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American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9kz8z96v>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 42(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

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Publication Date

2018

DOI

10.17953/aicrj.42.1.hunt

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Peer reviewed

“In search of our better selves”: Totem Transfer Narratives and Indigenous Futurities

Dallas Hunt

“My name is Max. My world is fire and blood.”

—*Mad Max: Fury Road*

Oh, when this world is all on fire

Where you gonna go?

Where you gonna go?

—*William Sanders, “When This World Is All on Fire”*

Much contemporary science fiction urges us to focus on eco-activism and sustainable futures in order to prevent environmental catastrophe. From a critical Indigenous and anticolonial perspective, the question becomes, however, for whom are these futures sustainable? That is, who is accorded space in these futures and who is not? The history of science fiction and its treatment of racialized and Indigenous characters has been contentious. As Patrick B. Sharp remarks, “Science fiction enjoys a reputation as politically progressive, but the history of the genre with regard to race is mixed. While some science fiction artists have imagined worlds that defy racist stereotypes, many others have reinforced the connection between race, technology, and civilization.”¹ Anishinaabe scholar Grace Dillon provides a similar argument when she states that “Historically, sf [science fiction] has tended to disregard the varieties

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of space-time thinking of traditional societies, and it may still narrate the atrocities of colonialism as ‘adventure stories.’”² Ultimately, this leads Dillon to ask: “Does sf have the capacity to envision Native futures, indigenous hopes, and dreams recovered by rethinking the past in a new framework?”³

Attempting to respond to Dillon’s question, in this paper I consider a few recent science fiction texts and the futures they (pr)offer. First, I look to George Miller’s massively popular reboot, *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), which depicts an environment in which the extractive lust for fossil fuel energy precipitates the end of the world. Miller’s film, while preoccupied with issues pertaining to global warming and ecological catastrophe, replicates and reifies settler replacement narratives, or what Canadian literature scholar Margery Fee refers to as “totem transfer” narratives. I further suggest that readings of the film that emphasize its subversive potential ultimately reaffirm a liberal multicultural future that requires Indigenous peoples to disappear. Although I recognize the risk in perpetuating the colonial gaze by “expending energy on repudiating” films that re-center (settler) colonialism, the critical acclaim with which *Mad Max: Fury Road* has been greeted does highlight the necessity to be vigilant in what narratives we consume and engage with—narratives that seem progressive might ultimately be actively harmful to Indigenous peoples in that they propose our erasure.⁴ Following this analysis, I examine two texts produced by Indigenous artists: namely, Cherokee writer William Sanders’s “When This World Is All on Fire” and Cree-Métis filmmaker Danis Goulet’s *Wakening*, both of which imagine decolonial futures not circumscribed by settler-colonial imaginaries, or what I describe as the “hermeneutics of reconciliation.” Indeed, both texts focus on transfers of a different kind, primarily intergenerational knowledge between Indigenous peoples and characters, ones that give life to Indigenous futurities.

CONTEXT(S)

In 2016 *Mad Max: Fury Road* was nominated for ten Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director. The film won Oscars in six categories, the most of any film nominated that year. The movie’s director, George Miller, has called the film a “very simple allegory” and “a western on wheels.”⁵ Miller is not alone in designating the film in this way, as several high-profile critics have done the same. Indeed, with the “circle the wagons” and wagon trail imagery of the film, it is not a stretch of the imagination to view it through this lens. As A. O. Scott writes, “the wide-open spaces and the kinetic, ground-level movement mark ‘Fury Road’ as a western, and the filmmakers pay tribute to such masters of the genre as John Ford.”⁶ As a genre westerns are invested in the consolidation of settler-colonial narratives of settlement and the “vanishing” Indian in much the same way as works of science fiction sometimes are.⁷

Set in a nondescript desert dystopia, the environment of *Mad Max: Fury Road* is a clear allusion to the westerns of yesteryear as well as the “Australian outback.” In their resistance to being tamed by settler-colonial interests, these spaces are depicted as rife with menace. The film dovetails nicely with another “western” nominated for Academy Awards in 2016, Alejandro Iñárritu’s *The Revenant*, also featuring Tom Hardy. In

that film, Hardy plays a bordering-on-caricature evil frontiersman in the threatening wilderness of a North American forest, serving as the foil to Leonardo DiCaprio's white savior pioneer, Hugh Glass. However, in *The Revenant* Hardy is cast as the greedy, ruthless colonizer, while in *Mad Max* he occupies a position similar to that of DiCaprio's white pioneer Glass. Despite Hardy's role shift, both films conform to what Elise Marubbio and Eric Buffalohead (Ponca) describe as "the problematic tradition of using Indians as a backdrop for the telling of a white person's story"—except the settler-colonial politics of Miller's film are much subtler than those of *The Revenant*, and in being so, much more pernicious.⁸

To offer a very brief summary of the film and its surrounding critical engagement: Max, initially taken as a prisoner by a militant group called the War Boys, later teams up with the film's other protagonist, Imperator Furiosa (played by Charlize Theron) to help lead a cadre of women called the Wives away from the patriarchal grip of Immortan Joe and his incredibly pale followers. Furiosa, Max, the Wives, and Nicholas Hoult's character, Nux, then travel across the wastelands facing numerous obstacles, eventually only to return to the film's original setting, the Citadel. Critically dissected *ad nauseum*, the movie has been hailed as a "feminist masterpiece," with the characters of Furiosa and the Wives being singled out as transgressive representations of female empowerment.⁹ Reviewers have also critiqued the film as a film mostly devoid of people of color.¹⁰ This article takes a different, though related, approach to examining the film's politics, focusing specifically on the way it may reproduce colonial tropes of Indigenous disappearance.

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD AS TOTEM TRANSFER NARRATIVE

In general, consumer citizens are attached affectively to pitying/adoring/hating/loving Indians, but do not seek to know them, particularly if they cannot figure out how to consume them.

—Dian Million (Tanana Athabascan), *Therapeutic Nations*

In the collection *The Native in Literature*, edited by Thomas King, Helen Hoy, and Cheryl Calver, contributor Margery Fee outlines the totem transfer stories prevalent in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century white settler narratives.¹¹ In these stories, white settlers leave the chaotic and restrictive confines of the city and flee to the idyllic and enlightening expanses of the rural or natural world. Here, without fail, these white settlers encounter one or several of the last remaining members of a "forgotten tribe" indigenous to the area.¹² Much is made of this interaction; much is learned. During this learning process, a transaction occurs whereby the white settler character(s) are given an object, which ranges from a ceremonial token, to a weapon or livestock, such as a horse.¹³ Immediately after giving this gift, the Indigenous character(s) in these stories wanders off, either walking into the forest never to be seen again, or in some cases, heading directly to the grave.

