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Contents

FROM THE GUEST EDITORS

"The camp-circle was on the move again." So begins Ella Deloria's novel, *Waterlily*: in a state of motion, its Dakota characters packing up for a deer hunt or "to gather the fruits in season," with their move ultimately leading to the birth of the novel's title character. It is a fitting opening, too, for this special issue of *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, as it honors and celebrates the Oceti Sakowin Oyate or "People of the Seven Council Fires" and our/their rich intellectual traditions.[1] It is a celebration of dynamic movement not unlike breaking camp, as we look both forward to future generations of Oceti Sakowin writers and intellectuals and to the possibilities of future storytelling that is—that always has been—sustained by its deep roots in a shared past.

The Oceti Sakowin consists of seven fires or tribes based on kinship, location and dialect—Dakota, Lakota or Nakota. The traditional names of these tribes are: Wahpekute (Wahpekute), Wahpetunwan (Wahpeton), Sisistunwan (Sisseton), Bdewakantunwan (Mdewakanton), Ihanktunwan (Yankton), Ihanktunwanna (Yanktonai) and Titunwan (Teton). Today, there are many Oceti Sakowin nations descended from the original seven tribes. These tribal nations now reside in South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Montana in the United States and Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan in Canada. We/they each maintain our/their own cultures, languages, land bases and government structures.

Since time immemorial, the Oceti Sakowin have relied upon oral stories, histories, songs, and traditions to sustain our/their cultures, languages, and values. The Oceti Sakowin oral tradition still persists today in both oral and written forms. Each tribe's oral tradition is distinctive. Oral stories—and the printed stories that have emerged from them—are unique to each family and community. And yet a common thread

across Oceti Sakowin territory is the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, which Charles Eastman describes in his 1902 autobiography, *Indian Boyhood*:

> Very early, the Indian boy assumed the task of preserving and transmitting the legends of his ancestors and his race. Almost every evening a myth, or a true story of some deed done in the past was narrated by one of the parents or grandparents, while the boy listened with parted lips and glistening eyes. On the following evening, he was usually required to repeat it.[2]

Eastman's use of settler terms like "legend," "myth," and "race" here should not cast doubt on Oceti Sakowin narratives' veracity and historicity. Instead, it points to his and other turn-of-the century Native writers' use of settler framings and vocabularies to convey Native life and experience within the confines of a settler publishing industry. Despite this restriction, the intergenerational experience Eastman describes is one requiring care in many dimensions: in listening, in remembering, and in "repeat[ing]." In this last aspect, Oceti Sakowin storytellers are guided by a principle of owotaŋna wohdakapo, or "telling it straight." And as Dakota historian Waziyatawin observes, "telling it straight" can also mean "telling it well," or "Tanyan wohdakapo!"[3] In effect, upholding these principles helps to ensure ongoing dialogue and relational accountability. The essays, reviews, and creative work represented in this special issue of *SAIL* no doubt uphold this crucial form of relationality.

There are many variations and genres of Oceti Sakowin oral storytelling. Some may be accounts of everyday life, while others are stories of origins sometimes called ehaŋna woyakapi or "long ago stories." Waziyatawin, quoting Prairie Island Dakota storyteller Dale Childs, notes that another genre called hitunkankanpi "were given to the people for their survival so they could learn from these stories." Hitunkankanpi include Unktomi or Iktomi stories, stories about animals, and other stories of how things "came to be."[4] Within and across these ways of storytelling, there is a dynamic of linking to the past as well as innovating newness—all in the spirit of tanyan wohdakapo.

Just as multiple genres of storytelling exist across Oceti Sakowin thought, so too are there many ways of representing them in written form. The editors of this special issue defer to individual authors' orthographic and spelling choices in representing the Dakota, Nakota,

Lakota languages in their submissions. As Sarah Hernandez points out in *We Are the Stars: Colonizing and Decolonizing the Oceti Sakowin Literary Tradition*, Oceti Sakowin writers "have long debated and experimented with these stylistic conventions,"[5] with many such choices stemming from longstanding involvement in community debates and practices that resist any universal standardization.

Over the past 120+ years, Oceti Sakowin writers have published more than two hundred books, representing a variety of genres and topics. In 1902, Eastman (Santee Dakota) published *Indian Boyhood*, the first full-length book to focus on Dakota culture and history. He published ten more books that subsequently paved the way for numerous other Oceti Sakowin writers—a short list from just the first half of the twentieth century might include Zitkala Ša, Luther Standing Bear, Nicholas Black Elk, Ella Deloria, Vine Deloria Jr.—as well as scholars to publish various material related to Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota languages, culture, spirituality, history, and politics. Over the years, these writers and scholars have developed new and innovative ways to reimagine their oral traditions in print form as autobiographies, memoirs, critical essays, short stories, novels, and poetry. This special issue seeks to center these writers and celebrate their contributions to the rich and complex Oceti Sakowin literary tradition.

This special issue of *SAIL* not only celebrates the Oceti Sakowin literary tradition, but also corresponds with and celebrates the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society's thirtieth anniversary. The Oceti Sakowin Writers Society (formerly known as the Oak Lake Writers Society) is a first-of-its-kind tribal group for Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota writers. The Society was co-founded by Dakota writer and scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux) and South Dakota State University Professors Lowell Amiotte (Oglala Lakota) and Charles Woodard. The Society's mission is to "organize literary efforts for the purposes of preserving and defending Oceti Sakowin (Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota) cultures, oral traditions, and histories; to reaffirm our peoples' political statuses; and to regulate and transform representations of such that are inaccurate and damaging. To those ends, we create, research, review, publish, present, and promote works in various genres in a manner that will bring about a greater understanding of our cultures, legacies, and lands."[6]

The Society's original name stems from the site of the first retreats

at the Oak Lake Field Station located amidst short-grass prairie and glacial lakes near Astoria, South Dakota. Every summer from 1993 to 2019, tribal writers would gather at the rustic field station for a week-long writing retreat to discuss and write about Oceti Sakowin cultures, languages, literatures, histories, politics and sovereignty. From these annual retreats, Society members have originated and published multiple anthologies—including *This Stretch of the River: Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota Responses to the Lewis and Clark Expedition and Bicentennial* (edited by Craig Howe and Kim TallBear), *He Sapa Woihanble: Black Hills Dream* (edited by Craig Howe, Lydia Whirlwind Soldier, and Lanniko Lee), and *Shaping Survival: Essays by Four American Indian Tribal Women* (edited by Jack Marcken and Charles Woodard). Additionally, Society members have published a number of individual books—beginning with Lydia Whirlwind Soldier's stunning books of poetry, *Memory Songs* and *Survival Songs*, and continuing into the present, with Nick Estes's recent *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* and Diane Wilson's *The Seed Keeper*, which were each selected, in 2022 and 2023 respectively, as the South Dakota One Book.

Over the past thirty years, the Society's annual summer tribal writing retreats have provided Oceti Sakowin writers with an intellectual and creative space to explore and express issues and ideas relevant to their tribal communities. Amiotte and Woodard provided the logistical support needed to organize the no-cost retreats, while Cook-Lynn served as the Society's primary mentor, providing writing instruction and offering culturally relevant feedback on members' work, while also guiding them through the editing and publishing process. According to Amiotte and Woodard, Cook-Lynn "was and will always be the group's most important mentor." They note that "Liz took great pride in this special group of writers, and her work with them continues to provide inspiration and guidance as they evolve and grow, as individual writers and as a tribal collective."

On July 5, 2023, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn made her journey to the spirit world. We dedicate this special issue in her honor. Le wowapi ke Liz bluonihan. Liz woksape cante waste ya maku. Nahan wopila wa ku.

The Oceti Sakowin Writers Society owes a significant debt of gratitude to co-founders, Liz, Chuck, and Lowell, and to charter members

Elden Lawrence (Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota), Lanniko Lee (Mniconjou Lakota), Florestine Kiyukanpi Renville (Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota), and Lydia Whirlwind Soldier (Sicangu Lakota) for their unwavering commitment to protecting and defending the Oceti Sakowin literary tradition. Their wisdom and guidance over the past thirty years has helped elevate the tribal voice and gifted a new generation of storytellers and writers with the knowledge and skills needed to carry their vision forward.

In 2019, shortly after the twenty-fifth anniversary, the Society decided to seek 501(c)3 status and become a Native-led nonprofit organization to build upon the efforts of the Society's founding members. The Society obtained 501c3 status in 2022 and officially changed its name to the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society to exercise tribal sovereignty and become more intentional about reaching out to Oceti Sakowin people and communities. Waŋblí Wapȟáha Hokšíla (Edward C. Valandra), who served as the Society's president during this transition phase, explains the name change in his interview with Jane Haladay in this issue. He observes, "we realized that [our organization] just cannot be a literary society. It has to be more than that. It's just not the production of literature. The literature has to speak to our conditions, our dreams, our aspirations, our disappointments, our failings," and must be shared with Oceti Sakowin tribal citizens—with the nation. As Waŋblí Wapȟáha Hokšíla says, "Where [do] we put our ceremonial staff, so to speak?"

In 2022, the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society hosted its first retreat in Lower Brule among relatives, the Kul Wicasa Oyate. The response from the membership was overwhelmingly positive and set the standard for future retreats and new anthologies. As the Society moves forward toward the future, it will begin hosting more of these retreats in Oceti Sakowin tribal communities to ensure that the Society continues to help preserve and perpetuate the Oceti Sakowin literary tradition for many more generations to come.

To help preserve this literary tradition, many members of the Oceti Sakowin Writers' Society contributed works to this special issue to honor and celebrate the work of our/their literary ancestors. Many contributions were also written by allies who recognized the complexities and sophistication of the rich Oceti Sakowin intellectual/creative traditions. The work represented in this special issue encompasses a broad scope. But the centrality of land and water, as well as of women, are key

throughlines for this collection. Taken together, the works in this issue unify such themes, which resonate throughout the Oceti Sakowin literary tradition, including the relationships between Oceti Sakowin people and territorial sovereignty, the persisting strength and leadership of Oceti Sakowin women, and the dynamic and relational nature of Oceti Sakowin storytelling. Across the pages of this issue, we hope that readers will develop, or have reinforced, a deep understanding, and concomitant appreciation, for recent (and not-so-recent) works of Oceti Sakowin literature, for new critical engagements with Oceti Sakowin authors across a variety of genres (from poetry, to fiction, to drama), and for the meditations on the interplay between tribal storytelling sustainment and the actualization of that sustainment, which is made manifest by this very special issue's existence. This special issue of *SAIL* exists because of the crucial and visionary labor of the founders (and the work of continuing members) of the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society and the editors of this issue have hoped to play a role in carrying that work forward.

Sarah Hernandez, Christopher Pexa, and Julianne Newmark

NOTES

1. Here and throughout this introduction we use "our/their" and its variants to notate the editors' different positionalities as Oceti Sakowin and non-Native scholars.
2. Charles Eastman, *Indian Boyhood* (New York: McClure, Phillips, and Co., 1902), 51.
3. Angela Wilson (Waziyatawin), *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 95.
4. Wilson, *Remember This!*, 64.
5. Sarah Hernandez, *We Are the Stars: Colonizing and Decolonizing the Oceti Sakowin Literary Tradition* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2023), xxv.
6. "Our Mission," The Oceti Sakowin Writers Society, accessed October 16, 2023, https://ocetisakowinwriterssociety.org/.

Origins

LOWELL AMIOTTE AND CHARLES WOODARD,
OAK LAKE WRITERS' RETREAT CO-FOUNDERS

Oak Lake is about two miles west of the Minnesota border in eastern South Dakota. Approaching it from the west, there are rolling hills, mostly pasture land, but the area on the south side of the lake is heavily wooded, including a stand of old growth oak trees, hence the name of the lake. According to some oral tradition sources, the area may have been one of the places Dakota families fled to, from the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862. The native plants in the area have been preserved for biological study, and the vistas are beautiful, especially in the late summer and early fall, when the leaves are changing colors.

On higher ground, in a clearing just south of the trees, is an old wooden structure that is a multi-use facility owned by South Dakota State University as part of its biological field station. A winding gravel road from the main gravel road leads to it, and there are often horses grazing along that quarter-mile stretch. The building includes a dining hall with a semicircle of large windows facing north, an adjoining kitchen, and bunk-bed bedrooms and bathrooms on the south side. In the dining hall are chairs and benches and rectangular varnished wooden tables, and a large open stone fireplace.

The first tribal writers' retreat at Oak Lake, entitled "Storytelling, Storykeeping," occurred in September of 1993, a dozen aspiring Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota writers and their co-mentors Eizabeth Cook-Lynn and N. Scott Momaday sitting in a circle on benches and in chairs around pushed-together wooden tables adjacent to the fireplace. We got the idea for the retreat from the "Returning the Gift" conference at the University of Oklahoma the previous summer, having discussed the irony of the richness of residential tribal cultures and the comparatively

few contemporary tribal writers writing in and of those cultures. Our initial plan was for this four-day retreat to be a one-time event, but the success of it motivated us to organize the retreat annually.

The Oak Lake Writers' Society was created the following summer, thanks to the ideas and leadership of Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, who functioned as mentor or co-mentor for most of the many annual retreats that followed. Co-mentors with her through the years included James Welch, Laura Tohe, Joseph Marshall III, Jim Northrup, Susan Power, LeAnne Howe, Gordon Henry, Kim Blaeser, Jodi Byrd, and Roberta Hill. All of them contributed to the development of the writers in attendance, but Liz was and will always be the group's most important mentor. She took great pride in this special group of writers, and her work with them continues to provide inspiration and guidance as they evolve and grow, as individual writers and as a tribal collective.

LOWELL AMIOTTE is Associate Professor Emeritus of Education and Counseling, School of Education, Counseling and Human Development, South Dakota State University. During his long and distinguished career, he was also Director of the Center for American Indian Studies at Black Hills State University, President of Oglala Lakota College, and Director of the South Dakota Office of Indian Education. Amiotte co-founded the Oak Lake Writers' Society (now known as the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society) in 1993 along with Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Charles Woodard.

CHARLES L. WOODARD is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of English, South Dakota State University, where he taught for forty years. His main area of teaching and research was American Indian Literature, and his published works include *Ancestral Voice: Conversations With N. Scott Momaday*, and *Shaping Survival: Essays by Four American Indian Tribal Women*, which he co-edited with Jack W. Marken. Woodard co-founded the Oak Lake Writers' Society (now known as the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society) in 1993 along with Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Lowell Amiotte.

Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Literary Traditions

Nation Before Reservation, A Conversation

WAŊBLÍ WAPȟÁHA HOKŠÍLA
(EDWARD C VALANDRA)AND JANE HALADAY

Abstract: In this conversation between Waŋblí Wapȟáha Hokšíla (Edward C Valandra) and Jane Haladay, WWH discusses his personal history with and understandings of the literary traditions of his people, the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Oyáte, and his involvement with the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society (formerly the Oak Lake Writers' Society). WWH discusses his perspective of the origins and purposes of Očhéthi Šakówiŋ literary traditions, the influence of Lakȟóta, Dakȟóta, and Nakȟóta languages on these literatures, the vitality of Očhéthi Šakówiŋ community based, small-scale publications, and how his own writing and scholarship have been shaped by, and contribute to, his people's ongoing literary traditions.

Keywords: Native literature, literary traditions, Oak Lake Writers' Society, Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Oyáte, Lakota, Native writers, Indigenous literature, nation building.

We began our conversation by introducing ourselves. Our conversations took place via Zoom on May 17 and 29, 2023, in Wakpá Ipáksaŋ and Pinehurst, North Carolina.

WAŊBLÍ WAPȟÁHA HOKŠÍLA (WWH): By way of introduction, I am Edward Valandra. I am Síčáŋǧu Thitȟuŋwaŋ and the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Oyáte are my people. I was born and raised in my settler-occupied homelands. Currently I am an editor for Living Justice Press. It's a small, independent, nonprofit press that does mostly restorative justice, restorative practice circle literature, and it does have an Indigenous part to it. So we do publish Indigenous literature as well. That's what I'm currently doing right now.

