registers the children’s capacity for “creative rebellion.” See Kristin Dowell, “Residential Schools and ‘Reconciliation’ in the Media Art of Skeena Reece and Lisa Jackson,” *Studies in American Indian Literature* 29, no. 1 (2017): 116–38.

59. There isn’t a specific referent for the “rhymes” of the film’s title, but the logic of the trace that pervades this film more generally can be referred to rhyme’s repetition and sense of echo. “Rhymes” also invokes the method of rap and hip-hop music, which have been part of Indigenous cultural production for more than a decade.