An apt example of this narrative is Howard O'Hagan's novel *Tay John*, wherein the eponymous character gifts a totem transfer to a white character and then eventually walks directly into the ground.¹⁴ Such narrative examples do not begin or end with

O'Hagan, however: as Fee argues, we also see them in well-known Canadian poet Robert Kroetsch's "Stone Hammer Poem," as well as in the works of John Newlove, Margaret Atwood, Marian Engel, W. O. Mitchell, Margaret Laurence, and Leonard Cohen, to name only a few.¹⁵ In a United States context, Unangax scholar Eve Tuck and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández locate these replacement narratives in the work of James Fenimore Cooper, whose influence cannot be overstated. Specifically, Cooper's *The Leatherstocking Tales* "were the most widely read [books] of the time, heavily circulated due to the newly more available technology of the printing press," and were "foundational to a national curriculum of replacement."¹⁶ Indeed, to national white audiences in the United States and, to an extent, in Canada, *The Leatherstocking Tales* "are among the most important and earliest literary representations of the encounter between invading white settlers and the Indigenous people."¹⁷

Fee and other critics view these totem transfer narratives as attempts by white settlers to become autochthonous to the area, a sort of passing of the torch from Indigenous peoples to the new "rightful" inhabitants of the land, white settlers. The totems in these narratives are metonyms for the land and Indigenous claims to it; so, in gifting the totem, the Indigenous peoples are symbolically releasing their holds over the lands. The "Natives" in these texts transfer their knowledge to settlers so they can disappear from view and help white settlers in remedying the often self-created ills that currently threaten their worlds. After attaining this invaluable Indigenous information, the white settlers then leave these Eden-like natural surroundings and head back to the city, having secured their futurity in the landscape. More than any other message, these narratives make clear that in these spaces there is ample room for Indigenous knowledges and remedies, but little room for Indigenous peoples themselves.¹⁸

Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández situate these narratives within the larger "project of replacement, which aims to vanish Indigenous peoples and replace them with settlers, who see themselves as the rightful claimants to land, and indeed, as Indigenous."¹⁹ They continue that this is a process whereby settlers are repeatedly "absorbing knowledge, but once again displacing [Othered] bodies out to the margins."²⁰ The function of these texts, then, is to figure Indigenous peoples as obsolete and having no place in the future, as they have already served their necessary function in the legitimation of settler presence. Elsewhere, Tuck and K. Wayne Yang refer to these narratives as "settler adoption fantasies" in which settlers not only absorb Indigenous knowledges, but also imagine that Indigenous peoples, foreseeing their own inevitable disappearance, have willingly granted their claims to land, and even Indigeneity, to the settler.²¹ In these narratives, settler futures are therefore premised on the denial of Indigenous futures.

Totem transfer narratives additionally traffic in what Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) refers to as the trope of "Indianness": "Indianness moves not through absence but through reiteration, through meme, as theories circulate and fracture, quote and build."²² Byrd continues that Indigenous peoples are often evoked as "past tense presences" in that they are "typically spectral, implied and felt, but remain as lamentable casualties of national progress who haunt the United States [and other settler nations] on the cusp of empire and are destined to disappear with the frontier itself."²³ For Byrd, the paradoxically present but de-Indigenized specter of "Indianness" enables settler societies

to proceed as liberal multicultural democracies that are premised on dispossession, but escape producing an ethical crisis. Ultimately, the intent of these narratives is the recuperation of these liberal multicultural democracies.

In many ways, *Mad Max: Fury Road* functions like these totem transfer narratives: stories that, as critics have charted, become codified as myth and are used to propagate nationalist narratives of settlement and naturalize Indigenous disappearance. As Max, Furiosa, the Wives, and Nux make their way through the desert, they eventually head towards “the Green Place of Many Mothers,” the “ancestral territories” of Furiosa’s clan “the Vuvalini” (I will address below the film’s troubling move of coding Charlize Theron, a white actress, as an Indigenous woman who belongs to a clan of aging warrior women). Furthermore, when Max, Furiosa, and crew first meet the Many Mothers, they encounter one of the only Indigenous actors in the film, English/Maōri actress Megan Gale, who not only appears naked but also emits a sound similar to the stereotypical Indian “war whoops” of mid-twentieth-century westerns. The Many Mothers, it becomes clear, are coded as Indigenous (though most actors playing the Many Mothers are not in fact Indigenous). Beyond this, during the reunion of Furiosa with the Many Mothers, the Green Place and the Vuvalini become involved in their own problematic totem transfer. We learn not only that these women are the last remaining members of their clan in the area, but also that a woman among their ranks is the “Keeper of Seeds.”

After discovering that the harsh desert landscape offers little refuge or escape, Furiosa, Max, the Wives, Nux, and now as well the Many Mothers, decide to make their way back to the Citadel, the fortified city. En route, Furiosa and crew are accosted by Immortan Joe and the War Boys, and in the confrontation nearly all of the Many Mothers are killed. Unsurprisingly, the Keeper of Seeds teaches one Wife about the seeds so valued by the Vuvalini before she ultimately risks her life to protect her traveling companions and upon her death, bequeaths the seeds to possibly the palest Wife of them all. Back at the Citadel, the problems that have hitherto been affecting the citizens of the fortified metropolis will now be remedied by not only the death of Immortan Joe, but also with the recent acquisition of the Indigenous totem transfer, the seeds.

The out-of-date, patriarchal, fossil-fuel-dependent world of Immortan Joe is replaced by a new world of liberal-progressive ideals embodied by Max, Furiosa, and the Wives. And, much like the totem transfer narratives of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, this transformation comes by way of interaction with sage, wise, but ultimately vanishing Indians. This new world is a gift from the former inhabitants of the land, but they will not be a part of it, ensuring that Max, Furiosa, and the Wives become what Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández refer to as “the true ‘native[s],’ the true inheritors of a post-post-reconceptualized re-occupation.”²⁴ The epilogue of the film gestures to such a conclusion as it ends with the question, “Where must we go . . . we who wander this Wasteland in search of our better selves”? The Citadel then becomes (re-)occupied by these “better selves,” who, now supplied with their Indigenous totem, will chart a more equitable future free from both the Immortan Joes of the world and “lingering Indians.” Most pointedly, when Nux laments his initial inability to stop Max

and Furiosa's mission by any means necessary, including his own death, one of the Wives replies, "I'd say it was your manifest destiny not to [stop the mission]." Here it is evident that, as Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández note, "The future of the white race . . . require[s] the elimination of lesser humans and the refinement of the cultural attributes that define the white subject, whose manifest destiny it is to take the place of the savage in the promised land."²⁵

A distinction must be made, however, between the two problems that are present here: the first concerns the totem transfer or replacement narrative I have been discussing. Theron's character is allowed to join mainstream "civilization" once all of the other "Indigenous" characters die off, which would be an issue even if the actress were Indigenous. Secondly, the fact is that not only Theron, but most of the other actors playing Indigenous characters are white. These two problems are entangled, but irreducible to one another.