I think Dr. Haladay gave me a really good segue at one time when she

said, "I think in the write up for the abstract, you said, [I am] a 'retired university professor' or a 'retired professor.'" And I thought, "Yeah," I like that." I have been teaching for about fifteen, sixteen years, primarily in Native Studies. Been all over the place. So that's part of my life, which is rather colorful. I would say in my journeys, I could tell stories upon stories about being an Indigenous person, first as a student and later as a professor, in the academy.

I like to maintain a strong connection to my people, to my homelands. I find that's where I get my strength, my energy, my validity as a human being—from that rather than through these external things that so many other non-Native people basically rely on. I'm fortunate in that regard.

JANE: Thank you. I'll briefly introduce myself as well. I'm Jane Haladay, currently a professor of American Indian Studies at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, where I have been for seventeen years now, beginning my eighteenth year. I'm the daughter of George and Lois Haladay. My dad's people come from Eastern Europe, and my mom's people come from Western Europe. I'm a settler scholar who, throughout my entire undergraduate education in California, did not read one thing by an Indigenous person. I randomly came across a Native novel as an adult, just before I was teaching high school in Northern California. And that book [*Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko] was the spark that led me on the path to pursue a master's degree in American Indian Studies at theUniversity of Arizona and then a PhD at UC Davis in Native American Studies, where I met you, Dr. Valandra, as I was finishing grad school and you were a tenure-track professor.

I am truly grateful to have had the opportunities to meet and work with Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, and Indigenous community people in particular, who have been very generous with me. I've learned a lot and have tried to be respectful and contribute what I can from where I am. To use the privilege and resources of my university position to support Native students and Native peoples through my teaching and writing. And I'm happy that after all of these years—we met in 2004—I'm happy that we're able to collaborate on something for this special issue of *SAIL*.

So let's dive into some of these topics. As we know, this special issue is about both Očhéthi Šakówiŋ literary traditions—which I'm conceptual-

izing very broadly, as seems appropriate—and also specifically celebrating the anniversary of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society (formerly Oak Lake Writers' Society), which you have been involved with as well. I'd like to start with the broader topic of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ literary traditions and then move into the Oak Lake Writers' Society, if that's okay with you.

WWH: Yeah, that. Let's do that.

JANE: How would you characterize, or how do you conceive of, or what comes to mind when you think of a literary tradition or literary philosophy, or however you would describe it, of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ—your people? What is involved with that?

WWH: This notion of the literary tradition is just a recent introduction to my people in terms of how the West defines a literary tradition. Some people would look at the late Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* [1968] as the emergence of this [Indigenous] literary tradition in print. So that's how I'm tending to frame this particular understanding for the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ. If we talk about literary tradition in written form, print form, we have the 1862 Dakȟóta prisoners of war (POWs), and they wrote letters in Dakȟóta about what their experiences were like as prisoners of war in Davenport, Iowa. They were there for three years, so perhaps, that might be one [literary tradition] for my people that was the beginning. And I say that very mildly; the beginning of my people's literary tradition. The written-in-print form.

Those are very powerful letters written in our Dakȟóta language. And there's been literature written about us by the Pond brothers, who were white missionaries, the Riggs, who were white missionaries, the Williamsons, who were white missionaries, and others who wrote about our people. But to come from within, you know, the endogenous aspect of it, I would say the 1862 prisoners of war letters would be our beginning of our literary tradition in print form.

The initial characterization of that was it was written in our language. And up until about maybe 1950, it was very possible for our people to write in our language. Because of the boarding schools, the coercive assimilation policies, that aspect of writing in our language has been replaced by writing in English now. Although it's still possible to write in

our language, there's not a greater pool of Indigenous speakers. There's a movement to push back on that [assimilation] and [promote] language revitalization.

JANE: As a follow-up, where would those imprisoned Dakȟóta letter writers have learned to write in Dakȟóta?

WWH: So, of course, when the white missionaries came out, one of the things that the missionaries always did with Indigenous peoples throughout the world—they were the prototypical anthropologists—they needed to understand Native languages. And so they began to study them. That's how we learned, because they adapted the alphabet to our languages, and so much of our language is written using the ABCs. It wasn't organic like it was with the Cherokee; theirs came from within. So it was the white missionaries wanting to learn our language so they could translate the Bible and all that religious literature into our language. That's how it evolved. It wasn't to keep the language going. It was just to make that conversion to Christianity. And once the conversion was there, then Indigenous language use was done. There was no real desire [by missionaries] to maintain language. So then we adopted that. And even today in the twenty-first century, like the Lakȟóta Language Consortium, we use the alphabet a lot . . . to write in our language. That's where that came from.

JANE: Thanks. I interrupted you, though. You were going to go in a new direction about the literary tradition idea.

WWH: Maybe the initial thing was perhaps the 1862 Dakȟóta prisoners of war letters written to talk about the experiences of being POWs and what that was like in a settler society. Now, some of those letters, of course, were read by settlers, particularly those who perhaps taught my people to write in Dakȟóta. And some of the letters, I think, were written to show that some of the prisoners of war, not all, but some of the prisoners of war were accepting Christianity, were accepting the white ways. And if those missionaries, those white settlers would read that, I think some of the POWs would think that they would get some kind of pardon or some kind of reduced sentence or something like that. So of those letters, there's some in that vein.

From about 1860 to about, I don't know, 1900, a lot of the Lakȟóta language, Dakȟóta language, literary tradition really had a religious character to it because the missionaries were so involved in trying to convert us. So a lot of that initial literature was biblically oriented, Christian oriented. I still collect that kind of literature because I think it's really interesting. I got a Bible written all in the Dakȟóta language and it's just interesting to read that. And to see how they're trying to translate English- speaking Western conceptions into our language. A lot of times it's just a stretch for the settlers to do that. But it's there.

JANE: Yes.

WWH: Oh, and then I guess if we jump to the twenty-first century, although we're using English quite a bit, that literature is all about self-determination, revitalization, resistance, [a] kind of oppositional literature now. It has gone from primarily writing in our language, but the religious element being so pervasive initially, to using English much more, but along the lines of just resistance and revitalization.

JANE: That's interesting. And even when you just said that you would characterize the origin of a written Oćhéthi Šakówiŋ literary tradition with those letters, that too was forged in the crucible of a political activity, of colonization. I'm thinking about a lot of different writers that I'm familiar with. Your people's literature is political. It's not all political, but a lot of it is political. Whatever form it takes, whether it's memoir or fiction or law or political science. Joseph Marshall, Vine's books, Layli Long Soldier, Luther Standing Bear; I'm thinking of a lot of different people.

WWH: And you know what's really interesting, too, is there are a lot of Oćhéthi Šakówiŋ writers who have self-published. That literature has not even pierced the mainstream. That written material I find extremely interesting. And a lot of it is in the cultural realm of explaining our understandings of the world and our language is a big part of that. A good majority of my people are very fluent in English, extremely fluent. And there are a significant percentage of Oćhéthi Šakówiŋ people who are fluent in Dakȟóta and Lakȟóta and Nakȟóta and they are bilingually fluent in both languages. They're the ones who do a lot of self-publishing. They write their own manuscripts [that] never see the light

of day. They might get them published, go to a print shop, have it done, and distribute them to the community. And those are really, really powerful tracts. I have been collecting them over the years, and I think those are more in the service of what I think Native Studies should embrace. But then, you don't see that kind of literature in the mainstream. So I find that kind of literary tradition really valuable because it is it is endogenous. And it is, I would say it's mainly meant for our people.

We don't call ourselves the Oak Lake Writers anymore. We call ourselves the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society. That also represented a shift in our consciousness. One of the things that we're finding out about our society is that there are a lot of people interested in writing. It could be as simple as journaling or poetry. We find there's a rich vein of this literary tradition, and a lot of it is internal to our people. The issues we face, the challenges that we have under colonization, our relationships with white people, our relationships with the Black brothers and sisters, other brown people. It is such a rich tradition now in terms of literary writing, the writing of it. And you have to be in community to see that. It's happening all the time.

JANE: Who did you grow up either seeing write or hearing tell stories? How were you influenced in your own upbringing with, you certainly wouldn't have called it a literary tradition at the time, but what you're describing as community-based expression, either written or oral? Are there specific moments or people you remember?

WWH: When I think about literary tradition as I was growing up, I'm of the generation that went to a public school that was white-run; you know, white teachers, white administrators, white, white, white. I'm of the Dick and Jane generation. And Spot.

JANE: See Spot Run! Run, Spot, Run!

WWH: And by the way, Spot was my favorite character.

JANE: Me, too.

WWH: The readers had white Jane and white Dick. And no one could really relate to them. We could relate to Spot because we all had rez dogs. My parents were speakers of the Lakȟóta language and also speak-

ers of the English language. And I come from, I would say, a political family. I mean, my parents were involved in the politics. Native politics, particularly. My mother [Christine Valandra] had a strong orientation to community service. And then I grew up at a time when the Lakȟóta language was particularly still strong, in the 1950s and 1960s and maybe early 1970s. But in terms of what my influences were, I think when we went to public school was our first introduction to the written word. But I did write an essay in college that I thought the literature that we read as adolescents was comic books.

Comic books. And these were the Western ones, too. When I say Western ones, I mean they were all white oriented. That was probably my first exposure to the [written] literary tradition was through comic books. That was accessible. You had these basically graphic novels. Of course, the reading level of most comic books is like, I don't know, sixth grade perhaps, but that's what I read a lot. I read so many comic books of all genres. A lot of us did and we just enjoyed it; it was a great pastime. So I often attribute my interest in reading to the comic books. It was very accessible, affordable. Then you traded them all the time.

One has to say that was very assimilative, too, because there were no Native comic books at that time. If you had any Natives in any comic book, it was usually the Western, i.e., cowboy ones. So you got that. But I would say that's probably where my interest started.

Because my father [Cato Valandra] was a community leader, we always had magazines. *Time* or *Newsweek* was part of his literature he read. And so those were lying around. I'd have to say my mother was more on the oral tradition side of things. She spoke fluent Lakȟóta and she probably spoke as much Lakȟóta as she spoke English in the community. Then, of course, [me] deciding to go to college. You had to read, so college just kick started my literary interest. In terms of influences, it would be great now to be young and have Joe Marshall and have Lydia Whirlwind Soldier and have Nick Estes and just have a whole pool of Indigenous writers.

JANE: And all the Indigenous comic books, graphic novels that exist now, too.

WWH: It's something that maybe we have adopted or adapted that Western literary tradition to our needs. To what we feel is important. I would

have loved to have had the exposure that we have now because we have a lot of writers who are being published. And then again, there's another segment of writers who write their own stuff and self-publish, and we shouldn't forget that because that tends to be people who are more grounded in Lakȟóta, Dakȟóta, and Nakȟóta languages and worldviews. They do know how to write in English, and they do a good job of giving both [languages] in their manuscripts.

JANE: You're making me think of your people's buffalo hide Winter Count as a graphic, not novel because it's not fiction, but as a graphic literature that has predated print literature, Western literature, in your people's tradition. As you're talking about graphic novels, would you talk a little bit more about how you see language having a role in your people's literary traditions, and also maybe in the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society's orientation or, just how you see that influence on who writes what? That is, how do you see the work of people who write in English but are bilingual or fluent speakers? Do you see a difference in how they write in English, or what they choose to write about? I'm just wondering about how language influences literary expression. Because what you described about a bilingual community production is a very direct way to incorporate language.

WWH: I write like ninety-nine percent in English, but when I talk about the issues that confront my people or my community or the challenges, I do know that there's another reference point in the Lakȟóta language. Plus my experiences of being born and raised in my homelands that help temper how I write in English and how I'm trying to convey [ideas].

I just finished a short paper I was asked to do on "Native justice?" And of course, it's easy to say what Native justice isn't in a comparative sense. Native justice is not adversarial as it is in the West. It's not carceral as it is in the West. It's not retributive as it is in the West. It's not hierarchical as it is in the West. But in saying that, [it] doesn't tell me what Native justice *is*. So then I say, well, first thing I think about is how do we say "justice" in my language? I think of some of the terminology and I have a whole reference section of the Lakȟóta language. I have dictionaries, this, that, and the other.

So I write [that] we don't have an exact word for "justice." Then I have to talk about how language then is influencing me, because I'm

not thinking of justice in the white framework of settler society. There's a very specific understanding of what justice is in settler society, and that doesn't really match up with my understanding of justice in my community, though we don't have a specific word for it. We have a lot of words that would be attributed to justice, so I have to negotiate that space using English. It gets to be a really enlightening and engaging and challenging paper to write about what is Native justice. I use Lakȟóta language in that and of course give translations, if you will.

I think being born and raised in our homelands, having some exposure to the culture and traditions as well as language, when you come from that and you're writing in English, it helps negotiate that space. So I penned this piece about what is Native justice, explained it in a way that it had to do with a way of life, it had to do with behaviors, and not so much a system or a definition. I often say that translation is not the same as interpretation. We have to be very aware of that. We have to be very aware that, for example, if people want to know how we say "white" or "white man" or "white person," we just say "wašíču." Which is a translation. But it's not an interpretation of the word "wašíču." "Wašíču" has a vast interpretation. And we can't just say "this is a word for justice." I think that's a one-to-one relationship within the West. We can say and I would say probably now we have a word for justice, but I haven't found it per se. That doesn't mean that we can't arrive at one.

When you come from an Indigenous community, I think when you write in English and try to explain concepts, I rely upon the Lakȟóta language and my understanding of culture and tradition to formulate what I'm going to write in English. And that's often a big, big challenge.

JANE: I can imagine. Part of what I'm hearing you say is something that, in even my very superficial understanding of Native languages, is that the languages are relational. English is very objectifying and it likes objects, so it likes nouns. English-speaking people want to know, "What is your one word for this?" Well, there probably isn't one Native-language word for that. You know, it is a description of a relationship; it's active. There's more than one way of describing that. Native languages are more about verbs and interactions than just the *thing*. And English and English-speakers like things. I feel like that's part of why it's so easy for English to objectify people, too.

WWH: Right. I think a good example of that, and I've been thinking about this lately is, at least for me and my thinking, when we say in my language that "I am Lakȟóta," it's a verb. It's a state of being; it's a stative verb. You're in process or in the state of being a Lakȟóta. Whereas when whites or settlers hear that "I'm Lakȟóta," it's a thing. For them you can switch that in and out racially or ethnically because settlers do that all the time. Settlers are Americans one day, they're U.S. citizens the next day, they're Irish Americans, the next day and so forth. And so it is this thing that has interchangeability, whereas when you say "Malakȟóta" or "Damakȟóta," you're actually saying that is a condition and that cannot be interchanged for anything, it's just who you are and what you are. Now with assimilation and things like that, it might be more along the lines of how you think in a Western sense of the term. You know, like I'm racially American Indian. That identity can switch up at any moment. So I think what you talk about, relational, I would say there's that aspect to it as well. And I'm not a linguist, but I do understand that Lakȟóta is a verb-based language, and it's—being a Dakȟóta, Lakȟóta, Nakȟóta—a condition or state of being and not a thing.

I do believe that there's some really interesting things to think about in this literary tradition, and the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society is very cognizant of that. We're talking about that all the time. And when I hear my people who want to be writers say, "Oh, I can't write," I don't think they're saying they don't know how to write or can't write. But that writing is very loaded in terms of how you can express Lakȟóta philosophy in a language [e.g., English] that is, I think, limited in a lot of ways.

JANE: Yes.

WWH: Trying to say, "Well, I can't write." Well, people *can* write. It's just that you're not sure if you can get the full conveyance of some Lakȟóta thought and philosophy expressed in English. I often hear that. When we do translation, a lot of nuance is lost interpreting, especially in English. And I can imagine that also happens in writing.

JANE: Oh, yeah. It's an additional translation, even if you're translating from Lakȟóta language into English, verbally, putting that in print is a whole other transaction. And I'm guessing also what people may be thinking when they say they can't write is that they've been indoctri-

nated by Western education to believe they must even write a certain kind of English; that is, whatever they think it is, grammatically correct or all of these kinds of rule-based things. I mean, even creative writers in English don't follow all that. But I think that's a pressure. I see that in the Native students I teach. So many think they're terrible writers when they're not. They have a vernacular in English and they have a home language. That's a whole other conversation. As a university educator, I do feel it's part of my role to point out to them what is considered standard English so that they have standard written English in their toolbox for whatever they may need it for—job applications, grad school applications, all of that. But not to suggest that that's a superior kind of English to what they speak.