The history of white actors portraying Indigenous people or people of color is long and complicated, from Iron Eyes Cody to contemporary examples such as Scarlett Johansson and Emma Stone playing Asian/Asian-American characters.²⁶ While on the surface this history is a problem in and of itself, for some critics the survival of Theron's Furiosa character at the end of the narrative—a fate so many other Indigenous characters throughout literary and film history have not shared—carries a productive potential because they perceive her survival as subverting the totem transfer colonial narrative. Yet even if Furiosa's survival as an Indigenous-coded character in *Mad Max: Fury Road* does represent a positive movement for an "Indigenous" film character—if we grant this is a productive or agential move by Theron or the other filmmakers—this movement is lateral at best.

Simply put, even if we see Furiosa as a potentially "Indigenous" character performing a subversive act, it comes at the cost of collective Indigenous life. Furiosa's survival conforms to the very same totem transfer narrative prescriptions, as she returns as an Indigenous *individual* coming to populate a progressive multicultural utopia; in fact, in many ways her simple presence secures the Citadel as such. Theron is that lone Indigenous survivor who is presentable enough to exist in this modern utopia, and whose presence comes at the expense of Indigenous politics — all other Vuvalini must die so Theron can become a population demographic in the Citadel. Indeed, we get a sense of this Indigenous collectivity in the presence of the Vuvalini as a still living "tribe," yet the film falls into the same pattern of heroic, loyal, yet ultimately vanishing Indians, in that the collective aspect of Indigenous life disappears. *Mad Max: Fury Road* does not escape the central aim of totem transfer narratives or narratives about Indigenous disappearance more broadly; that is, it eliminates the idea of a collective notion of Indigeneity in all senses, whether political or cultural. This death, of Indigenous political and social life, is the *sine qua non* of settler colonialism and Indigenous replacement narratives.

As well, this article makes the case that Theron's casting in and of itself plays into a larger context of Indigenous erasure and replacement. Indeed, Indigenous cultural production is increasing, especially in the realm of sci-fi. Examples ranging from the short films of Helen-Haig Brown (Tsilhqot'in; "The Cave," 2009) and Nanobah Becker

(Diné; “The 6th World,” 2012) to the recent mainstream success of Taika Waititi (Maōri; *Thor: Ragnarok*, 2017) demonstrate that Indigenous peoples in filmmaking should not only be behind the scenes, but front and center as well. Although views in support of Theron’s portrayal of an Indigenous character who upends the social relations established by Immortan Joe may have merit, nonetheless it would be just as subversive, if not more so, if instead Maōri actor Megan Gale’s Valkyrie character returned, and, in concert with the rest of the Vuvalini, destroyed Joe’s social order. Ultimately, even if the efforts of coded-as-Indigenous white actresses are seen to have subversive potential, as is the case with a lot of well-meaning progressive efforts, the film’s settler politics of erasure and replacement undercuts any such potential. As Indigenous scholars and critics engaging with sci-fi and the futures they offer, we should be skeptical of the scraps that Hollywood extends, especially if they center whiteness—and in the case of the casting of Theron, as embodied by a white settler both in South Africa and the United States—as the only avenue through which to achieve justice or an equitable path forward. While these themes and tropes have been critiqued at length, most notably in Philip J. Deloria’s *Playing Indian*, narratives of Indigenous erasure continue to reoccur nonetheless, even in contexts of imagined futures and futurities.²⁷ If these worlds are supposed to present something new, for better or worse, why is it that artists are still circumscribed to creating worlds that are defined by the well-worn logics and narratives of Indigenous elimination? And, at the very least, why is it seemingly impossible for Indigenous actors to represent themselves in this erasure?

George Miller has stated that *Mad Max: Fury Road* is, at base, a survival tale, told in much the same way as stories of courageous pioneers who braved the elements and survived foreign environments. But the question becomes, as it so often does with these narratives, who is meant to survive, exactly? In a crucial scene, for instance, as Valkyrie valiantly helps her fellow Many Mothers and her recent allies as they plow forward toward their destination, a vehicle runs her down and slams her into the earth. Apparently, like the Tay Johns of yesterday, Gale’s Valkyrie is a necessary sacrifice who must return to the dirt to make room for the progression of a/the new world. For Indigenous characters, the only appropriate response to the question “Where must we go?” seems to be, “to the grave.”

INDIGENOUS FUTURISMS

In the colonial imaginary, indigenous life is not only separate from the present time but also out of place in the future, a time defined by the progress of distinctively western technology. If colonial society cannot accept Geronimo in a Cadillac, it can hardly conceive of him in a space ship.

—Lou Cornum (Diné), “The Space NDN’s Star Map”

I will now turn to examine a few texts that offer different views of the future than either the prototypical western or settler replacement narratives and that neither solidify nor guarantee settler futurities. In Indigenous critical work and cultural production, the concept of Indigenous futurities has a long lineage, even if they are

not always specifically described as Indigenous futurist works. Indigenous futurisms can be traced, for example, from the radical, alternative futures Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor envisions in his fiction (*Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart*, 1978; *The Heirs of Columbus*, 1991) and also in his notion of “survivance,” to Grace Dillon’s 2012 anthology *Walking the Clouds*.²⁸ While coagulating into a field of study only somewhat recently, Indigenous futurisms has started to develop a corpus of strong creative and critical works. These texts provide a crucial vocabulary for talking about the many ways Indigenous futurities manifest themselves (or not) in the field of cinema studies and media more broadly, and include Michelle Raheja’s *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (2010), Joanne Hearne’s *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western* (2012) and Elise Marubbio and Eric Buffalohead’s *Native Americans on Film* (2013). Will Lempert’s 2014 essay “Decolonizing Encounters of the Third Kind: Alternative Futuring in Native Science Fiction Film” explores how Indigenous filmmakers employ a “creative subversive mode of representation” to portray “alternative utopian-dystopian futures,” while Salma Monani’s “Science Fiction, Westerns, and the Vital Cosmo-ethics of *The Sixth World*” (2016) engages with the short film *The Sixth World* and how it proposes Navajo answers to not only contemporary ethical ecological issues, but future ones as well.²⁹

Further, as Dillon notes, Indigenous artists “sometimes intentionally experiment with, sometimes intentionally dislodge, sometimes merely accompany, but invariably change the perimeters of [science fiction].”³⁰ Multiple sci-fi works, therefore, can be read as countering or subverting totemic transfer narratives. Rather than attending to works that recenter whiteness and/or settler colonialism, I focus on two of such countertexts in detail in order to consider the radical possibilities of Indigenous futurities, broadly conceived. Although the futures offered by the texts I will be examining are by no means perfect or complete, and thus are in no way prescriptive or utopian, they still nonetheless imagine a world that does not reproduce the same tired tropes repeated in westerns parading as sci-fi parables. The following artists illustrate the paradoxes of imagining worlds in ways that consider, but are not bounded by, historical and contemporary violences; and in light of this, the artists’ choices about how to tell stories may be understood not as putting forth “ideal” worlds, but rather prompting reactions/reflections in their audiences.

The first text is published in *East of the Sun and West of Fort Smith* (2008), a collection of Indigenous speculative fiction by William Sanders. While this anthology has much to offer, especially in terms of alternative Indigenous futurities, this article focuses primarily on Cherokee author William Sanders’s “When This World Is All on Fire,” since it depicts a future not entirely unlike the one depicted in *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Indeed, the first words spoken in *Mad Max: Fury Road* are “My name is Max. My world is fire and blood” and Sanders’s story includes a similar song refrain, “oh, when this world is on fire / where ya gonna go?”³¹ The difference between the two texts, however, is that the destination for the Indigenous peoples in Miller’s film seems to be into the ground (or the grave), while the response of the Indigenous characters in Sander’s text to the question “where will we go?” is “to their ancestral territories.” While

we see the transfer of Indigenous knowledges in this text also, knowledge transfer in Sanders's narrative is neither a totemic transfer nor intended for the consumption of white settlers. Rather, it is the knowledge of broken promises and treaties and the fallout from these historical processes, and how Indigenous peoples could potentially learn from these events when they are relayed and transmitted.

In Sanders's short story, the world is beset by the effects of climate change, and as major metropolises such as New York and San Francisco are sinking due to rising tides, other areas are plagued by drought and forest fires. These droughts and forest fires occur predominantly in areas inhabited by white settlers, and as the lands they have previously occupied turn to ruin, many flee to reservation communities to find refuge, as these lands still remain relatively intact. The response to this deluge of white settlers from a Cherokee nation in Sanders's text, however, is telling in that the Indigenous communities involved refuse to repeat past mistakes.

An exchange between characters clearly illustrates this refusal. When Davis, a character who is tasked with patrolling the boundaries of the reservation, asks a group of white squatters to vacate "Cherokee reservation land," one of the squatters responds: "Oh, why can't you leave us alone? We're not hurting anybody. You people have all this land, why won't you share it?" Davis's initial thought is, "We tried that . . . and look where it got us," a clear reference to the numerous repeatedly broken treaties and genocides of Indigenous communities (268). Indeed, much like *Mad Max*, white settlers look to Indigenous peoples in Sanders's text for refuge and salvation, even though the ills they are fleeing are of their own making. Not only this, but these very same issues (physical violence, ecological degradation) have been afflicting Indigenous peoples since contact, and it is at this exact moment of crisis for white settlers that Indigenous peoples are meant to feel sympathy and/or empathy. Davis's reaction "look where that got us" is a historical accounting of the ways in which white settlers have failed to have empathy for Indigenous communities.

Davis proceeds to state aloud that "the laws are made by the government of the Cherokee nation," and that he "just enforce[s] them." The response from one of the white male squatters is incredulity at the idea of an Indigenous nation and the subsequent denigration of Indigenous sovereignty: "Nation! . . . hogging good land while white people starve. You got no right" (268). This sci-fi scene is remarkable not only because it shows Indigenous characters who are not "agreeable" or willing to vanish, but also because it shows the continuance and maintenance of Indigenous law. While this scene could be interpreted as a reactionary response to solidify borders and shore up dwindling resources, it may also be viewed as a rejection of tropes of Indigenous subservience and as a display of a future wherein past wrongs are remembered and settler futurities are not a given. At the same time, the responses from the settler characters in the short story gesture to the narrow range of possible futures that are available to Indigenous peoples within most mainstream texts. As Byrd writes,

[L]iberal colonialist discourses depend upon sublimating Indigenous cultures and histories into fictive hybridities and social constructions as they simultaneously trap Indigenous peoples within the dialectics of genocide, where the only

conditions of possibility imagined are either that Indigenous peoples will die through genocidal policies of colonial settler states (thus making room for more open and liberatory societies) or that they will commit heinous genocides in defense of lands and nations.³²

A less generous reading of Sanders's text could see it engaging in one half of this dialectic—that is to say, committing heinous genocides in defense of lands and nations—but the character of Davis does go out of his way to provide some relief for a non-Indigenous character in the short story without having to sacrifice the health and security of the rest of his nation.

In fact, this whole short story takes place within a historical context wherein settlers have committed much more heinous atrocities to Indigenous communities, and the peoples who witness such atrocities are protecting themselves against the reenactment of such violence. Dean Saranillio outlines a similar argument made about Indigenous assertions of self-determination, when he writes that the “[i]maged violence on the part of Indigenous movements is a common trope that allows Native savagery to stand in for settler self-critique.”³³ These settler tropes and discourses offer little space for the full complexity of Indigenous peoples and our diverse efforts to continuously produce lifeworlds in defiance of colonial violence.

Settler self-critique is absent from the settler characters in Sanders's short story. The white, non-Indigenous peoples cannot, or will not, see any reason for the Cherokee community not to allow their unconditional access to Indigenous territories. Sanders seemingly is aware of how settler narratives offer little nuance regarding how Indigenous peoples negotiate the narrow available possibilities in settler-dominated worlds in order to survive, and when they do, they are often still premised on Indigenous replacement (an event that Davis most likely sees as inevitable if settlers are allowed into reserve spaces again). Sanders's text, then, does not presume Indigenous disappearance or replacement to be a foregone conclusion; in fact, he assumes the opposite. As settler populations begin to disappear, the strength of the Cherokee nation and its continued governance is on full display, and is, at times, where much of the conflict arises.

Davis, and the Cherokee Nation more broadly, hold their former treaty partners accountable not only for the agreements breached in the past, but also for the persisting and damaging ways white settlers continue to inhabit the land in this short story. When later another character similarly charges that Davis has no right to run the white squatters off the reservation, Davis replies: “Sure I did. It's our land . . . All we've got left.”³⁴ Davis gestures to the repeated abrogations of treaties when he proclaims to a squatting settler: “Understand this . . . we don't give second warnings. If you're found on Cherokee land again, you'll be arrested,” implying that a second chance would not be forthcoming if Indigenous law was transgressed (269). Ultimately, the text offers much by way of notions of Indigenous peoplehood, belonging, justice and law, and (shared) history. However, I reference the text here explicitly for its focus on Indigenous refusal, on the unwillingness to compromise Indigenous futurities for the sake of white settlers actively harmed in the contemporary moment by the conditions they created on stolen Indigenous lands.