WWH: I think that this project that *SAIL* is doing, particularly focused on the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society, the uniqueness of our society . . . At least to my knowledge, there might be Native writing societies around, but I believe we are the only Native nation specific one and that you have to be a citizen of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ. Because we think that being Očhéthi Šakówiŋ means something. It has meaning for us way beyond racial. So if you're on the margins, how can one really then engage in the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ literary tradition? Heaven knows we Očhéthi Šakówiŋ citizens certainly have!

You know, Vine Deloria said in the early 1990s that to be one of us is [to know]. Do you know the people in your community? Do you know your relationships? Your relatives? And then, do you know the generations? Certainly the generation before you—the grandparents and possibly the great-grandparents. Do you know the generation following you, your children, and their children? And he says, when you don't know that, then you are considered outside of your community. You are no longer a Lakȟóta. You are no longer a Dakȟóta, although you might have an enrollment card to say that "I'm enrolled." But then, where does the thought and philosophy come in, because you need to understand what that experience is all about in order to, let's say, for any literary tradition, you have to know what that experience is all about to write effectively, coherently, and meaningfully about that. So that's why we [Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society members] really hold on to this. You have to be a citizen of our nation. Were you raised in our homelands or were you raised in New York City because of relocation? Well, that plays

a big part in our writers society's membership. Those other extraneous factors come into play.

JANE: When did you become aware of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society and what has been your involvement with that group?

WWH: I think we're going on thirty years now. The society began when a six-member planning committee wanted to host a September 1993 Indian Writers Conference at the Oak Lake facility. And they began, I think, strictly as a literary society. I don't know if I really knew about this writers' society until I went to the University of South Dakota and became the tenured chair of the Native Studies department there. Then I began to hear about it, so that had been about 2008. I might have heard about it a bit before that. So then I went to those retreats. They usually have summer retreats for about a week. I'd go to those, and mentors would come in and talk about their writing and do workshops and just talk, and people would bring their manuscripts. That's how I got involved. I've been a member since.

In the last three years I became active on the board. And [we] decided that we needed to be on our own, whatever that looked like. So we severed ties with one of the state universities in South Dakota, which the society was kind of attached to. We used to have [the retreat] at a place called Oak Lake field station; that's where the name Oak Lake Writers' Society came from and which has its own history regarding my people. Then we decided we needed to start going into our homelands, so we went to Lower Brule Reservation this past year [2022]. And that was one of the largest turnouts we had in recent years. We have community members that had accessibility to what we're doing, whereas before we would be in the field station that the state university owned. And it was nice; I mean, you had kitchen facilities, you had nice accommodations. But then we decided we needed to be out in our communities more and more, to show that we're relevant, right?

JANE: What do you think that experience provides for the people who participate? I mean, how is that experience of writing and talking about writing and workshopping, how is that distinctive? I understand it's a distinctive Indigenous national writers society, but just the actual experience of it, what does that feel like?

WWH: Well, a lot of joking. A lot of use of relational terms: tȟaŋhánši, haŋkáši, šičéši. I mean, that's how we talk. And we have the Kim Tall Bears and Nick Estes showing up, too. Someone who writes, maybe as a journalist for one of the Native newspapers, shows up. What I appreciate about that is, there's a commitment. It's gone from just being a literary society to one in which literature becomes the tool for self-determination, for decolonization. And it could be in the poetry, it could be in a novel, it could be in the fiction or nonfiction genres. It's a very informal gathering. What I like about going to them is I get to see a lot of my relatives, and we talk about issues, too, confronting us as writers.

I think the Society, I can't speak for the whole Society or anything, but we're very much culturally centered. And while we know there's politics all around us, like that South Dakota wants to eliminate or erase us in their social studies standards. We may talk about that, and some writers of the Society may do an op-ed piece or something like that, but we don't come up with a plan to go to all the hearings as a writers' society. All that is important, but I also think that we realize that we have a mission and purpose for the revitalization of our people.

So while the debate on social studies standards is important, it's a waste of our energy and time, as a society, to engage that because we know in a settler society, they're going to do what they're going to do anyway regardless of how many hearings we go to. It's just a waste of our time. If individual members want to engage that, we support that, too.

I think when we get together, it's more like a gathering of the nation, a subset of the nation. We do want to nurture and encourage emerging writers, of course. I think the Society shows that there are people who are out there writing about the very issues that are really important to us. Maybe as a model, something I didn't have when I was growing up. I mean, we had Eastman, Standing Bear, Zitkala-Ša, Ella Deloria, but they never conceptualized themselves as an Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society. Perhaps they should have, but they didn't. Yet they were all twentieth century contemporaries.

JANE: Do you see your work with the Society having an ongoing influence on you as a Lakȟóta scholar and writer?

WWH: Yeah, I do. Because the late Elizabeth Cook-Lynn was a very integral part of that. It was always good to go to the retreat, see her, visit

with her, talk with her and nurture that relationship. That generation of Elizabeth's leaves a lot of their experiences with us, so we engage them (the experiences). I do see at some point in time where I won't be an active member anymore. I'll just be happy to maybe go to one gathering.

When I see emerging Očhéthi Šakówiŋ writers, people that are interested in writing, and they may have gotten introduced to writing, maybe they wrote an article in a newspaper or an article in a school paper, or maybe they became journalists, whatever that writing process is, we want to make sure that whatever literary tradition, however that's defined, that that becomes an important part of our arsenal. We're a small group, we don't have a lot of money, so we're very limited in what we can do. But what we do, we do it well.

JANE: You said you don't think of yourself as really a literary person. You started our conversation talking about those letters from the Dakȟóta POWs, and since I really conceive of literature very broadly, I'm thinking of even what may have preceded those. I don't know this history; you do. But even letters written to the U.S. government by your people, or other kinds of communications and correspondences. Responses to treaties, or—I don't know exactly what I mean, but just literature very broadly defined. It's just making me think about that diversity of Očhéthi Šakówiŋ literature, not just as a creative expression.

WWH: I really appreciate that. When you mentioned like, even letters written to Congress people. In doing some of my research for my first book,[1] I would go into these Lakȟóta, Dakȟóta, Nakȟóta archives and I would see letters written by my people to Congressional people. We have a lot of that. Even in this day and age, we're still talking about treaties and there's still a lot of conversation written about those treaty relationships. And so yeah, I appreciate that because it is vast, and it's quite deep.

JANE: I even think about your brother Steve, when I was visiting Rosebud, who was doing work in the archive there at your community historical center, he was looking at some really interesting material. I don't remember what, but even the local archives, similar to what you were saying about the community published literature, those are things that are only accessible there. And not a lot of people probably see those.

WWH: Now you're giving me some ideas to talk about at the next retreat. We have talked about that a little bit in terms of people just writing and maybe doing some self-publishing. You know, like, nothing more than writing something down and then going to a copy machine and making fifty copies and just passing them out. I think that we had talked about that in a very superficial way. But when I think about it more, why not go into those archives? Why not go into the Jesuit records at Marquette University and go through there and see who wrote what to the diocese?

JANE: Yes.

WWH: And just start going through that and surveying that. I mean, that would really be helpful in a historical perspective as well. It would really bust the idea that writing is such a challenge, when it's not—when people are moved to write regardless, and something motivated them to write. In my folders, I've made copies of my people writing letters in the 1950s to county commissioners, to white ranchers, to congresspeople, and those primary sources formed the basis of my book. A lot of that is community literature.

And it was very insightful. Even then, there was bilingualism. A lot of material was published in my language in the 1950s and 1960s explaining certain things in our language. Those documents would be great tools for language revitalization.

JANE: Absolutely.

WWH: You know, to give them [printed works in D/L/Nakȟóta] to intermediate learners and say, translate this.

JANE: Let's shift gears a bit, because I want to talk to you about the late Vine Deloria Jr., whom you did briefly mention earlier. I know that you knew him first through your dad, right? Didn't you tell me once that he came to visit your dad before you were his student? How did you come to know Vine and what was working with him like in the context of this Očhéthi Šakówiŋ literary tradition that we're discussing?

WWH: Well, I actually got to know Vine through *Custer Died for Your Sins* when I read it in college. I got to know him that way. I didn't really know his relationship with my father at all, and they knew each other

quite well. Vine did mention one time that he did visit my father. All he said was, "When I pulled up in your yard with a car, there was just a bunch of kids." Because we have a big family and we have a lot of friends. He made a remark like, "I'm just so lucky I didn't actually run over one of you."

And of course, my dad knew Vine Senior, and I think I read a book or two by Vine Junior by that time and asked my dad, "Do you know Vine Deloria, Junior?" He said, "Well, yeah, I know him." That was it. Like so matter-of-factly. Like he would say that about anybody in the community. "Yeah, I know that guy. I know him." So I never knew the import of that relationship until I met Vine. Then he started talking to me about my father and their relationship, and I thought, Holy moly! So I think those familial relationships were there and I was just not aware of them until my adulthood.

I think that relationship with my father made it easy for Vine when I applied for the master's program [at the University of Colorado, Boulder]. He really stepped up and really advocated for me. I wouldn't say I hung out at his house like a groupie, [but] I made visits to his house when I had to. And they were enjoyable. He was bigger than life. And could be quite intimidating in a lot of ways. He was just really plainspoken. That was a lot of times disarming because he had written so much. He was at one time considered one of the top twelve theologians in the world.

JANE: Oh, wow. I wasn't aware of that.

WWH: So yeah, there was that common aspect to him, yet when I'd see people visiting him, there was this aura of deference to him. People knew him and read him and he did a lot of things in his life. I appreciate what he did for me. And so I hold him in a certain light. There's literature coming out about Vine now, his influence, his impact. I've never written anything with him, for him or anything, but in my little corner of the world, I just really appreciate what he's done for me. I could honestly say if it wasn't for Vine, I wouldn't be talking to you right now.

JANE: Well, that's big.

WWH: So there's an awareness and a gratitude. He and I always felt that. I think he would be very happy with the fact that I got through his pro-

gram. I mean, I got through and got a master's. I think that was his high-water mark at least. I don't think he expected me to go on for a PhD. I don't think he expected me to write. Perhaps he just expected me to get my butt back to the rez and start working at the community level.

JANE: He saw you get your masters, right? He knew you got a PhD as well? He was still alive?

WWH: Yeah, I wrote him a few times about my experiences. I value those handful of letters that I got from him. But I also realized that as grateful as I am for everything he's done for me, I also realize that in the end, he gave me the opportunity and it was up to me to make it or break it. I thought he was very demanding.

JANE: So I guess you're saying he made you read in his classes?

WWH: I remember one, I took a Lakȟóta Worldview class from him, and I remember at one point he said, there were a handful of us Native graduate students in his class, it was a class that was filled. It was a handful [of us] and he was going over the syllabus and the readings and he talked about the final paper. And then he said this to the Native students: "I don't want to read papers about how great your grandma is or how great your grandma was." After class, the handful of us got together and were like, "Damn, he read our mind!" [Laughs] A handful of us were like, "Damn, that was what we were going to write about!" What he said, he was messaging that he wants some serious scholarship out of this process.

I got the impression from him that you had to fight the battles on your own in the academy. But he would support you in a lot of ways, which I appreciated.

JANE: Giving someone the tools to do their own work is, I think, what being a good educator is about. You can't do the work for them and fight their battles for them.

WWH: So his influence on me is probably in that, when I took his Lakȟóta Worldview class, he had all this literature from Standing Bear, Eastman, all these people, Black Elk, and I tore through that literature. We talked about it. Sometimes privately, sometimes in class. He

got me to thinking. He basically said, "You have all the tools. You were born and raised in your homelands. You were exposed to a lot of things that ninety-nine percent of the people in this country don't even know about." He said, "Use it. Use it."

We briefly discuss WWH's having been on the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Council and his involvement in tribal governance before becoming an academic, then continue.

WWH: Maybe some people feel disappointed that I have not been involved politically in my nation, like returning to the tribal council. But I've seen what those [Indian Reorganization Act] governments are all about. They're just one huge bureaucracy of providing social services and very little in terms of the meat of sovereignty. So I have coined the phrase, "nation before reservation." I tell this to the Oglála at Pine Ridge; the Húŋkpapȟa at Standing Rock; the other Tȟítȟuŋwaŋ at Cheyenne River and Lower Brule; my Dakȟóta relatives in Sisseton, Flandreau, Crow Creek, Upper Sioux, Lower Sioux, Prairie Island, and Santee and our relatives in Canada, I say, "Look, man, nation before reservation." In other words, we have got to move as one nation.

JANE: That seems very appropriate to the idea of literary traditions as a nation-building project that unifies, and the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society as a gathering of nations in a way that supersedes or doesn't really consider reservation, but considers that national literature, even if people don't conceive of it that way.

WWH: And I think that's what we're aware of. Initially it was like a literary society of writers from the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, just do the literature, but as time evolved over the thirty years, we realized that it cannot be just a literary society. It has to be more than that. It's just not the production of literature. The literature has to speak to our conditions, our dreams, our aspirations, our disappointments. Our failings. So that was the move to go from Oak Lake Writers' Society, which is not very descriptive, to Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society. That's more of where we land, where we put our ceremonial staff, so to speak. And then what does that mean? We do talk about our writing, certain mechanics of it, but also the philosophy of it, the thinking behind it. Why do we write

anyway? And who are we writing for? What does it mean to be a writer in the mainstream versus a community writer? So those are good places to be. I think we're very political without actually being politically active [e.g., working on political campaigns]. In our discussions, I mean, we don't take any position, any stands.

JANE: It's the production of literature with a purpose for the people, whatever that may look like.

As we conclude our interview, we consider some of these larger questions about purpose and audience. For example, how does WWH envision what the next thirty years might look like for the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society and the ongoing development of Očhéthi Šakówiŋ literary traditions? What are his thoughts about the types of writing future generations of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Oyáte will undertake, either in the same or new forms and genres as their Očhéthi Šakówiŋ literary ancestors? While we continue to reflect upon and discuss these questions, we agree that future possibilities for the perpetuation of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ literary tradition in all forms—existing and yet to be created—will bring, as it always has, energy, beauty, power, and a clear assertion of national identity to the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ peoples.

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NOTE

1. Edward Valandra, *Not Without Our Consent: Lakota Resistance to Termination, 1950–1959* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

A Memory of Oak Lake

VI WALN

Abstract: The Oak Lake Writers' Society was formed in 1993 at the South Dakota State University (SDSU) Field House near Oak Lake. SDSU Professor Charles Woodard and tribal educators Lowell Amiotte and Elden Lawrence coordinated the gatherings. Tribal college and public university officials submitted names of tribal citizens they believed would benefit from an Indigenous writer's retreat. The Field House, used as a Girl Scout cabin prior to SDSU acquiring the property, contained a large meeting room with a fireplace, a full kitchen, two bathrooms and several sleeping rooms. The Field House was located a few hundred yards from the lake. There were about fifteen tribal citizens from South Dakota who attended the first retreat. Most of the participants experienced dreams or unexplained incidents while exploring the area surrounding the cabin and lake during the initial retreat. During one of the group sessions, we discussed what we were experiencing both in the cabin and surrounding area. Several incidents on the last day of the retreat were experienced as a group. Our time there was no coincidence. Many of the group members believe they were drawn to Oak Lake to help with healing one instance of trauma experienced by their ancestors.

Keywords: Indigenous, writers, trauma, ancestors, dreams, healing, prayer, massacre

We are the tellers of our Dakota-Lakota-Nakota stories. We hear others say the stories of our people were shared through an oral tradition. We maintain our oral tradition by storytelling. Many of us tell our children about family history and the accomplishment of ancestors, along with personal or cultural experiences surrounding the Lakota way of life.

Our stories have always been shared visually. We have many contemporary artists telling our stories. The images of our past captured through the antique wasicu camera are even more graphic when inter-

preted through various mediums shared by contemporary artists. For instance, when I view a painting of an image from the Wounded Knee Massacre, I feel pain. Indigenous art evokes emotion on many levels.

Another example of visual storytelling is our ancestral Winter Counts. We read books in which historical writers refer to these depictions of camp life in their storytelling. As Indigenous people, we must write our stories as often as we tell or share visual art forms of our history. An Indigenous perspective is vital in written stories about our people. We are the authenticity of our past, present and future stories; whether they are told in person, shared through art or written down.