I now turn to examine a second Indigenous futurist text, Danis Goulet's short film *Wakening*. The film was not only directed and cowritten by an Indigenous woman (Goulet), but it cast Indigenous women as well, with actresses Gail Maurice (Cree/Métis) and Jennifer Podemski (Saulteaux/Ojibwe) in the lead roles. Here, then, is Indigenous representation not only behind the camera, but in front of it, not only with Cree characters but Indigenous women to play them. And since the language used by the characters is Cree, and the film is heavily invested in Cree cosmologies, we can view this film as engaging in an attempt to transfer not only the Cree language but also Cree knowledges. The behind-the-scenes production of the movie mirrors the politics present in the film, something that blockbusters like *Mad Max: Fury Road* sorely lack.³⁵ Indeed, Goulet has stated that the film was inspired by (and ultimately is for) the "empowerment" of Indigenous youth, so this focus on Indigenous cultural production, whether through language revitalization or the telling of Cree stories, is an intergenerational knowledge transfer that, unlike settler replacement narratives, does not require the elimination of Indigenous communities, but instead supports their continued vitality.³⁶

Produced and set in Toronto, Goulet's film debuted at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). The film intentionally alters the city setting with visual effects, especially Yonge Street, to alienate or disorient viewers familiar with the urban landscape. Goulet has commented that the process was like "tearing apart Yonge and Dundas Square and putting it back together."³⁷ The world is depicted as post-apocalyptic, but this time the story takes place predominantly in a heavily militarized urban environment, patrolled by a fascist government of what the film refers to simply as "occupiers." The two main characters in the film are Weesageechak and Weetigo, two prominent figures in Cree (and other North American Indigenous) cosmologies. Weesageechak can shift shapes and is a transformative figure, one that "is said to have come from the stars."³⁸ The Weetigo is most commonly portrayed as a cannibalistic spirit in Cree storytelling traditions, and either appears in the form of a human or other animals. In a description of the film, Goulet, states that the title refers to the "awakening of these two characters" as a "metaphor for Cree cultural resurgence."³⁹ Commenting further, Goulet notes "If the telling of indigenous stories can be an act of resistance, then these two infamous characters from Cree stories are staging a comeback. Under a ruthless occupation and against the odds, the two of them will find a way to survive."⁴⁰ Goulet alludes to Vizenor's notion of survivance here, and gestures to how Indigenous stories and resistance produce an Indigenous futurity, a world wherein settler futurities are thrown into question and not portrayed as a given.

The beginning of the film primarily consists of Weesageechak running from location to location seeking out Weetigo, with the viewer taken along as the handheld camera mimics the disorienting feeling of hurried steps, "engag[ing] the point-of-view of fleeing alongside her."⁴¹ Weesageechak locates the spirit at an old abandoned auditorium, in which it houses its next victims by securing them to a chair to feast on later. The auditorium is painted in muted colours of grey and black, and as Salma Monani writes, "viewers are confronted by a wintery darkness filled with drifts of gray powder—snow, or ash, or something else. Trees with frosted leaves stand sentinel over

dilapidated seats.”⁴² Weetigo lives in the auditorium, it claims, because “the forests are all dead,” so the spirit “uses this palace [i.e., the auditorium] to lure humans to [its] belly.”⁴³ Responding to Weetigo’s claim, Weesageechak asserts that the occupiers have purposefully confined Weetigo to the auditorium so they can police the world outside of it: “The occupiers, they tricked you Weetigo. This is no palace. This is your prison.”⁴⁴ Weesageechak continues, “the occupiers are more feared than you are, Weetigo,” and that “long ago your hunger was feared throughout the land, but no more.”⁴⁵ In essence, the power of the spirit is, to quote Weesageechak, “forgotten.”⁴⁶

After the exchange between the two Cree figures, Weesageechak runs to the lobby of the auditorium to leave, but while there she encounters two occupiers dressed in military gear, placing hoods over nondescript persons with their assault rifles aimed at them. As Weesageechak reorients herself to the light not permitted in the dark auditorium, a succession of “quick cuts reveal the fear on Weesageechak’s face, and the camera’s positioning behind her shows her indecision as she moves her raised bow from one figure to the other.”⁴⁷ A standoff occurs when the occupiers point their rifles at Weesageechak and Weesageechak points her bow at them. Following a few tense seconds, Weetigo appears from behind the occupiers and, off-camera, can be heard attacking and consuming them. After this scene, Weesageechak looks to Weetigo in fear until they exchange a knowing glance, and Weetigo disappears in a flash of light. The film ends as a smile slowly creeps across Weesageechak’s face.

Much like the appropriate totem transfer narratives in which *Mad Max* dabbles, the Weetigo is also a figure commonly co-opted by western cinema for consumption by settler audiences. As Monani outlines, the “Weetigo’s cannibalism brings to mind the more commonly recognized Anishinaabe Wendigo, who has often been coopted into mainstream settler horror (examples include Algernon Henry Blackwood’s 1910 short story ‘Wendigo’ and Jim Makichuk’s 1981 *Ghostkeeper*).”⁴⁸ While *Mad Max* concerns itself with the appropriation of Indigenous *knowledges*, Weetigo or Wendigo stories are preoccupied with the co-optation of Indigenous *stories*, with the knowledges accompanying these stories in Indigenous traditions often removed.⁴⁹ In Goulet’s film, however, the Weetigo exists within its rightful cultural context and used for the narrative ends of an Indigenous artist.

Similar to Sanders’s story, this short film is insightful in employing characters from Cree stories and narratives, thus showing their survivance. It also uses Cree language for significant portions of dialogue. Indeed, as Monani argues, “[f]ollowing the disorienting affect of [an] earlier sequence—which had no words, just creaks, clanks, and unstable sight—the centering of Cree reframes the audience’s sense of the locus of privilege, giving voice to language that was deliberately forbidden by colonial powers.”⁵⁰ The Cree cultural figures and practices depicted in the film, in spite of the consistently violent measures taken against them, persist and are mobilized to combat the highly militarized occupying army. Moreover, the smile cast across Weesageechak’s face at the end of the film implies Weetigo is now out in the world to turn its sights from the marginalized peoples it previously consumed and instead toward the occupiers, potentially presenting a new (Indigenous) story.

Ultimately, Goulet's text reverses the "affective economy" of film. According to Raheja, the possibilities opened up by the affective economy of film set in a colonial context is "its ability to animate communities that non-Indians perceived as dying or dead," to give life to "Native people who were considered doomed, defeated, vanished, or ghostly."⁵¹ Yet Goulet's film brings its non-Indigenous viewers into an alternative affective economy, into a space wherein they potentially perceive themselves as susceptible to doom, defeat, or vanishment—indeed, where the settler audience themselves can become ghosts. Not only does the film participate in or enact "visual sovereignty," which is to say the "creative self-representation of Native American visual artists," but it also poses uncomfortable and complicated (for some) questions around the perpetuity of ongoing settler colonialism, and calls to account those who uncritically consume Indigenous representational imaginaries without considering their broader implications.⁵²

"BUT I WANT TO SURVIVE": FUTURITIES AND WAYS FORWARD

Indigenous peoples have no desire to build a future that is still grounded on a colonial relationship.

—Rachel Flowers (Leey'qsun), "Refusal to Forgive:
Indigenous Women's Love and Rage"

When I presented a version of this paper at a conference on "Sustainable Futures" and concluded with the idea of a future not bound by the strictures of settler colonialism, a white settler scholar in the audience responded, "But I want to survive." If deceptively simple, this comment is extraordinarily generative. For instance, such a statement reinforces the "unthinkability" of a future without the structures of settler colonialism, structures that are contingent upon the continued (or imagined permanency of) displacement of Indigenous peoples in North America. This response also suggests an unwillingness to grapple with the affective investments this choice of words implies and prompts important questions about the ongoing affective and material investments in settler colonialism from settler viewers, scholars, and populations. For this scholar, much like the settlers in Sanders's short story, the idea of a future without settlers in Indigenous lands appeared to provide a great deal of anxiety and possible grief. Although some settlers may view themselves as progressive individuals invested in the decolonization efforts of Indigenous communities, responses like this one suggest that some are unaware (or rather, are willfully ignorant) of how their desires (for survival, for prosperity) are shaped by settler colonialism. As Beenash Jafri makes clear, settler colonialism is "a project of desire, articulated through narratives that appear natural and innate and that sustain colonial power."⁵³

Thus, the colonial presumption underlying this response should not be lost: Indigenous peoples have been disappeared from texts and environments for centuries, and yet even at the mention of a (hypothetical) future without continued settler dominance, the immediate response was one of measured, slight panic. Indeed, this may be understood as a specifically settler colonial manifestation of what DiAngelo terms "white fragility," in which any challenge to presumed white/colonial entitlements

triggers significant stress and defensiveness.⁵⁴ Because (white) settlers are so used to having epistemic authority, and so unfamiliar with being challenged in their entitlements, if and when something “does directly address racism and the privileging of whites, common white responses include anger, withdrawal, emotional incapacitation, guilt, argumentation, and cognitive dissonance.”⁵⁵

In challenging this white settler fragility, what these Indigenous futurist texts ask of settler audiences is to sit with, or dwell in, these affective spaces, to engage with narratives that consider the possibility of one’s disappearance—narratives that Indigenous peoples have had to deal with for a very long time. Indigenous populations have had to engage with symbolic and material realities/violences that have vanished their bodies and foreclosed their possible futures for centuries, and they continue to deal with these realities on a daily basis. And yet, at the hint of an equivalent narrative produced in two Indigenous futurist texts, the response is one of immediate concern and, ultimately, disavowal of complicity in ongoing violence and the failure to uphold relational obligations.

Given the imaginative futures provided by Sanders and Goulet above, and so many others, it is clear that worlds outside of settler colonialism are not “unthinkable.” What possibilities are opened up under these imaginative conditions, and what futures allowed? If futures are not circumscribed by the parameters of settler colonialism, where, in fact, will we go?

Against totem transfer narratives, and the reconciliatory futures they propose, which ultimately is more of the same, these two narratives do not foreclose on radical Indigenous futurities of other possibilities that exist outside of settler colonialism. Indeed, these instances of Indigenous cultural production actively resist what I call a “hermeneutics of reconciliation”: the way in which settler critics, scholars, artists, and the broader public cannot seem to conceive that the relations of (and between) Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are indeed fraught, or imagine a world in which societal problems are not easily resolvable for the sake of civil, social, or political expediency.⁵⁶ Reconciliation, as a concept, has a long history in settler-colonial contexts, especially in Canada, Australia, and South Africa. Quoting Anishinaabe scholar Dale Turner, Glen Coulthard (Dene) describes reconciliation as “the process by which things are brought to agreement, concord, or harmony; the fact of being made consistent or compatible.”⁵⁷ Coulthard elaborates that it is “frequently inferred by proponents of political reconciliation that restoring these relationships requires that individuals and groups work to overcome the debilitating pain, anger, and resentment that frequently persist in the wake of being injured or harmed by a perceived or real injustice.”⁵⁸ Thus, state-sponsored reconciliation efforts in colonial contexts tend to require that Indigenous people “reconcile” themselves to their continued colonization. Meanwhile, little is asked of settlers beyond an apology, and settler futures are secured with little substantive transformation of the Indigenous-colonizer relation.

The audience member’s objection “But I want to survive” is shaped by this hermeneutics of reconciliation in that it actively contests an imaginary wherein Indigenous futurities are not subjected to the processes of settler colonialism. The thought becomes distasteful before the imaginary itself is even grappled with; in fact, most conclusions

about the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (whether they be in sci-fi films or everyday life) are pre- or overdetermined in that they must conform to this ultimately conciliatory narrative; if not, these alternative imaginaries risk disappearance as well (alternative futures are not registered or engaged with at all, neither by an audience at a conference nor by readers or filmgoers). These horizons, then, are always presupposed, and in that sense, are in no way radical or speculative—which is to say that, although the environment of *Mad Max: Fury Road* might estrange its audience with its “unfamiliar” dystopic settings, the intent (often framed as a film’s “message”) is quite conservative in its imaginative horizons. Put bluntly, the end of the film imagines a scenario wherein everyone gets along, especially after the eradication of Immortan Joe and his patriarchal world, but also with the elimination of the just-as-irritating, and perhaps unsettling, world(s) of the Vuvalini’s Indigenous political autonomy and collectivity. These worlds, though, are centered in both Goulet’s and Sanders’s work, and are foregrounded as sites wherein the futurity of settler colonialism is not provided *a priori*.

Sanders’s and Goulet’s texts propose a future that is not “reconciled” to colonialism, one without a neat, tidy, and ultimately overdetermined or prescribed ending like *Mad Max: Fury Road* and other settler colonial sci-fi films. For it is precisely these kinds of sloppily enforced sci-fi endings that foreclose on a politics of “rupture . . . [and] division,” and that aim for “the aspirational recasting of a near-total unity” that exists more in mind than in practice or politics.⁵⁹ This aim for a fictive unity, or difference-suppressing happy resolution, is concerned less with “substantive differences” and more with “who can claim the mantle of speaking for everyone and whose unity is therefore preferable.”⁶⁰ Because of the presumed inevitability of reconciliation and the centering of settler futures, interpretative lenses are already circumscribed by categories of forced unity or harmony, and thus, the possibility of noncolonial futures is foreclosed. Within a hermeneutics of reconciliation, alternative relationships and societal formations are impossible to imagine because their potential is already made a conceptual impossibility, a void, and the necessary process of working through how to enact ethical relations “outside of” colonialism is preempted.