An Indigenous writer must be ethical, especially when sharing historical accounts of ancestors or ceremony. Spoken or written, our words are sacred and touch the people we share them with.

Our stories were passed down through our ancestors, who survived with only the land as their ally for centuries. This forged an unbreakable bond between our people and the land. We maintain our ancestral connection to the land.

As we spend time on the land, we might see her memory. I describe it as a glimpse of a moment past. We feel the energy and emotions of our ancestors in a snapshot of a time long gone. This energy brings flashes of images to our minds. More vision comes through dreams. The land has communicated with us since the beginning.

The land was also witness to countless atrocities. The history of this country holds many savage accounts of the murder of Indigenous people. Our ancestors were killed across Turtle Island in the cold, heartless march toward Manifest Destiny. In the quest to slaughter our ancestors, there were times when massacres were covered up by wasicu. Still, the land remembers.

I attended the initial retreat that sparked the Oak Lake Writers' Society. Our society was the first exclusive Indigenous writers' group. Today, we are the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society. Many stories have been written by our members since our society was born, yet we continue to contemplate what it means to be an Indigenous writer.

The group is unique. Our members are citizens of federally recognized tribes. Most are published writers. Many have advanced college degrees. My writer peers are the cream of the crop when it comes to intelligence, critical thinking and storytelling. I applaud every one of

them for their continued work as literary artists. We maintain our connection to the land and our ancestors.

The invitation to the Oak Lake Writers' Society came at a critical time in my life. I don't know where my writing skills would have been applied if I had not attended the ongoing retreats with other Indigenous writers.

The first year at the Oak Lake retreat was a spiritual experience. I believe each one of us who attended the initial retreat was chosen to spend time on the land at Oak Lake. The land called us there to help our ancestors.

When I arrived for the first retreat, I wanted to pray with burning sage all around and through the cabin. The energy was heavy. The dreams started the first night we were there. Our nightmares were vivid. There were so many ancestors who reached out to us in our sleep, crying for help. I'll never forget those dreams.

The massacre happened near Oak Lake. I felt the ghosts of our tortured ancestors fleeing near the lake, as they must have done on their last day alive. I could almost smell the pungent sweat of the soldiers' horses as they chased the men, women and children through the ravine.

I made prayers and left tobacco in a red felt flag near the lake where the savage killing of our ancestors happened. There were many murders of Indigenous people during the Dakota War era. Prayers are still made in ceremony for the spirits of our traumatized ancestors.

Creator works in mysterious ways. The spirits of our ancestors were weary. They were ready to move on. I am sharing a glimpse of what happened at Oak Lake.

—

An enemy scout had led the soldiers to where we were camped. There was no time to pack. We fled camp at dawn. We took only the food we could carry because the Itancan said our warriors saw the soldiers not far away.

The late afternoon sun was hot. We had been running all day. I could see the lake not far ahead of me.

My side felt like one of my Kunsi sharp awls had been jammed in there. I could hear my heart pounding like a loud drum in my ears. My lungs were burning as though they were on fire, every breath I took hurt. My legs were going to buckle under me at any time. Still, I ran.

I knew if we could get to the lake, I could hide under the water with a

long reed to breathe through, just like my Ina taught me to when we last had camped by the big water.

I heard Leksi give the warning, which meant the soldiers were close! They found us! Soon I could hear the horses wheezing behind me as they do when they have run hard for a very long time.

I could hear the men yelling and fighting with the soldiers. Even though I could see the lake not far ahead of me, my Mommy signaled to hide. I veered left and ran for the cover of the bushes at the bottom of the ravine. I crawled into the thick brush as far as I could and tried to lay still.

I could hear screaming. My body trembled. I jumped when the soldiers began firing their big guns. I was too afraid to cry out for Mommy. I knew she would want me to stay quiet in my hiding place.

Then the screams were gone. Soon the copper smell of human blood filled the air. I could hear the soldiers shouting as they came crashing through the bushes looking for me.

I wondered where my Mommy was as the words of the death song she taught me ran through my mind. I closed my eyes and silently prayed for Tunkasila to make me invisible.

—

The land is sacred. She holds many secrets. Many ancestors lie in unmarked graves or are buried at boarding schools.

The wasicu made many laws to protect their savage history. One of those laws is to prohibit the public from viewing certain historical documents until many years have gone by, in the hopes that atrocities are forgotten. Indigenous remains have also been long hidden in the basements or attics of universities. Descendants are chosen to help these often-forgotten ancestors move forward on the path to the Star Camps.

When a moment comes for our ancestors to show us the memory of the land, we have the responsibility to share the story with others. In fact, we are interpreters of stories that could not otherwise be told, as no one was left alive to share the tale.

VI WALN, Sicangu Lakota, resides on the Rosebud Reservation. She is a member of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society and the Indigenous Journalists Association. Vi has worked as a journalist for over twenty years. She is currently researching to write a book about the life of Chief Afraid of Eagle.

Lydia Whirlwind Soldier. *Memory Songs.* The Center for Western Studies, Augustana College, 1999. 60 pp., o.p.

Lydia Whirlwind Soldier. *Survival Songs.* Martin, SD: CAIRNS Press, 2020. 50 pp., paper, $12.00.

Julianne Newmark, University of Mexico

In reviewing these two books of poetry by Lydia Whirlwind Soldier, I found myself connecting Whirlwind Soldier's careful effort in her "Dedication" in *Survival Songs* to themes and resonances, indeed sensory evocations, from poems across both volumes, which span twenty-one years between their publication. As a boarding school survivor, Whirlwind Soldier explains in the "Dedication" that the stories she was told as child, during her summers spent away from school back home on the Rosebud Sićaŋġu Lakota reservation, imprinted within her "the memory of my relatives of Bad Nation" and "helped me retain my Lakota pride and not lose my sense of hope while at boarding school" (1). Because Whirlwind Soldier does not mince words about U.S. governmental "destruction" of "tribal cultures and identities," perceptive readers from within her home community, as well as readers from outside of it (like me), can identify the threads of resistance and recovery that are woven throughout her poems in these two volumes (2). Indeed, there are many searing renderings of destruction, death, and trauma, yet Whirlwind Soldier insists upon remembrance and recovery. It is these latter themes that, combined with her elegant and direct poetics, make these collections the rich and emotionally laden works that they are.

Memory Songs begins with a poem from 1992, entitled "Lakota Poet." Whirlwind Soldier prepares her readers for what to expect from her, as one who embodies this role, a role that is saturated with labels descending from colonial literary traditions, which she seizes and refuses at the outset: "this Lakota poet (?) don't know / form / free verse, / prose / oxymoron / or rhyme creation" (ix). As if to challenge her readers and

their assumptions concerning poetry, she takes on these assumptions, or expected moves of compliance, from her poem's first lines. She will resist, yet she does so within a structure of moves: an overture stanza that contains one long line, four indented short lines of one or two words each, and a sixth line set aside to the right, of three words that comprise a final thought on what she supposedly, to her invisible accusers, doesn't know ("or rhyme creation"). She takes down her critics across this opening poem's five stanzas, which all function much like the first one in design, but position "this Lakota poet" as one who faces challenges and assumptions by "scholars" about what a poet must do ("must have / documentation / and linear confirmation") but who chooses, instead, to center her experience on what she *does* have ("a literary tradition / philosophy / oratory, drama / music and / oral tradition"), markers that define her and move her to assert that "this Lakota poet" "don't need validation" (ix).

I've offered such a sustained view into the above poem—just one from the 33 poems that *Memory Songs* comprises and the further 42 that are included in *Survival Songs*—because it sets the vital tone that defines Whirlwind Soldier's poetic oeuvre. While other poems emerge out of her stance as a poet who does not need or seek non-Native validation, and does not need to comply with expectations concerning what her poems "must have" thematically or formally, she progresses across stories in her poems that offer evidence of her gifts as a poet who is able to carefully build a story across lines, words, historical time, geographic distance, family ties, and intercultural (mis)understandings.

While I cannot offer robust exegeses in this review of even a fraction of the 75 poems that constitute these two collections, I want to draw our attention to a few specifically, as they exemplify the work Whirlwind Soldier does in spare verse, varied line lengths, and shifting authorial positioning. In her 1996 poem "Sandhills of Nebraska," from *Memory Songs*, Whirlwind Soldier begins by describing a time before the land was "quartered and quilted" and the land was Siċaŋġu land; she proceeds to contrast the travel of Canada geese, their "joyous chorus of reunion" and the ways in which they "elude the wind / land in patches of melting snow / hidden in yellow fields," where "whiffs of fertilizer" sting her throat (7–8). From these visions of geese, she reveals what she "can almost hear": "Lakota women / in long fringed dresses," children who "happily / splash in clear sandy creeks," and "young women / with

scarlet wase streaked / through their hair." Despite the painful "whiffs of fertilizer" and the realities of the "pestilent covered wagons" that "wound their way west," Whirlwind Soldier is able to "drift off to sleep" because her "Uncicila's gentle voice / offered sanctuary" (9). Though she defines the Lakota words she uses after offering the date of composition at the end of the poem, the translations may be, perhaps, unnecessary for understanding the spirit of her poem, yet, these translations might support the language-learning goals of some of her readers.

Whirlwind Soldier revisits the themes of language, memory, trauma, and recovery throughout her collections. The poem "New Age" is defiant about what she, and other Lakota, do not need, which is the "theatrical language that strips traditions naked," "phony language" that is tied to money and "value" (27). She doesn't need the words of faddish, so-called new age people (as per the poem's title) who appropriate and indeed steal "Lakota teachings" (27). "Go away unless you can take it on," she writes; she will not "fix your guilt" (28). Her reiteration of the presence in Lakota territory of deceptive voices, manipulating messages, and inauthentic and appropriative gestures catalyzes her ire, her directness, her resistance.

In *Survival Songs*, and in selected poems from *Memory Songs*, Whirlwind Soldier does not offer the "textual apparatus" of translated words after a poem's close. In *Survival Songs*, there are very few examples of the after-the-poem translated words. Similar to the *Memory Songs* poem "Journey Foreseen," where she offers in-line combinations of language ("Nayahunpi he? Hotunpi! Did you hear them? They / were honking"), she juxtaposes Lakota and English across two stanzas of "Grandma's Song," wherein a whole stanza in Lakota is followed by an English-language stanza. She understands the language kinship of some of her readers and she challenges other readers to grapple with the unknown. She lets the dissonance resonate on the page.

Before closing, I want to draw attention to two particular poems: "Kimimila," a poem from *Memory Songs*, written in 1995, and "Micunks'i" from *Survival Songs* (an undated poem, like the others in the volume). The first poem is in beautiful, succinct lines, twenty-nine lines to be specific, ranging from one to three words across them. The person Whirlwind Soldier is describing in this poem, "she," has fluttering "from her mouth" butterflies, "mystical wisps of color"; they are "truly of earth / truly of spirit" (36). The female the poem focuses on reaches out to the

butterflies: "'how beautiful / how beautiful,' / she sighs" (36). These butterflies "carry her through / the streams of / sunlit paths" (36). The much shorter poem "Mikunks'i," or "Daughters," as Whirlwind Soldier adds, is but four lines long: "let them be butterflies / beautiful and free / not fleeing shadow /rushing to meet the night" (21). By contrast to the tone of "Kimimila," "Mikunks'i" is more plaintive, a solemn wish for freedom for Siċaŋġu Lakota daughters, freedom from various shadowy oppressions, women and girls perhaps rushing towards darkness, is whatever manifestation. "Let them be," Whirlwind Soldier writes; perhaps, *let them be* like the "she" in "Mikunks'i" who effectively emits earth, spirit, sunlight, and beauty from her body. She creates a space where this *let them be* becomes an affirmation of being-in-present—women and girls who *are* free, as she is, as a Lakota poet via her word-work.

A founding member of the Oak Lake Writers' Society, Whirlwind Soldier created poetry volumes that are striking meditations on the persistent multidimensionality of her sense of the Siċaŋġu Lakota story-scape. As a poet who asserts that she is participating in a Lakota storytelling tradition, she also creates space for her words to occupy textual and cultural space, assertively, thereby allowing her to model for those who read her words and are inspired by her poems' power and beauty (and even, their pain) to persist and flourish, via an assertively Lakota poetics of story-making.

Sandy White Hawk. *A Child of the Indian Race: A Story of Return*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2022. 232 pp., paper, $18.95.

Gabrielle Tateyuskanskan, Oceti Sakowin Writers Society

The continuous assault on families of the Oceti Sakowin or Seven Council Fires by American society is one of the most traumatic of human rights violations the Oyate or Nation has endured. Innocent wakaneja or children had bounties placed on them, were persecuted by citizen militia, incarcerated in prison of war camps, and massacred by the American military during colonization. Americans were allowed to assault children with impunity. The collective suffering from harms continues in to the modern era caused by the boarding school system, non-Oyate foster care, and the adoption of wakaneja outside their nation by misguided Americans. In her survivor account, Sandy White Hawk documents the destructive impact of ill-advised federal policies that promoted the eradication of tribal languages, culture, and spirituality, and punished those who refused to comply. The most harmful is the psychological and physical mistreatment of Oyate wakaneja in education institutions, foster care placement, adoption by American families, and racism in American society. The story of Sandy White Hawk details the horrific historical factors that continue to affect current generations and the tremendous weight the Oyate carries today.

The Oceti Sakowin is an alliance comprising seven bands: the Bdewakantunwan, Sissetunwan, Wahpetunwan, Wahpekute, Ihanktunwan, Ihanktunwanna, and the Tituwan. This is the traditional governing structure of the Oyate. The aftermath of war, exile and the betrayal of treaties, resulted in America forcing the Oyate into several reservations across the northern plains. This distance purposely further fragmented and separated the Oceti Sakowin. Federal policies compelled Oyate citizens to abandon their traditional ways of knowing and forced their assimilation into American society. Children were forcibly removed from their parents, families, and communities, and this has led to a legacy

of damaged lives and missing relatives. The Oyate was once powerless to protect and stop the many abuses of their wakaneja by American society.

The Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of June 18, 1934, or the Wheeler Howard Act, pressured the Oceti Sakowin and other tribal Nations to adopt constitutions that mimicked the U.S. Constitution. This further eroded the pre-European-settlement original Nations' governing structures by denying equality, dignity, and agency. What it did allow for was self-determination in other matters. America continued some of its assimilation position in boarding schools, but policy changes did begin to allow for some tribal histories and cultures to be taught in boarding schools. On June 15, 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Indian Child Welfare Act in *Haaland v. Brackeen*. Yet traumatic catastrophic harms continue to happen to the children of the Oyate. Wakaneja have had their hair cut in public schools without the permission of their parents. They have been denied cultural practices like wearing eagle plumes or feathers during their high school graduation ceremonies.

The United Nations (UN) Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was approved by the General Assembly on December 9, 1948, states:

> ARTICLE II
>
> In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to
>
> Destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethical, racial or religious group, as such:
>
> (a). Killing members of the group;
>
> (b.) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
>
> (c.) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
>
> (d.) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
>
> (e.) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.[1]

The historic actions of American society to remove wakaneja from their

family, tiyospaye, and Oyate meets the criteria of genocide. In order to promote a humane and civil society America must admit and atone for the historical mistreatment of the most vulnerable in society, our wakaneja. The narrative of Sandy White Hawk is an important voice in telling the story of American societal failure to safeguard an important cherished resource, our wakaneja. The word "wakaneja" translates as "they are sacred too." It describes the high regard the culture of the Oyate has for its children. It is up to the present-day Oyate to live up to this value and see that wakaneja are protected.

At the present, the Oyate are healing and repairing from the trauma experienced by generations of Oyate families who suffered from harms, especially during the childhoods of their wakaneja. This intergenerational trauma inflicted on children occurred during war, exile, imprisonment, forced relocation to reservations, in the government and Christian mission sponsored boarding schools, in non-Oyate foster care and adoptions. The story of Sandy White Hawk's life-experience and the harms she inherited from being an adoptee in an American family explores the complexity of two cultures that collide in a transracial adoption. White Hawk discloses the extreme trauma she endured from being removed from her birth family, culture of origin, and tribal nation, telling her story of childhood suffering as an adoptee. She uses the account of her trauma experience and the deep wounds she carried as the result of the attempted erasure of Oyate culture and identity by her American adoptive family to bring awareness to this important issue. She illuminates how painfully heavy and damaging these injuries were to her and how detrimental these harms are to the healthy development of young people.

Through her powerful memoir Sandy White Hawk illustrates the difficult and painful journey from the trauma of separation from her family, community, and Oyate, to healing. She has used her personal struggle as a means to help others to face the harmful experience of alienation and losses endured as a result of childhood devastation caused by removal of children from their community of origin. Sandy White Hawk has demonstrated courage to face her painful childhood trauma. In doing so she has found a healing path forward. Through ceremonial practice she is able to address intergenerational trauma to help our lost relatives find their way home. As stated in her narrative, "Wicoicage aki un kupi" or "Generation after generation we are coming home."

This inspiring memoir explains the challenging and courageous personal transformation from a suffering, wounded child to a resilient adult who then transforms her wounds into empathy, compassion, and a welcoming spirit to other Oyate adoptees who have been disconnected from their family, tiyospaye, and Oyate of origin. By founding the First Nations Repatriation Institute for individuals impacted by foster care and adoption, White Hawk offers hope to others whose lives have also been shattered by the heart-breaking losses caused by foster care and adoption placements away from their Oyate of origin. She offers a collective means for lost generations to return to their relatives.

At present, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 is still under challenge. The purpose of the act is to set minimum adoption criteria to protect the interest of tribal children by ensuring they are not separated from their culture and community. It is a necessary measure to assist the Oyate and other tribal nations in protecting their children and preventing the further loss of missing relatives in our communities. The story of Sandy White Hawk is an important resource to help society to think in broader terms about the removal of wakaneja from their Oyate of origin. Her story demonstrates the necessity of promoting the health and well-being of children through knowing their culture of origin and having contact with their family, tiyospaye, and Oyate to end the anguish of childhood trauma. We are unable to change the past, yet we do have the agency to live fully in the present and choose our future. Healing for the Oceti Sakowin means the living relatives must find resolutions to unresolved harms. A key strength of our resilient culture is that it shows us we have the ability to heal ourselves.

NOTE

1. UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, 9 December 1948, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 78, p. 277.

Larissa FastHorse. *Wicoun*. Directed by Michael John Garcés, Cornerstone Theater Company, May 25–June 16, 2023, North and South Dakota.

Clementine Bordeaux, University of California

At the end of May 2023, Sicangu Lakota playwright Larissa FastHorse premiered her play *Wicoun*, directed by Michael John Garcés and produced by Cornerstone Theater Company (Los Angeles, CA). *Wicoun*, which loosely translates to "a way of life," was created with, for, and about Očéti Šakówiŋ communities in the Northern Plains. The play focuses on tribal communities of local reservations in the Dakotas. Through inside tribal jokes and powerful topics of rural life, the script evokes a clever, entertaining, and thought-provoking narrative that touches on kinship, Native superheroes, and the complicated dynamic of balancing white American heteronormative expectations and Očéti Šakówiŋ cultural values. The ensemble cast was led by Áya (played by Lakota actor 9a ["nee-nuh"] Matowin) and their brother Khoskalaka (played by Iipai/Kumeyaay actor Kenny Ray Ramos). Áya and Khoskalaka are raising their younger siblings and cousins while navigating gender identity, community safety, and educational decisions for their future. But after Áya unknowingly summons an Očéti Šakówiŋ superhero in a moment of bravery, the siblings have to venture on a journey to find answers in the Ȟe Sápa (Black Hills) and, ultimately, within themselves. Khoskalaka supports and challenges Áya as they navigate the world as a trans-Lakota character seeking guidance from Očéti Šakówiŋ superheroes that embody the four cardinal values: Wóohitike (Bravery), Wówačhiŋtȟaŋka (Perseverance), Wówačhaŋtognake (Generosity), and Wóksape (Wisdom). The play toured North and South Dakota from May 25–June 16, 2023, and visited six tribal reservations.

FastHorse builds on the literary legacy and documentary styles of Očéti Šakówiŋ authors like Ella C. Deloria, Zitkala-Ša, Elizabeth

Cook-Lynn, Layli Long Soldier, Sarah Hernandez, and many others who prioritize cultural and community stories to weave present-day and future-facing narratives. FastHorse, alongside Cornerstone Theater Company, demonstrated a theater methodology that employed self-reflexive portrayals that emphasized a collaborative approach to crafting the play in which communities shared stories, and the team documented their descriptions anonymously. The script was written directly from those anonymous portrayals. The play resulted from four years of outreach and engagement in Northern Plains tribal and non-native communities. FastHorse, Cornerstone, and their collaborators spent time in the Dakotas hosting story circles, conducting youth theater workshops, and traveling across the region. Every story shared with FastHorse became a part of the *Wicoun* narrative. FastHorse and her team created an Očéti Šakówiŋ futurism that embraces the historical fluidity of gender expression, imagines our cultural values as superpowers, and utilizes the Lakota language in about one-third of the play. Unlike the typical extractive storymaking that occurs in mainstream American theater, the legacy of storytelling from an Očéti Šakówiŋ perspective is an essential contribution to Očéti Šakówiŋ literary legacies.

The play, performance venues, and community engagement are needed interventions in mainstream theater production, which also desperately needs rural and tribal representation not centered on deficit narratives. *Wicoun* met the community where they were, performing in elementary school gyms, next to skate parks, and outside tribal office buildings. Without microphones or lighting, *Wicoun* utilized the surrounding scenery to their benefit. For example, in one of the productions I participated in, a "rez dog" (an unleashed neighborhood dog) joined the action, attempting to protect the audience from a zombie character. This occurrence was a perfect mirror to the community. The play also dives into the ongoing issue of substance abuse, particularly meth—FastHorse frames meth users as "zombies" and criticizes their lasting impact on our communities. Instead of centering their substance abuse as a point of no return, *Wicoun* utilizes an "Elder Superhero" that reminds us that the zombies used to be our relatives and that maybe someday they can return to us. FastHorse repeatedly shared, introducing the play, that superheroes were a theme that often emerged in conversations with the community. Unlike many stories that frame res-

ervation life as a negative, *Wicoun* uplifted the parts of rural tribal life that are most precious, including the familial and cultural connections we have access to.

I was able to watch the play at five different venues. As an audience member, I was excited to see every aspect of the story grounding me in place while also pushing me to think about the celebration of past, present, and future selves. The play's preview occurred with a theater-going audience at the Black Hills Playhouse located in Custer State Park in the Black Hills. The preview was the first time the cast and crew experienced an audience. Thankfully, the theater-based audience was generous and provided space for any missteps as the cast adjusted to a complete run-through in a new area. The show only got better from there. The "opening" of the play was hosted at Racing Magpie, an Indigenous-based arts organization located in Rapid City, SD. The intergenerational audience was mainly Native, and the play's reception was celebratory. The jokes landed perfectly, and excitement post-show afforded group photos. I overheard some young audience members preparing to write plays when they got home. Unfortunately, the show that was supposed to be in downtown Rapid City was rained out. Still, those audiences could attend a performance that coincided with Rapid City's first Two-Spirit Pow Wow the following week. That performance yielded one of the largest audiences. Each experience was intergenerational and demonstrated a wide range of laughter, excitement, and a sense of pride as the audience sought pictures with the cast post-show.

As the cast and crew moved performances to the reservation, I was eager to witness the show with fellow tribal members. Cast member Kenny Ray Ramos shared with me, in passing, that before each reservation performance, he would drive through the local neighborhoods and recruit audience members. Again, the intergenerational audiences on the reservations provided more significant laughs. The play surprised many, and I often overheard the audience exclaim that the theater play was about us. The Očéti Šakówiŋ superheroes reflected our lives in real-time. The biggest challenge for *Wicoun* was the breadth of locations the crew attempted to cover. I hope to see more shows on the reservations if the show receives a re-launch.

Mark Tilsen. *It Ain't Over Until We're Smoking Cigars on the Drill Pad: Poems From Standing Rock and the Frontlines*. Mark K. Tilsen, 2019 98 pp., paper, $25.00.

Taté Walker, Oceti Sakowin Writers Society

The poems and stories in Mark K. Tilsen's debut collection, *It Ain't Over Until We're Smoking Cigars on the Drill Pad*, reflect both the vitality and the mundanity of what day-to-day life was like for those in the thick of 2016's Dakota Access Pipeline protests at Standing Rock. So much of what drove this movement into worldwide fame and history is due to the no-bullshit efforts of relatives like Tilsen, who documented on-the-ground energies through these writings, which are funny, heartbreaking, frustrating, contemplative, sexy, depressing, and excruciatingly real. This book pulls you right back to Backwater Bridge and forces you to experience the wonderful community-building and fucked-up-ness of camp life, frontline action, post-protest blues, and the "what's next?" of it all.

Tilsen is Oglala Lakota and self-published the first edition of the *It Ain't Over . . .* in 2019. I was gifted a copy of the third edition (2021) in the fall of 2022. The book embodies the #NoDAPL experience within fifty-plus poems and journal entries. I was at Standing Rock as a journalist, and I found myself nodding along with Tilsen's distinct voice, which offers an archive-worthy perspective that is at once both profound and simplistic. In "We are Going to Stop the Pipeline" (9) Tilsen explains:

> There are warriors here and wannabe warriors and honest to god want to be warriors. We have allies too. I am not a warrior, nor a defender, or an activist, or a protester, or protector, nor a man of prayer. I am a poet. That's it.

As the third piece in the book, and the first listed in the table of contents, it sets the tone for what readers can expect in the rest of the book: direct,

vulnerable, and in your face. This is frontline action as poetry. There are also poems like, "Ode to the Prairie Knights Casino Bathroom" (29), a chuckle-worthy title. As a kid, I visited the casino on several occasions (I spent my teen years in Bismarck, and many of my family are Standing Rock citizens), and I can vouch for its amenities—and buffet. Tilsen does the venue justice in this love letter when he writes:

> A candle and altar would not be out of place here
> wash your hands clean
> let go
> in a camp of thousands
> this is the only privacy you get.

Like a lot of poetry, reading Tilsen's words offers a different experience than hearing them read aloud by the poet. Tilsen's normal tone is gruff, gravely, and dry, but familiar in a rez cousin-type way. When he performs to an audience, Tilsen drops into a lyrical urban cadence that recalls scenes from *Good Fellas*, especially if he's holding one of his titular cigars. Many of his poems mirror this shift in tone: On one page you'll get beautiful imagery about dancing women and dancing water; the next page filled with paranoia and depression. In "Leaving Camp" (54) we get the lines:

> you imagine every vehicle is following you
> helicopters freak you out
> one month out
> there are people you don't talk to because you feel the surveillance on your skin
> you're a danger to them, or they to you

Later, in "The Modern Lakota Man" (78), Tilsen fills our cups with this prayer:

> My beautiful boys
> My beautiful lakota men
> Stay you
> Stay true
> Lead us out of the darkness and brutality and mental infection that has been ending us
> Let us not be the monsters we were trained to be
> I need not be a terror on my people

Be like that
Just like that
wahwahala

Tilsen includes a few pieces from time spent with land and water protectors in Hawaii (Mauna Kea) and Louisiana (Bayou Bridge Pipeline). At first glance it feels like Tilsen might have included these poems to flex his protest bonafides, but their inclusion touches on the deeper meaning of decolonizing as a verb that necessitates action. Standing Rock was one, bright sun in a constellation of transcendent struggle and liberation. Tilsen might poke fun at self-care hype and hypocrisy, but he also challenges himself and his readers to resist, reflect, and rest because injustice is everywhere and ever-present—but so is family and community. Tilsen's work reminds us that the Oceti Sakowin are nothing if not layers of perfection and flaw. We are living metaphors both selfish and sacrificial. We are the best and the worst of Indian Country (more of the former, of course *winks*). The way Tilsen spotlights the great and grim of our people is truly masterful, and *It Ain't Over Until We're Smoking Cigars on the Drill Pad* negotiates Indigenous knowledge and struggle with the honesty we deserve. There is no romance here, just the culturally appropriate application of functional protest prose. Light up a cigar and give this man your money; purchase Tilsen's book at https://www.marktilsen.com/.

I Remember Turtle Woman

TRACY HAUFF

Abstract: The essay *I Remember Turtle Woman* is gleaned from two author memories: Hauff's introduction to Elsie Flood, aka Turtle Woman, in the early 1960s and hearing about her death in 1991. As a child, she was fascinated with Elsie's fearless nomadic lifestyle and easygoing demeanor. Flood was a memorable woman who made an impression on her young mind. Hauff didn't realize it at the time, but she felt protective of Flood, sensing she was a rare human being. The author was gut punched when she heard about Flood's brutal murder on the South Dakota Public Broadcasting radio station during storyteller hour. The narrator was reading the passage from Mary Crow Dog's book, *Lakota Woman*, where Elsie's death is mentioned. It was the first Hauff had heard of it, even though Elsie had been killed in 1976. It was also the first time she grasped the heartbreaking reality of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

Keywords: Elsie Flood, Turtle Woman, chokecherry jelly, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), Pine Ridge Reign of Terror, Wounded Knee Occupation, FBI Report for Pine Ridge Indian Reservation 2000.

Driving along Interstate 90, familiar saw-toothed buttes materialize on the southside, massive fortresses sculpted from limestone, sandstone, claystone, and volcanic ash. The ramparts rise skyward, smudged with brilliant bands of bronze and red hematite, a glorious juxtaposition of beauty in a barren land. It took millions of years of deposition and erosion to create Mako Siča, the Badlands, my father's childhood home. He told stories of summers spent in the isolated terrain, of cowboys on horseback visible upon the horizon for a mile before their arrival, always surprised to find the modest two-room house where his parents had coffee ready, eager for conversation with an outsider. The summers spent with his family in the Red Stone Basin were the happiest days of his

youth, disrupted by the dreaded end of August when he would have to return to Pine Ridge Indian Boarding School to live in perpetual homesickness for nine months. The Badlands will always squeeze my heart for this reason, and in 1991, its appearance coincided with the disappearance of FM frequency in your vehicle. I fiddled with the car's radio dial until I heard the distinctive timbre of the storyteller from South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

"One woman, Elsie Flood, a niece of grandma's, had a big influence upon me."

I smiled at my good fortune of tuning into a story about Turtle Woman, someone I knew, and I listened attentively.

"In the summer of 1976, she was found beaten to death in her home. She was discovered under the bed, face down and naked, with weeds in her hair."

These two sentences rocked me; the words traveled downward from brain to throat to heart to stomach, seizing each body part in a shock wave of disbelief. The narrator announced he would return after a short break to continue reading from Mary Crow Dog's memoir, *Lakota Woman*. The road blurred as my tears pooled.

I first met Elsie in the 1960s when I was a stick-thin young girl. It was Chaŋpasapa-Wi (The moon when chokecherries are black), the season when chokecherries must be separated from their branches before birds feast on them and wobble drunkenly beneath the bushes. The heat was suffocating that day; waves of hot air danced atop the pavement in front of our car as it rolled up the hills and down the valleys in the Pass Creek District. Our chokecherry picking excursion had been a success; the trunk held several buckets filled with dark purple berries, covered with worn dishtowels to prevent their escape.

We sat quietly, lulled into submission by the heat. Grandma, no doubt, was thinking about the work awaiting her once we arrived home. She and Mom would sort out the leaves and stems, boil the berries in water, extract the juice, add sugar and pectin, and fill Mason jars with steaming chokecherry jelly. I would help carry the jars down to the cool, cobwebby cellar and place them upon the rough-hewn wooden shelves Grandpa had built for food storage. Caŋpa wo'japi (chokecherry pudding) would be tonight's dessert. The Lakota people consumed chokecherries long before my grandmother was born. They pounded the ripe berries to smash the pits and dried them in the sun before mixing them

with shreds of buffalo meat and lumps of tallow, shaping the mixture into nutritious patties that would sustain them during travel and winter months.

"There's Elsie. We better see if she wants a ride." Dad pulled over to the side of the road, and I crawled over my brother, sticking my head out the window to get a better look. The woman approaching our car wore a housedress dappled with a faded floral pattern, her feet encased in a pair of men's high-laced work boots with big round toes. She wore her hair in two braids wrapped from ear to ear and secured with bobby pins.