The fact that Indigenous peoples, like the characters in Sanders’s and Goulet’s texts, prioritize their own survival over helping white people and communities, calls into question the givenness of white settler futurities and the presumption that Indigenous peoples will offer their helping (but ultimately vanishing) hands to deliver them into these futures. This betrays settlers’ perceived entitlement to Indigenous assistance, sacrifice, and ultimately, disappearance. In defying the hermeneutics of reconciliation, these Indigenous authors create worlds that prompt responses/questions in readers, and sometimes, defensive responses. In a different context, Sharon Patricia Holland, when addressing reviewer responses to Leslie Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* and its supposed hatred of white people, writes: “It is amazing that after centuries of marking black and brown peoples as the antithesis of the word good, we should be so frightened of turning the tables, even when that look at the underside of history provides us with some truth about the way things really are in the eyes of peoples surviving the terror brought on by the practice of genocide.”⁶¹ Settlers may feel horror at even

the imagined possibility of no white future, while they simultaneously continue to live and benefit everyday in the most mundane ways from a world that is premised on no Indigenous future.

As Leey'qsun scholar Rachel Flowers writes, if “the term settler is used without a critical understanding of its meaning and the relationships embedded within it,” it exists more or less as “an empty signifier.”⁶² While the exaggerated affective responses that often arise in response to Indigenous texts like those reviewed above are instructive in themselves for identifying and deconstructing settler desires and subjectivities, I emphasize that it is indeed the case that for decolonization to take place, promised white futures do have to be reimagined—or, rather, dismantled—to the point where the structural position of the settler ceases to exist as such. This would not require the literal death of people who currently inhabit the position of settler, but the total transformation of existing relations (or we might say, nonrelations) between Indigenous peoples and settlers toward something as yet unimagined that would ensure the thriving of Indigenous lands and lives. Yet even the metaphorical death of the settler is disturbing despite the fact that settlement is premised on Indigenous death, environmental destruction, and various other forms of subjugation.

And if, as Dakota scholar Philip Deloria maintains, “[f]rom the colonial period to the present, the Indian has skulked in and out of the most important stories various Americans have told about themselves,” then the stories told about Indigenous peoples must indeed change.⁶³ To Dillon, speaking specifically about science fiction narratives, this change is paramount “as a way of positioning [Indigenous peoples] in a genre associated almost exclusively with ‘the increasing significance of the future to Western technocultural consciousness.’”⁶⁴ Byrd looks to texts that “provide possible entry points into critical theories that do not sacrifice Indigenous worlds and futures in the pursuit of the now of the everyday;” that is to say, she searches for narratives that do not just satisfy the immediate desires of viewers with little regard for how they shape Indigenous futures.⁶⁵ Neither settler nor Indigenous communities should settle for lazy science fiction that begins with the premise that Indigenous peoples have disappeared, nor should they accept narratives that reenact the disappearance of Indigenous peoples, whether through invasion stories or adventure tales. The field of Indigenous futurities and Indigenous science fiction is burgeoning, and there is no shortage of the ways in which Indigenous peoples have imagined and are actively creating their futures.

Ultimately Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez discourage providing “any viable alternative frame” that “will account for the needs of the settler, address their anxieties, and assure them that nothing is going to require them to change or disrupt their lives.”⁶⁶ As they further note, if interventions like the ones offered by Goulet and Sanders “try to accommodate the affect of the settler, they cannot succeed in reshaping or reimagining” the present, and, consequently, the future.⁶⁷ For this and other reasons, I abstain from proposing any particular vision of future worlds, or indeed for the transformational processes that will lead us there. Instead I ask, what happens when we try to decenter the settler and their presumed futures? What is at work when settlers proclaim allyship, yet have strong investments in colonial futures?

While Indigenous writers, activists, and scholars may be interested in cross-cultural alliances and kinship relations, ultimately there is much work that white people and other settlers need to do that is not the responsibility of Indigenous peoples. I follow Byrd in her assertion that “[t]he future anterior of such a world that exists outside the cruel optimism and violences constitutive of liberalism’s very structures must also be a future in which Indigenous peoples will have been and will remain decolonized, if there is to be any hope at all.”⁶⁸ As Indigenous artists produce texts without neat endings that do not foreclose on Indigenous futurities, it is in many ways a powerful performative effort to enact a decentering of settler futures and centering of Indigenous futurities. Indeed, we might think of the work of such writers, artists, activists, and knowledge-keepers as an assertion of the proclamation: “I want to survive.” And survive Indigenous peoples have done and shall do into the future.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the editors of the *American and Indian Culture and Research Journal*, as well as the keen eyes and insights of Sharon Stein.

NOTES

1. Patrick B. Sharp, *Savage Perils: Racial Frontiers and Nuclear Apocalypse in American Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 223.

2. Grace L. Dillon, *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012), 2.

3. Ibid.

4. Grace L. Dillon, “Introduction: Indigenous Futurisms, *Bimaashi Biidaas Mose, Flying and Walking towards You*,” *Extrapolation* 57, nos. 1-2 (2016): 2, <https://doi.org/10.3828/extr.2016.2>.

5. Ben Child, “Comic-Con 2014: *Mad Max: Fury Road* Roars into View,” *The Guardian* July 28, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2014/jul/28/comic-con-2014-mad-max-fury-road-trailer-release-tom-hardy>.

6. A. O. Scott, “Review: ‘*Mad Max: Fury Road*,’ Still Angry After All These Years,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/15/movies/review-mad-max-fury-road-still-angry-after-all-these-years.html?_r=2. John Ford is one of the preeminent filmmakers of westerns; he made twelve western films in total, and worked repeatedly with the most infamous ‘Indian killer’ in film history, John Wayne.

7. For examples of settlement in the western genre, among many others, see: Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979); Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Beenash Jafri, “Desire, Settler Colonialism, and the Racialized Cowboy,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37, no. 2 (2013): 73-86, <https://doi.org/10.17953/aicr.37.2.n758545211525815>.

8. M. Elise Rubbio and Eric Buffalohead, *Native Americans on Film* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2013): 5.

9. Anna Klassen, “‘*Mad Max*’ is a Feminist Masterpiece Because ‘*Fury Road*’ is All About *Furiosa* . . . & Her Sidekick Max,” *Bustle*, May 12, 2015, <https://www.bustle.com/articles/82751-mad-max-is-a-feminist-masterpiece-because-fury-road-is-all-about-furiosa-her-sidekick>. Claims of the film

being a “feminist masterpiece” appear to be somewhat undercut by the *Mad Max: Fury Road* graphic novels. The graphic novels, written by the same writers who wrote the film, allude to graphic acts of sexual violence while the film only gestures towards sexual violence. The titles of some of the reviews of the graphic novels are indicative; see Jess Zimmerman, “Why Are All the Female Characters in the Mad Max Comics So Desperately Half-Assed?” *Vulture*, June 13, 2015, <http://www.vulture.com/2015/07/mad-max-comics-half-assed-female-characters.html>; James Whitbrook, “The Furiosa Comic Undoes Everything Great About Mad Max: Fury Road” *io9*, June 23, 2015, <https://io9.gizmodo.com/the-furiosa-comic-undoes-everything-great-about-mad-max-1713368243>.