"Hi, Elsie. Do you want a ride?" Grandma asked.

"Aŋpetu was'té [good day], Zona. Thank you, I will walk."

"You should jump in," Dad said. "It's mighty hot today."

I was still hanging out of the window, staring impolitely, and Elsie turned to me. "Do you want to see my turtles? My good luck charms?" Her hands sunk deep into the front pockets of her dress.

"Sure," I replied.

She pulled a tiny turtle from each pocket.

"Can I hold one?"

She nodded and placed it in the palm of my hand.

"Lila was'té [very good]. I will ride with you," Elsie said.

She plunked her worn travel bag onto the floorboard, climbed in, and handed my brother the other turtle.

"Look at its belly." She pursed her mouth in a familiar gesture, pointing at the turtle with her lips and a slight thrust of her chin, the Lakota mannerism considered more polite than pointing your finger.

The shell would have been an unimpressive, dull, mossy green if not for the bright red dots Elsie had painted upon it. I carefully flipped the turtle over to look at its underbelly, where Mother Nature had painted a red, yellow, and black design in the shape of a beetle.

The adults conversed in Lakota and English, traditional and progressive languages intermingling like two rivers meeting at the confluence. A crunching sound like walking upon gravel emerged from Elsie, a voice different from any I had heard from a woman. I continued to eye her even though Grandma was scowling, shaking her head ever so slightly, signaling me to break my gaze. I had a feeling I wasn't offending Elsie; we were allies in our innate need to gather information through observation. She was the color of the burnt sienna of the Badlands and

smelled of dust, prairie grass, and pond water, organic odors as natural as a human could possess. A few wrinkles creased her otherwise smooth face, making it difficult for me to guess how old she might be. Her spiritual ease made me assume she was old, yet her dark brown eyes were as bright as a child's, making me wonder if she was younger than I supposed.

Elsie lived in Coats' Cabins in Martin, a few blocks from Grandma's house. We dropped her off there, and I watched as she crouched down to pick up a loose pile of sage and carry it inside.

The next day, chatting with Grandma, I suggested we invite Elsie for dinner.

"She's probably left town already. She doesn't stay home for very long."

"Where does she go?"

"Here, there, and everywhere. She comes and goes as she pleases."

"You should be her friend, Grandma."

"I am her friend. Everyone likes Elsie. She has more friends than I do, and her turtles keep her company. Some people call her Turtle Woman, but I call her Elsie. That is her name."

"I like the name Turtle Woman. That's what I'm gonna call her. What does she have in her bag?"

"Turtle shells, sage, beads, trinkets, medicinal plants."

"Why was she walking on the highway?"

"She was crippled by polio when she was a little girl and had a lot of operations to help her walk. Now she walks everywhere because she can."

From then on, I was always on the lookout for Elsie and would spot her heading east to Rosebud, west to Pine Ridge, north to Kyle, or nowhere in particular. Her initial course could change depending on the direction of the wind or the destination of the person who offered her a ride. Even as a child, I understood she was free of obligations and routines, unshackled by time. The only clock she needed was the rising and setting sun.

We often drove to Martin to spend Christmas with Grandma, and on one such holiday trip, a few miles outside of town, I saw someone sitting on the side of the road. The ground was a bone-chilling composition of snow and ice, and I panicked when I recognized Elsie's travel bag next to

the figure that was bundled in a heavy woolen coat and several scarves. Could it be possible she was frozen to the ground?

"Dad, stop! It's Turtle Woman."

We had crammed our family of nine into the station wagon along with our dog, suitcases, and boxes filled with gifts. There was no place for Elsie to sit, and Dad explained as much, but he slowed down to make sure she was all right. She smiled and waved us on, and I sighed with relief, marveling at her ability to relax on the frozen asphalt.

Rapid City and the Black Hills came into view. The road trip to East River and return to West River was complete. Childhood memories faded, and I was pulled back into the present, not ready to accept Elsie's murder as a fact. Although tired from my drive across the state, I was more emotionally exhausted from speculating about the crime and bearing the weight of sad news. I went straight to my parent's house instead of my own.

"Mom! Dad! I was listening to public radio, and they said Elsie Flood was murdered. Is it true?"

My sudden appearance and outburst bewildered them. I repeated what I had heard.

"Yes, that's true," Mom said.

"Who did it? Why? Why would anyone kill Elsie?"

"No one knows who or why."

"What do you mean? Why don't they know?"

"They never found the killer, so they don't know why she was killed. She hadn't been seen for several days. Someone went to the rooming house to check on her and found her body."

My dad was a retired Federal Probation Officer, and his caseload had included the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations. I directed my next volley of questions toward him.

"I don't understand, Dad. Less than a thousand people live in Martin. Why didn't they find out who did it? How hard could it have been to investigate?"

"It was certainly a heinous crime—a senseless act of violence. The absence of any signs of struggle in her room led to the conclusion that she was killed outdoors, most likely alongside the road, which would account for the weeds in her hair. They suspected the killer was a transient, a no-good drunkard, and with no evidence, it became a cold case.

I found it puzzling that her body was hidden in her home. Someone placed her there. Someone who knew where she lived."

For the second time that day, I shed tears for the gentle Lakota woman who asked for nothing more than to enjoy life as a free spirit, and it was the first time I fully comprehended the blatant bias that hinders criminal investigations regarding missing and murdered people in Indian Country. Many years would pass before the grassroots movement Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) was founded to address the disproportionate number of violent mortalities among Native women. The homicide rate of Indigenous women in the United States is ten times the national average.

Elsie's murder in 1976 was only one of many that occurred during the period known on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation as the "Reign of Terror." Between 1973 and 1976, in the aftermath of the Wounded Knee Occupation, sixty-nine Natives were killed on the South Dakota reservation, and their deaths went unresolved for over two decades. In 1999, the South Dakota Advisory Committee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights listened to tribal members at a forum held in Rapid City, South Dakota, and decided to question FBI officials regarding the lack of accountability for the excessive fatalities that the FBI did not consider foul play but dismissed as rumors.[1] In May 2000, the Minneapolis Division FBI released the *Report for Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota*. In this report, the FBI recorded fifty-seven of the sixty-nine deaths with these results: No Investigation—21; Convictions—19; Insufficient Evidence—8; No Jurisdiction—4; Accidental—3; Unsolved—1; Acquitted—1.[2] The victims' families had pushed for answers and prayed for closure for years, and this final report with only nineteen convictions was an immense disappointment. The loss of Native lives seemed to annoy the FBI; the assumption was that someone's mother, father, son, daughter, sister, brother, auntie, or uncle must have inexplicably been responsible for their own death.

The report's opening paragraph shifted blame onto family members and friends who spoke up but had their voices silenced for twenty years. "The Federal Bureau of Investigation and its Agents in South Dakota can only operate effectively where we have the trust and help of the American people. For South Dakota, much of our work revolves around crimes occurring in Indian Country. The trust and help of res-

ervation residents are vital to the accomplishment of our sworn duty."[3] The unvarnished reality of inequality surrounding murdered Indigenous people was evident and compounded the anguish of the grieving families.

In 2023, I have no difficulty conjuring up the woman I found so fascinating. I still bristle at the shameful failure to conduct a proper investigation, but I no longer harbor the painful image of Elsie's last earthly moments. Knowing her penchant for travel, I think about the joy she must have found in her spiritual journey, the ultimate trek taken by every Native once they shed their human shell. She must have loved traipsing along her ancestors' trail, wandering with unconditional abandon throughout the Milky Way, and visiting relatives dwelling in the Great Bear constellation before selecting her forever home in the star camps.

Shine bright, Turtle Woman. I remember you.

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Taté Walker. *The Trickster Riots*. Illustrations by Ohíya Walker. Tuba City, AZ: Abalone Mountain Press, 2022. 132 pp., paper, $20.00.

Sarah Hernandez, The University of New Mexico

The Trickster Riots is the stunning debut of Two Spirit Lakota storyteller Taté Walker (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe). In this poetry collection, Walker plays the role of trickster and social commentator, shattering many of the myths and misconceptions that have long dehumanized the Lakota Oyate. They do so with tremendous heart, humor, and thoughtful reflection. In addition to deconstructing common Native American stereotypes, Walker also critically interrogates the long-term effects these colonized representations have had on tribal communities and celebrates the strength and resilience of our ancestors whose knowledge and wisdom still guides us today. *The Trickster Riots* captures the beauty and complexity inherent in contemporary tribal life.

Walker's poetry refuses to romanticize or fetishize Native people. From the onset, they declare: "I am a modern / Lakota wiŋyan / no tipi /no paint / no feathers / I'm like no Indian / you've ever seen / *because I am not /a blockbuster archetype*" (8). Tonto is one of the many "blockbuster archetype[s]" that Walker shatters in this collection. In "Fuck You K*mosabe," a biting critique on this latest, white-washed iteration of Tonto played by Johnny Depp, Walker blasts many of the common archetypes and stereotypes that have harmed our communities (i.e., Hollywood, sports mascots, fashion trends, etc.). However, this poem is not simply a laundry list of Walker's pet peeves, but rather is an insightful discussion that challenges readers to consider the deep, long-lasting impact these colonized representations had—and continue to have—on tribal nations today. While some readers might be inclined to dismiss these cinematic narratives as trivial or inconsequential, Walker screams, in all-caps for emphasis, "THESE IMAGES HURT ME!" (10). Indeed, they hurt all of us by creating unrealistic expectations about culture and

gender that shape how contemporary Native people see themselves and how the rest of the world misperceives us and our communities.

Throughout this collection, Walker deftly links these colonized representations to many of the pressing issues and challenges facing our communities today—from boarding schools and intergenerational trauma to misogyny and the current murdered and missing Indigenous people (MMIP) epidemic to pretendianism. Walker uses poetry to reflect upon these difficult, often controversial, issues with thoughtfulness and sensitivity. In "Scissors of Colonialism," for instance, they tackle the fraught issue of pretendianism (i.e., when individuals falsely claim Indigenous identity for personal or monetary gain). Pretendianism is a recurring problem that has plagued Native communities for years, especially in Hollywood, politics, and academic circles.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, exposing these pretendians became a popular social media trend. In this poem, Walker carefully weighs the strengths and limitations of this new social media trend. On the one hand, they acknowledge that "exposing pretendianism is necessary—critical—to protect / sovereign people and nations" (22). On the other, they also consider the dangers of "self-appointed experts on Blood Quantum Mechanics / enrollment vigilantes and identity gatekeepers . . . who perform 10s in journalism gymnastics / and 0s in community healing" (24). Although exposing pretendians is critically important, Walker warns that it is also a slippery slope, complicated by settler colonial histories that have the potential to further damage tribal nations. Walker emphasizes that this new social media trend is dangerous because it is not community-driven or even community-focused, but rather is about the individual need for personal celebrity or what they term "celeb-red-ty" (22). This clever neologism is a caveat to Native social media users who exploit their cultural/national identity for "likes and shares," and disregard their kinship relationships and responsibilities. As Walker accurately points out, this "Twitter saloon" has devolved into a form of gatekeeping, learned during the boarding school era, to divide and conquer our people. Walker argues that pretendianism will ultimately lead to self-destruction and undermine any efforts at community- or nation-building.

Throughout this collection, Walker implies that the key to decolonizing and healing our communities lies in our oral traditions, which remind us who we are, where we come from, and what's expected

of us. Kinship, land, language, and ancestral knowledge are key themes in Walker's poetry. They even reimagine several traditional o'hunka'ka tales as poetry in this collection as poetry, including: Iktómi (The Trickster), Ptesáŋwin (White Buffalo Calf Woman) and Tapúŋ Sá Wiŋ (Red Cheek Woman). Walker reimagines these traditional oral narratives in a more modern tribal context. For instance, they reimagine Iktomi as a modern-day writer, righter, and rioter; Ptesáŋwin as an advocate for MMIP; and Tapúŋ Sá Wiŋ as "an unmannerly Lakota wiŋyaŋ" (97). Walker purposefully revises these traditional o-hun-ka-kan tales to remind readers that the Oceti Sakowin Oyate and our rich oral storytelling tradition has survived and even thrived into the twenty-first century. As Walker points out, our "stories are multifaceted and complex galaxies of information waiting to be told and retold / like the cosmos dancing above earth /stories are meant to evolve / and progress / because that's what cultures do /if we want to survive" (97). Similarly, *The Trickster Riots* is a "multifaceted and complex" portrait of contemporary tribal life that emerged from the cosmos to guide future generations and remind us of our commitment to each other and our tribal nation. This collection is a must-read for all Oceti Sakowin citizens, but especially for tribal youth and young adults navigating the beauty and challenges of contemporary tribal life.

Diane Wilson. *The Seed Keeper: A Novel*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2021. 392 pp., paper, $18.00.

Alec Mullet, The University of New Mexico

The Seed Keeper by Diane Wilson was released in 2021. The book primarily focuses on a Dakhóta woman, Rosalie Iron Wing, and primarily spans from the 1970s to the early 2000s. In the book, Rosalie navigates through challenges in her life and works to care for the land and her family, both of which have been damaged by centuries of colonial genocide. The challenges Rosalie faces show how deeply the influences of colonial powers have affected Dakhóta life and land, while her successes are meant to symbolize Dakhóta resiliency and the power to enact change. *The Seed Keeper*'s biggest strength lies in its ability to display Dakhóta successes and struggles on a personal level.

The history of the land most Americans live on has been primarily taught through the perspective of the people who colonized it. *The Seed Keeper* not only teaches history that has been obscured, but also explores colonization's persisting effects through the perspective of a diverse cast of Indigenous women. Although Rosalie Iron Wing is the main perspective of *The Seed Keeper*, there are three other perspectives in the novel: Gaby Makespeace, Marie Blackbird, and Darlene Kills Deer. Rosalie's chapters primarily explore themes of how family and land cultivation have been affected by colonialism. Gaby's chapters explore land cultivation and the effects of industry. Marie's and Darlene's chapters explore history—whether that be the survival of Dakhóta people in the nineteenth century or Rosalie's family history. There is also significant overlap in the themes of these chapters, and each woman deals with the challenges of a colonial world differently. For example, while Rosalie tends to a garden to feed her family, Gaby avoids gardens and farming because of the colonial history of the American government forcing Dakhóta people into a life of farming (169). The diverse perspectives

Wilson includes show the many ways Indigenous and Dakhóta women have survived and flourished not just in the past, but today.

Contemporary issues such as the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), and the effects of industry on the land are explored on a very personal level in *The Seed Keeper*. GMO corn and the fictional Mangenta corporation serve as parallels to the poisonous effects of industry on Indigenous lands, such as the recent approval of the Mountain Valley gas pipeline.[1] One of the strongest explorations of contemporary issues is Rosalie's experiences with the American foster care system, and ICWA. Rosalie's father disappears just a few years before ICWA is enacted, so Rosalie is not placed with her Dakhóta great-aunt, but with a foster family outside of her community. This severance between Rosalie and her Dakhóta community isolates her from centuries of cultural traditions that provided Dakhóta people with a way to survive in a capitalistic and colonial society. Without those cultural protections and community supports, Rosalie is forced to take up odd jobs on farms to survive.

ICWA is just one of many ways that the importance of family is displayed in *The Seed Keeper*. After Rosalie's husband dies, Thomas, her son, becomes resentful of her—a reaction exacerbated by decades of capitalist and colonial influences on their family. In Rosalie's own words, "family gave [her] a place, history, connection, identity. Even in the midst of terrible pain and heartbreak, family held the possibility of love" (303). The possibility of love that family holds is not always realized, as can be seen with Rosalie and Thomas's estranged relationship. *The Seed Keeper* shows how colonial and capitalist influences greatly hamper that possibility.

Wilson's novel is an incredibly effective story of the persistence of Indigenous women in modern colonial America. Not only does *The Seed Keeper* teach explicit histories of Dakhóta people, but it also uses stories to pass history on to a newer generation, which is a Dakhóta tradition in itself. Like Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's *Aurelia: A Crow Creek Trilogy* before it, *The Seed Keeper* is a narrative of a modern Indigenous woman dealing with the challenges that past and present settler colonialism have brought to her doorstep. Teachers of history and language arts can find this novel rich with historical lessons, both explicit and implicit, along with a masterful use of characterization, perspective, and thematic

complexity. More importantly, because Indigenous students often experience poorer educational outcomes compared to their white peers (such as those in Minnesota[2]), culturally relevant texts are incredibly important to today's students. Diane Wilson's *The Seed Keeper* is one of those texts. It dismantles stereotypes of one of the United States's most underrepresented and underserved communities and presents a complex yet accessible narrative about some of the struggles and resilience of Dakhóta women.

NOTES

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The Blue Beaded Dress in the Works of Susan Power

SAMANTHA MAJHOR

Abstract: This article combines archival research at The Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago with references to a blue beaded Dakota dress that Susan Power makes in both her fictional novel *The Grass Dancer* and her nonfiction essay "Museum Indians." In a close reading of Power's writing, the author traced the blue beaded dress as it moves from family history to the museum and, finally, ends up dancing on the moon. Power's novel articulates a Dakota object ontology that thwarts traditional understandings of space-time in order to strengthen and reinforce kinship ties. Power's depictions of the dress defy the typical view of such objects as stagnant, dependent entities, and Majhor argues that Power offers a view of Dakota materialism that positions the dress as a participatory and performative object-being. Taking Power's works together with an analysis Field Museum's Dakota holdings, the author argues that her writings offer imaginative liberation of object-beings like the dress and, ultimately, call for the material liberation and repatriation of such objects.

Keywords: Native American literature, Dakota beadwork, Indigenous Museum Studies, Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, Plains Indian clothing, The Field Museum of Natural History, NAGPRA, *The Grass Dancer*

MY ENCOUNTER WITH THE BLUE BEADED DRESS AT THE FIELD MUSEUM

When I first visited The Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago in the summer of 2016, I went to see if it had within its holdings a Dakota-made dress with a blue beaded yoke as Susan Power describes in her novel, *The Grass Dancer*, and her nonfiction essay, "Museum Indians." The journey through the museum led to my encounter with a number of Dakota dresses, and in particular, one dress that captured my imagi-

nation as the dress most likely aligned with the one described in Power's works. The path I took unfolded over the course of a long afternoon. I entered the intimidating edifice of the Field Museum and, with only a passing glimpse of Sue (the T-Rex), the "Fighting African Elephants," and the towering totem poles from British Columbia that stand guard in the central atrium, I was whisked down a set of side stairs, through multiple passageways and one elevator ride before finally passing through a vault-like door into the Field Museum's storage holdings—the archives of the Field Museum's anthropology department. Following Jamie Lewis, a collections assistant at the museum, who had agreed to give my colleague and I a tour, I walked through a darkened warehouse to a door that opened into the American Indian collections. Here, the majority of objects are stored in closed shelves that ride on long tracks and have to be cranked open one by one until the spaces between long rows of shelves open up and reveal a whole history of things.

As each section cranked past me, I craned to snap photos of the endless carvings, textiles, baskets, weapons, and clothing as these objects came briefly to light before being sealed together again. We were trying to find one of two blue beaded dresses in storage, but the multitude of things astounded me. I, too, hurried to collect and memorialize all these hidden things. Some objects sat openly on shelves while others slept nestled in hand-tailored boxes made of specialized materials, in drawers of their own or in large blue boxes with clear labels printed with black to mark tribe and serial number. I wanted to open every blue box labeled "Dakota" to see what was hidden inside. I saw drums and arrows and miniature painted tipis lined on shelves. I saw exquisite quillwork laid flat in the semi-dark shade of the stacks. I saw masks and prints and a headdress so long that the bottom feathers would skim across the ground and kick up two little trails of dust when worn, if only it weren't missing one entire row of feathers—a bird with one wing. Noises echoed through the warehouse space—mechanical noises that were rhythmic and sounded like footsteps in an empty room. This room was not empty. In truth, it held a million different things stripped of the lands and peoples that give them their context. And for me, it was strange to walk through the space, to climb a ladder to look at a beaded dress, and to feel the limit of my own gaze as it swept the length and breadth of the shelves and sensed the multitude of items even as they remained hidden.

Fig. 1. Dakota Dress with Blue Beaded Yoke originally owned by Pretty Owl, The Field Museum of Natural History. Photograph taken by Samantha Majhor, July 22, 2016.

We continued the labyrinthine tour of the Field Museum's holdings on our way out of the storage space. Jamie had warned that some of the archival spaces were woefully in need of refurbishing—that whole collections live in precarious spaces and await tailor-made blue boxing. Down the staircase and the hallway, around the corner and down,

again, two flights of stairs, and we reemerged through a "staff only" door into the public exhibition for the Northwest Coast and Arctic Peoples. Vignettes of Indigenous families, staged to display interactions with key items in the Field Museum collections, lit up in their display cases as we passed by them, and after a few short turns we entered the Native North American Hall—where the item, the blue beaded dress that Susan Power describes in her writing and which I had come to see, might reside. Jamie explained that there were two dresses with blue beaded yokes credited to the "Sioux" on display in the hall before directing me to one of them.

The dress hangs, drooping on the shoulders of a stuffed mannequin at the back of the exhibit with the label "Sioux Woman" in plastic lettering just beyond the tangle of buckskin fringe that sweeps unevenly across the floor of the display case. I scanned the rest of the faceless visages of the lumpen mannequins, their soft hands hanging alongside them, and came back to the sagging dress against the salmon-colored interior of the display. I took in her sad surroundings and her exquisite beadwork, and then I turned away.

THE BLUE BEADED DRESS IN *THE GRASS DANCER*

In a style that has become quintessential in Native American literature, Susan Power's 1994 novel, *The Grass Dancer*, weaves intersecting stories that span generations of two primary Dakota families on the Standing Rock reservation from 1864 to 1982. The narration oscillates between a handful of chapters told in third-person and a series of chapters in first-person that allow the reader more acute access to the underlying motivations of the community of characters. In the amalgam of storylines, characters, and points of view, an overarching question emerges. How does one restore kinship ties that have been broken? Repairing and strengthening relational kinship remains a central concern in Native American literature, grappling with the historical and continuing conditions of colonialism and settler-colonialism. From war and removal to reservations and boarding schools to relocation and coerced adoption, Native people have faced disruptions and separations from their homelands, their resources, and their kinship networks in various forms over the course of generations. In Power's novel, the blue beaded dress becomes part of the answer to restoring kinship across

time. I argue that the nonhuman objects in the novel play an essential role in maintaining kinship ties across these ruptures, particularly because nonhuman objects move through time and space according to their own makeup and can carry information, express their own sense of agency, and manifest connection beyond human lifespans. Although I concentrate on the blue beaded dress, the novel is filled with examples of a human and nonhuman relational network that is informed by an Očhéthi Šakówiŋ worldview. In *The Grass Dancer,* human and nonhuman beings cross time and space in order to restore broken connections and kinship ties, particularly with the introduction of a blue beaded dress made by Harley Wind Soldier's great-great grandmother that ends up on display at the Field Museum of Natural History.

In both the first paragraph of the prologue and again in the novel's final pages, Power gives the reader omniscient access to the dreams and visions of Harley Wind Soldier. In the prologue, Power opens with a single paragraph from Harley's perspective as he envisions his father and brother, who died in a car crash before he was born. Power writes, "When Harley saw his father, Calvin Wind Soldier, and his brother, Duane, in dreams, they were wearing crowns of glass. Drops of blood trickled down their foreheads, beaded on their black lashes, and slipped into the corners of their mouths. Four weeks before Harley was born, his father and his older brother were killed in a car accident."[1] From Harley's dreams, Power turns to a description of two non-Native men getting drunk at a bar on the edge of the Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota and the fatal car crash premised in Harley's dream ensues. In the first chapter, we see Harley as a young man, still wrestling with the "black, empty hole squeezed in his chest between heart and lungs" that is the physical and emotional result of the crash. As the reader later learns, the events leading up to the crash affect all of the main players in the novel. In order to unravel the story behind the fatal crash and, thus, behind the "empty box" at the center of Harley's being, Power weaves a tale of generations that includes a significant clash between two women whose dressmaking demonstrates the power of such work to either destroy or repair the bonds of kinship.

In the production of clothing by the characters Lydia Wind Soldier and Mercury Thunder, Power articulates fundamental Dakota values with regard to such cultural objects and their ability to influence kinship ties. Here, I provide a close reading of the remarkable centrality of these

cultural objects in *The Grass Dancer* and argue that this thread within the novel insists on a particular reality guided by a Dakota view of the power of production and persistent agency of these relational objects. I begin by looking at a key chapter, entitled "A Hole in the Sheets," that focuses on the character Mercury Thunder. Here, Power establishes Mercury Thunder's prowess and provides a primer for how to read the extraordinary episodes in the story. It's critical that readers understand how to interpret both Thunder, as a character, and her power as *real* and materially manifest. The emphasis on materiality, even in the face of extraordinary events and outcomes, shapes the reader's ability to comprehend the relational work that the blue beaded dress does in Harley's storyline. Next, I look at chapters that highlight the blue beaded dress and the story of Lydia Wind Soldier and her son Harley. The chapters "The Moon Landing" and "The Vision Pit" bring the blue beaded dress to life so that it can attend to its relational work. Finally, I come back to my own encounter with a blue beaded dress at the Field Museum—the dress that Susan Power, who was raised in Chicago, also describes in her nonfiction essay "Museum Indians." The dress performs in extraordinary ways in Power's imaginative rendering, and I argue that the performative power of the dress as witnessed even within the confines of the museum space is no less extraordinary and indicative of how meaning and materiality perform in the Dakota worldview.

POWER'S MATERIAL REALISM: "I AM NOT A FAIRYTALE"

In the first half of *The Grass Dancer,* the reader is held in suspense. The deaths of Calvin and Duane Wind Soldier haunt the text in the background, while Power introduces a host of supporting characters and, more importantly, instructs the reader in how to interpret the "magical" elements that become paramount in the latter half of the novel. She does this by introducing a non-Native character, Jeannette MacVay. Jeannette is the ultimate outsider and her lack of knowledge about reservation life and Dakota culture positions her as a foil to Dakota characters whose kinship ties to the reservation and each other run deep with specialized knowledge. Although we see Jeannette in various roles (girlfriend, student, school teacher, mother) depending on the chapter, Jeannette's backstory and her most significant encounter occur at the exact midpoint of the novel in the chapter "A Hole in the Sheets." In this chapter,

Jeannette is privy to the events that put Harley's journey throughout the novel in context, especially the interplay between Harley's mother and father, Lydia and Calvin Wind Soldier, and Mercury Thunder.

"A Hole in the Sheets" highlights the contrasts between a non-Native and a Dakota view of reality. The chapter, set in 1961, is narrated by Anna (Mercury) Thunder, a character who has been described in previous chapters as a witch, a powerful and frightening woman whom her fellow community members avoid. Herod Small War, a yuwípi man who works as a male counterpoint to Mercury, deposits the troublesome interloper, Jeannette, at Mercury's doorstep. As Jeannette explains, she came to the Standing Rock Reservation to do fieldwork after having "spent the last four years of [her] life at a girls' college"[2] on the East Coast, where she "studied archaeology, and that led to anthropology and mythology." The irony in the scene heightens as Jeannette reveals her ignorant exuberance for her field studies: "I thought this was going to be a thing about death: dead culture, dead language, dead God. I came out here to record the funeral, so to speak. Collect data on how a people integrate this kind of loss into their souls. And you know what? I found all this activity and vitality and living mythology. I feel like I've stumbled upon a secret."[3] Power imbues the scene with humor as Jeannette describes herself and her purpose for arriving on Mercury's doorstep. She exhibits an obliviousness that's heightened and contrasted in eyes of the powerful, self-assured, and manipulative Mercury. Power highlights Jeanette's misinterpretation of Dakota social norms in a disarming, humorous way that can work to inform a reader who is similarly positioned, even as the scene makes humorous jabs at the expense of such ignorance.

As an example of one of her misunderstandings, Jeannette's explanation for coming to Mercury stems from Herod Small War excluding her from certain access. She explains that, in her quest for knowledge, she sought out Herod Small War but "was barred from his sweat lodge and couldn't take part in his Yuwípi ceremony because [she] was on [her] period."[4] Instead of accepting Herod's boundaries for participation in the Yuwípi sweat ceremony, Jeannette misreads the situation as base sexism. Non-Dakota outsiders have historically misread such cultural practices, particularly regarding Očhéthi Šakówiŋ gender epistemologies, and mischaracterized them in the same way—as backward and demeaning toward women.[5] In fact, in some ceremonial settings, women do not traditionally take part in sweats because these

are purifying ceremonies. It is a widely held view in Dakota culture that women undergo a natural purification process every month through their menses, so they may not need an additional purification ceremony. However, Jeannette's ignorance leads her to ask around for a female cultural liaison. It is another twist of humor that people tell her to go to Mercury, a person they consider dangerous and transgressive; they're sending Jeannette to a woman who, in their minds, will eat her alive. As Jeannette explains to Mercury, "I was told such stories—they were legends really, but alive and moving upon this earth. I absorbed the tales, marveled that you were nothing less than Aphrodite, Goddess of Desire, with her magic girdle that helped her spell the other deities and mortal men. But think how wonderful this is, because you're not in some book or reclining on Mount Olympus. You're right here in the kitchen, serving me peaches!"[6] And it's this characterization of Mercury, as more real and yet still mythic, that imparts the central lesson of the chapter and a key to reading the novel as a whole.

Mercury's internal response to Jeannette's reverence is laden with the language of materiality and, in fact, positions her power as an inheritance she cannot take full ownership over:

> I was fifty-one years old, and my face was pleated by early disaster—what people so innocently call "hard times." I was not one to gaze long in the mirror beyond parting my hair in a straight line, and I knew the tips of my fingers were squashed-looking from so many years of beadwork, but my breath was sweet with the taste of wild plums and my eyes were black as those cut into gambling dice, and if I looked into a man I could lower a line so skillfully it would hook his heart. Then I would jerk it right out of his throat. I collected so many I kept thinking I would get my fill of them, but I never did.
>
> Medicine pulsed within me, shot through my veins, and I don't mean the kind a doctor pumps into the body. I didn't practice good medicine or bad medicine, or a weak magic summoned by poems; I simply had potent blood inherited from my grandmother's sister, Red Dress. And there were times when it pained me like a fire, or froze me like a rock, and any weaker person would have crawled toward death.[7]

Jeannette becomes a witness to her "medicine" as Mercury orchestrates a damaging love triangle that results in the car accident described in the prologue that kills Calvin Wind Soldier and his son Duane.

In the chapter, Jeanette becomes a witness, as Mercury turns her attention toward Calvin Wind Soldier, a young married man. Mercury is under the misguided notion that she and he should come together based on the unrequited love of their ancestors, Red Dress and Ghost Horse. She soon finds her methods for luring Wind Soldier anticipated and blocked by Herod Small War, who fashions a protective belt for Calvin to wear. Angry at being thwarted, Mercury creates and executes a new plan when she knows most of her neighbors would be away from home at the funeral of a prominent community member. Again, with Jeannette in the role of anthropology student asking questions, Mercury reports, "I answered plainly, letting her document my activities as if this were all a scientific experiment performed in a lab."[8] She continues:

> I managed alone, striding from empty house to empty house, using nothing more than a needle, thread, and a small pair of scissors. When my neighbors had left for the wake, I went first to Calvin Wind Soldier's house, entering boldly through the front door, which in those days was never locked. I found the bedroom in mere seconds and decided that the left side of the bed was his because when my people dance as couples around the drum, the men are on the left and the women on the right . . . I traced with my small finger a small area on the sheet, a space I thought of as the Region of Lust. I crimped the material at its center and, with sharp scissors, snipped a piece of the fabric, such a small swatch my little finger couldn't push through the resulting hole.
>
> Half a mile away, in the bedroom of a clean but flimsy shack, I repeated the process, only this time I worked on the right side of the bed, the woman's side, and repaired the tiny hole I'd just made, with the fabric from Calvin's sheet. It was so easy I was almost disappointed.[9]

The story suggests that Mercury's manipulation of the sheets manifests an affair between Calvin Wind Soldier and Lydia's twin sister, Evelyn. The results of the affair spiral and create the conditions of broken kinship ties that stretch into the next generation—the central conflict that

must be resolved in the novel. Jeannette confronts Mercury in a key scene after learning that Evelyn is pregnant, and she is shocked to hear Mercury admit "that child is my creature."[10] Mercury is likewise a bit shocked by Jeannette's reaction to her trickery. She's surprised to discover that "we had traveled only one step. The girl who came to me eager to discover a modern mythology had not really believed in it any more than she trusted that Aphrodite would show up at our next powwow wearing nothing but a dance shawl and her magic girdle."[11] By the end of the chapter, Mercury has enacted a demonstration of her power for Jeannette that turns out to be terrifying and dastardly, and one that flies in the face of Jeannette's naïve expectations to find either a "dead culture" or a quaint "living mythology." Significantly, Power embeds the "magic" in the chapter in *material* moments from the snake-skin belt that Herod Small War gives to Calvin to protect him to Mercury's cutting and repairing of holes in the sheets to coerce an affair between Calvin and his sister-in-law. Mercury's manipulation of the sheets, her sewing and dealing with fabrics, do not have much meaning beyond the idea that this exchange of material somehow has the power to set a disastrous affair in motion. However, in the latter half of the novel, Power takes us further back into Mercury Thunder's personal history, and we see how these manipulations stem from and echo a moment of deep grief that set Mercury on a path of misinterpreting and misusing the materially-manifest creative power that's a part of her heritage.