10. For just one example, see: Nashwa Khan, “*Mad Max: Fury Road* and the Glaring Whiteness of Post-Apocalyptic Films,” *In These Times*, May 23, 2015, <http://inthesetimes.com/article/17986/mad-max-fury-road-and-the-glaring-whiteness-of-post-apocalyptic-films>.

11. Margery Fee, “Romantic Nationalism and the Image of Native People in Contemporary English-Canadian Literature,” in *The Native in Literature*, ed. Thomas King, Cheryl Calver, and Helen Hoy (Toronto: ECW Press, Inc., 1987), 8.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, 9.

14. See Howard O’Hagan, *Tay John* (Toronto: Penguin Collins, 1944); as well as Fee, “Romantic Nationalism.”

15. Fee, “Romantic Nationalism,” 16-17. I have not provided every transaction listed, but rather want to indicate the number of authors using this literary device as well as the range and influence of these authors (Atwood, Laurence, and Cohen are viewed as influential figures in Canadian literature and beyond). To see the variety and breadth of these narratives, Fee’s text is illuminating, as it crucially outlines how these various totem transactions operate.

16. Eve Tuck and Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández, “Curriculum, Replacement, and Settler Futurity,” *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 29, no. 1 (2013), 77, 78, <http://journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/view/411/pdf>.

17. *Ibid.*, 72.

18. Margery Fee, *Literary Land Claims: From Pontiac’s War to Attawapiskat* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2015); as well as Fee, “Romantic Nationalism.”

19. Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández, “Curriculum, Replacement, and Settler Futurity,” 73.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-40, <https://unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/2012/09/26/decolonization-is-not-a-metaphor/>.

22. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xxxiv.

23. *Ibid.*, 11.

24. Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández, “Curriculum, Replacement, and Settler Futurity,” 86.

25. *Ibid.*, 77.

26. Iron Eyes Cody was an Italian-American actor who played and portrayed Indigenous characters in film, television, and commercials. For information on Iron Eyes Cody and his problematic representations, see the following: Johanna Feier, *We Never Hunted Buffalo: The Emergence of Native American Cinema* (Berlin: Lit Verlag Münster, 2011); Michelle H. Raheja, *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), among others. For information on the problematic depictions of Asians/Asian-Americans by Emma Stone and Scarlett Johansson, see Joanna Robinson, “Emma Stone Says Her ‘Eyes Have Been Opened’ by *Aloha* Controversy,” *Vanity Fair*, July 15, 2015, <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2015/07/emma-stone-responds-aloha-whitewashing>; Steve Rose, “Ghost in the Shell’s Whitewashing: Does Hollywood Have an Asian Problem?,” *The Guardian*, March 31,

2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/mar/31/ghost-in-the-shells-whitewashing-does-hollywood-have-an-asian-problem>.

27. Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
28. A combination of the words *continuance* and *survival*, Vizenor differentiates survivance from survival by pointing specifically to the ways in which survivance implies never being defeated. For more on this distinction, see Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (1999) and *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (2008).
29. Will Lempert, "Decolonizing Encounters of the Third Kind: Alternative Futuring in Native Science Fiction Film," *Visual Anthropology Review* 30, no. 2 (2014), 164, <https://doi.org/10.1111/var.12046>.
30. Dillon, *Walking the Clouds*, 3.
31. William Sanders, "When This World Is All on Fire," *East of the Sun and West of Fort Smith* (Los Angeles: Norilana, 2008), 263. Subsequent references to this story will be cited parenthetically in the main text.
32. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xxxiv.
33. Dean Itsuji Saranillio, "Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: a Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference," *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, nos. 3-4 (2013): 285, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2013.810697>.
34. Sanders, "When This World Is All on Fire," 275.
35. Eve Ensler acted as a consultant for *Mad Max: Fury Road*, no doubt as a way for the film to convey a balanced/progressive take on its feminist politics. While Ensler has a storied, and contentious, history among (white) feminists, she has been accused repeatedly by Indigenous women and other women of color of appropriation, misrepresentation, or worse. For an example, see Anishinaabekwe/Nehayowak writer Tara Williamson's description of *The Vagina Monologues* as a text that reinforces/reproduces stereotypical images of Indigenous women: Tara Williamson, "I'm All of Everything that I Am': Constituting the Indigenous Woman, the White Woman, and the Audience in Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture, & Social Justice* 34, no. 1 (2009): 68-77, <http://journals.msvu.ca/index.php/atlas/article/view/220>.
36. Andréa Ledding, "'Unfixed and Infinite' Part of Growing Aboriginal Film Renaissance," *Eagle Feather News*, March 28, 2016, <http://www.eaglefeathernews.com/arts/index.php?detail=1999>.
37. Andrew Parker, "Interview: Danis Goulet," *Dork Shelf*, September 3, 2013, <http://dorkshelf.com/2013/09/03/interview-danis-goulet/>.
38. *Wakening*, dir. Danis Goulet (Toronto: Glen Wood, Jordana Aarons Productions, 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbmi2ff3MBk>.
39. *Wakening*.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Salma Monani, "Feeling and Healing Eco-social Catastrophe: The 'Horrorific' Slipstream of Danis Goulet's *Wakening*," *Paradoxa* 28, no. 1 (2016): 1-22, 4, <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/esfac/83/>. While my reading of, and writing about, Goulet's short film preceded my coming into contact with Monani's article, I feel it pertinent to state here how generative it has been in my revisiting of Goulet's text. That said, I do find problematic Monani's move to make Goulet's film, and Goulet's subsequent thoughts about the film, legible through the language and theory of Walter Benjamin. If anything, this paper attempts to disrupt the ways in which indigeneity is only made legible within certain settler frames, and rarely is taken on its own terms.
42. *Ibid.*, 7.
43. *Wakening*.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*

46. Ibid.
47. Monani, "Feeling and Healing Eco-social Catastrophe," 11.
48. Ibid., 8.
49. For a contemporary example of the problematic, decontextualized use of Weetigo stories in progressive settler politics, see <https://therules.org/seeing-wetiko-creative-brief/>.
50. Monani, "Feeling and Healing Eco-social Catastrophe," 9.
51. Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, xiii.
52. Ibid., 9.
53. Jafri, "Desire, Settler Colonialism, and the Racialized Cowboy," 73.
54. Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility," *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3, no. 3 (2011): 54-70, <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/view/249/116>.
55. Ibid., 55.
56. For more on these ideas, see Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).
57. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 107.
58. Ibid.
59. George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 5.
60. Ibid., 3.
61. Sharon Patricia Holland, *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 68.
62. Rachel Flowers, "Refusal to Forgive: Indigenous Women's Love and Rage," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 4, no. 2 (2015): 33, <https://decolonization.org/index.php/des/article/view/22829/19320>.
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64. Dillon, *Walking the Clouds*, 2.
65. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, 11.
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