As a chapter, "A Hole in the Sheets" brings together the most important elements of the novel, including the constant play between material and immaterial elements and how the things one creates in the material world (for instance, as *textiles*) and the way those creations work beyond the material form (for instance, as *texts*) have the power to either strengthen or destroy that which is most highly regarded in Dakota culture: kinship. In order to make these connections clear, Power creates this central chapter with Jeannette as co-witness with the reader. In the end, when Jeannette confronts Mercury about Calvin and his sister-in-law's love child, Mercury "reached out and pinched what little flesh remained on her arm. 'Feel that? Feel me? Remember Pennsylvania and your college in the East, and the buses, all the buses you took to get out here?' She nodded. 'That is all a legend from the past, and here you are where things happen. It is so real now it is a nightmare, am I right?'"[12] The adamant insistence on the *reality* of the events in the chapter warns

against the tendency to view these moments in Native literature as surreal. Instead, the connections that Power makes between the material and immaterial worlds, between textile and text, are to be read as real events to understand the rest of the novel. The chapter concludes with Mercury's ominous line to Jeannette: "I am not a fairy tale."[13] This line speaks beyond the page of the novel to put Power's work in conversation with the origins of American literature that created the fairy tale, a mythology of the kind Jeannette originally sets out to find, about Native American people and their stories. Power takes care to build into her story a lesson on Dakota ontology; the extraordinary events in the novel are not to be taken as fantasy but to be read as real events. Power underlines this idea in various interviews and in her teaching by stressing her rejection of "Magical Realism" as an apt categorization for her novels and for similarly extraordinary stories in Native American literature.[14]

THE BLUE BEADED DRESS IN SPACE

In *The Grass Dancer*, Power creates multiple scenes that describe a blue beaded dress at the Field Museum. The dress becomes a key player as she interweaves generational stories following two central family lines, but the novel begins and ends with the perspective of Harley Wind Soldier, a young Dakota man coming of age in the 1980s at Standing Rock Reservation. All through his childhood, Harley's mother, Lydia, refused to speak. The reader learns that Lydia's silence is a self-inflicted penance that stems from a sordid episode that resulted in Harley's half-brother, Duane, being born of Lydia's husband, Calvin, and her twin sister, Evelyn. Although Duane comes to live with Lydia as her own, she never fully accepts the boy, and when Duane and Calvin die in a car crash, Lydia begins her silent vigil in the belief that the final caustic words she spoke to the pair caused their deaths. When we meet Harley at eighteen years old in the opening chapter, he wonders at his mother's silence and internalizes the breach by imagining a "black, empty hole squeezed in his chest between heart and lungs."[15] The novel proceeds with chapters that shift in narrative perspective and in time so that the reader must piece together the long, complicated history that caused this "empty hole." In doing so, the novel emphasizes moments from the past where proper kinship is either reinforced or, more often than not, transgressed. And this winding path through time and perspective leads, of course, back to

Harley and Lydia—and, in particular, to a blue beaded dress very much like the one Power describes in her personal essay.

Power's novel includes multiple instances where natural and cultural objects like rocks, plum seeds, grass, beads, and regalia not only enter the intertwined stories that span over a hundred years but become participants in ways that challenge the binary between animate and inanimate. It is the blue beaded dress, however, that becomes the means through which Lydia finally communicates with her son in the novel. The blue beaded dress first appears in the fourth chapter, titled "Moonwalk," where a five-year-old Harley sits vigil as Margaret Many Wounds, Harley's grandmother, is dying. The scene of her death just happens to coincide with the 1969 moon landing, and the family has rolled the television set into the sickroom. As they watch, Margaret bids Harley to sit with her and tells him about her grandmother's dress on display in the Field Museum in Chicago, adding, "Someday when you're grown up, you should liberate my grandmother's dress." She tells Harley that "The background was blue beads, and [my grandmother] beaded buffaloes and Dakota warriors on horseback running through the sky, pictures of their spirits, because so many of them were dead. She wore it to only the most sacred ceremonies, and when she danced at the edge of the dancers' circle, she said she was dancing them back to life."[16]

In telling the history of the dress to Harley, Margaret highlights two key aspects that confer the object with its own power and unique agency: first, the specificity of the finished design enables the object to transmit key historical and cultural information, and second, the object acts as a meaningful participant in a type of ceremony that revives kinship as the woman and the dress dance relatives back to life. As Colette Hyman explains in her book *Dakota Women's Work*, objects like the blue beaded dress are neither merely serviceable nor exclusively aesthetic objects in the Dakota worldview. Rather, these objects emanate from a feminine creative tradition where such work is both a product of gendered labor but also an emblem of feminine spiritual power. Hyman highlights the reciprocity between the women and these objects by noting that "women brought special gifts and talents that beautified and embellished the lives of all Dakota. Because ornately quilled and beaded garments were not worn every day, their appearance during community celebrations enhanced those gatherings. The beading and quillwork itself, however, enhanced daily life for women creating it." Hyman

continues, "As the wakan [or spiritual force] permeated the environment in which they lived, the functional art made by women brought the wakan into the tools and equipment of everyday life."[17] Such objects embody multiple and simultaneous fronts of relationality. Their designs are symbolic and tell stories in ways that approximate a text; their color, symmetry, and beauty designate them as artworks; their use as clothing might categorize them as an everyday object or as one that, as in this case, marks special occasions and is meant to move in accordance with the wearer's body and the rhythm of the music. In other words, the beaded dress refuses any one-dimensional or static categorization.

This early chapter in *The Grass Dancer* introduces the blue dress as not simply a family heirloom but as an object that plays various roles and makes various appearances across time. As previously discussed, it is a dress with specific beaded imagery made by Margaret's grandmother in order to perform a very specific type of dance. As the story continues, the dress winds up on display in the Field Museum in Chicago, and in this instance it is an object that needs "liberation." The idea that the dress does not belong in a museum is important to understand. The sentiment does not seem to stem (only) from a sense of material inheritance but rather the significant problem that, under glass, the dress cannot perform as intended. This is not an object meant to simply be observed but rather an object whose construction and imagery reconstitute kinship ties in the form of story and ceremonial dances that seek to resurrect those who have fallen—significantly, it is an object that might perform this work for future generations, independent of its creator.

At the end of the chapter, underscoring the mutability and agency of the dress across time and space, Harley has a vision of his grandmother after her passing—he sees her wearing the dress on the moon. In an extraordinary moment, Power gives us a scene that frees the dress from the museum. As Margaret dies on earth, Harley watches the 1969 moon landing telecast, and he sees Margaret and the dress perform the ceremonial dance she had described to him on the moon. This performance is made all the more significant when Margaret passes by Neil Armstrong's oxygen system, making it quiver. The quivering equipment underscores the material reality of the moment, for Harley and the reader. I also read the moment as Margaret counting coup on one of the most infamous moments of U.S. imperialism; she gives an insistent

counterpoint to the planting of the flag and expansion of settler-colonial "discovery" happening in outer space. When we trace the dress through the chapter, Power gives us multiple versions of the dress, concluding with a version that even defies time and space. The beaded blue dress in Power's narrative challenges normative object ontology by showing the way the object, imbued with the creative powers from the woman who stitched the design, performs in old and new ways across time and space, reviving kinship ties in more ways than one.

The blue beaded dress returns at the end of the novel in the chapter "The Vision Pit." It is 1982 and Herod Small War is organizing "the annual North Dakota Prison Rodeo" to be followed by a feast and powwow in the evening. We see Harley, now a talented grass dancer, at his low point, "a person of swift gestures and abrupt departures, not because he felt he had places to go, but rather because he felt he had circumstances to leave behind. The dark silence that had blossomed inside him as a small child had both expanded and compressed, become a leaden weight branching everywhere, even to his fingers."[18] While Harley is getting drunk in the bed of a pickup, Lydia is dressing for the powwow. Power describes the dress that Lydia dons in great detail, particularly noting that Lydia replicated the beaded yoke based on "a faded picture of the dress that Lydia's great-grandmother once wore to important ceremonies and that currently languished in Chicago's Field Museum."[19] The dress in this scene becomes a vehicle for communication between mother and son: "Lydia would never use her voice to tell Harley what he needed to hear. She would offer a story he could read with his eyes. *We will dance together,* she said to herself. *He will finally know me and understand where he comes from*."[20] Significantly, it is the sense of identity imparted by the long history of kinship ties that Lydia feels most urgent to convey, and once again, it is the dress that will do this important work in the absence of her voice. Lydia's confrontation with her son when he is at his lowest point provides the climax of the novel, which concludes with Harley's purification and participation in traditional ceremonial rites of passage. Once again, the dress performs in a culturally specific way by restoring proper kinship networks but in a new time and place. In Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer*, we see what I consider an Indigenous object ontology at work, in this case revealing the agency and subjectivity of a particular cultural item: the blue beaded dress.

THE BLUE BEADED DRESS AT THE FIELD MUSEUM

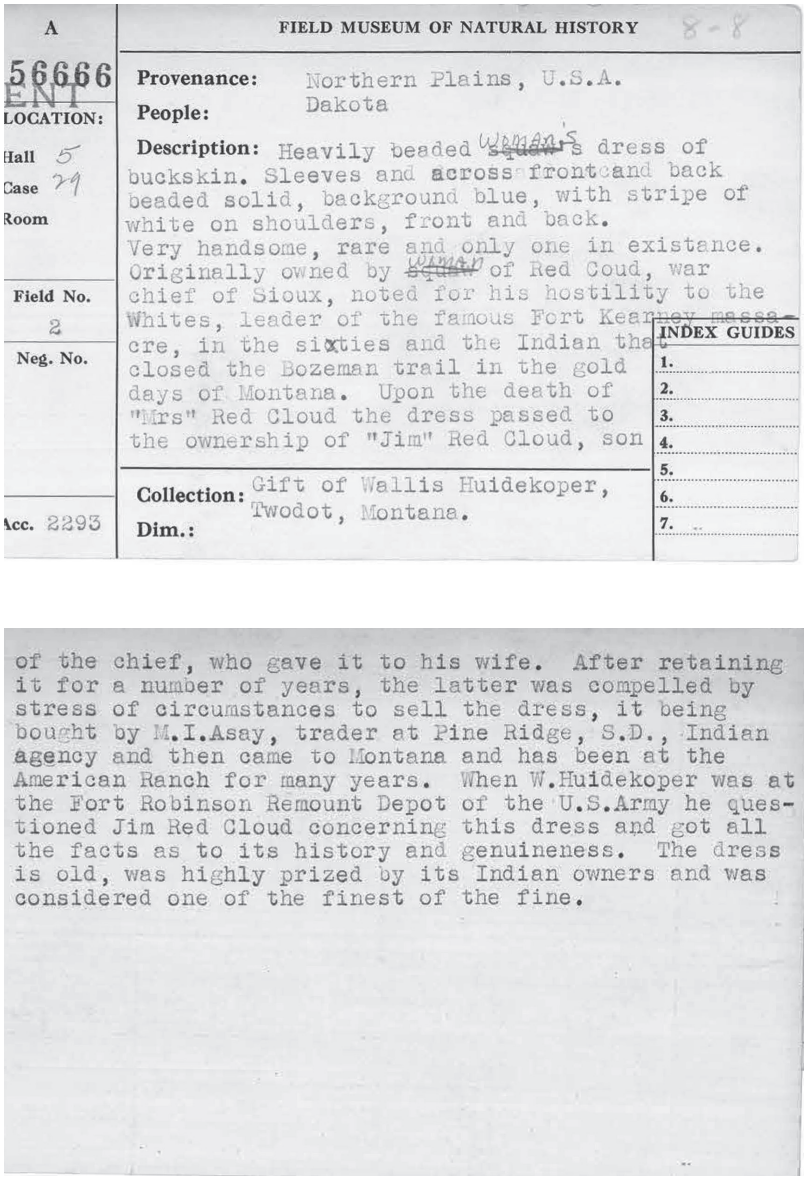
Back in the Native North American Hall at the Field Museum in 2016, I turned away from the glass case and the blue beaded dress. To cover my shock at the state of the dress on the lumpen mannequin with its fringe dragging on the floor, I quipped, "That's not what Dakota people look like! We're obviously much taller." And after the collections assistant left me to explore the rest of the Native North American Hall on my own, I performed a quick walk-through and then exited the space. I found a bench in a very dark corner in the Webber Gallery, a small hall that housed a model of a cave and played a video documenting its discovery and exploration on a loop. I sat quietly in the dark corner listening to the soundtrack of water dripping from stalactites and felt an unusual exhaustion wash over me. I only half-registered the looped sounds of water dripping in a cave. The display of Native American objects in the adjacent exhibit had shocked me. When I ventured back to the Native North American exhibit to reconfirm my initial reaction, I saw that the rest of the displays proved as pitiful as the mannequin wearing the blue beaded dress. The items in the cases had been improperly stored and were grouped together in outdated anthropological schemes. They lacked dates, correct labeling, and any suggestion that they were made with care, consideration, and artistry by a particular person from a distinguished tradition. Painted hides hung on the walls by tack nails or lined the bottom of cases with their edges folded underneath to fit. One of the most prestigious pieces, another hide painting, was hanging upside down. The glass cases for the clothing displays were clouded around the edges and suggested moisture issues. Alongside the cultural objects was a diorama display of Plains Indians driving bison off a cliff. And just down the aisle, in pride of place in the center of the hall, a giant stuffed bison stood. His placard reads, "In 1889 fewer than 1000 animals remained. The bison that are present today in National Parks and reserves descended from those few." A stubborn old story was on display in the Native North American Hall.

The Grass Dancer tells a very different story. As we trace the dress throughout the novel, Power reworks settler time in a similar way to Mark Rifkin's reading of novels like Alexie's *Indian Killer* and Silko's *Garden in the Dunes* in his book entitled *Beyond Settler Time*. Power not only arranges a nonlinear narrative in the ordering of *The Grass Dancer's*

chapters, but creates a network of kinship that's best understood through the tiyošpaye's (extended family's) continued interactions with the blue beaded dress that moves outside the bounds of human-centered lifespans. As I have argued in my close reading, the novel reveals a Dakota ontology in which the dress lives and works trans-generationally. As Rifkin writes in his chapter "Ghost Dancing at Century's End," "invoking the Ghost Dance [. . .] enables Native authors to deviate from settler historical emplotments and their associated cartographies, opening room for acknowledging Native realities in which the dynamics of settler colonialism exert force but do not define the limits of Indigenous possibility, placemaking, and perception."[21] Certainly, settler colonialism is seen "exerting force" on the dress when it becomes packaged under plexiglass at the Field Museum. And yet, the dress in Power's novel challenges even the imposed stasis of museum collections in Harley's vision of Margaret dancing on the moon and by Lydia's replication of the dress in the novel's last chapter.

After I'd returned home in 2016, I asked the collections assistant, Jamie, if she would send me any accession information she might find on the Dakota dresses in the museum's holdings. She noted that two of the dresses came to the Field Museum via a huge accession from Edward E. Ayer around 1894. Ayer is the same collector from whom the Newberry Library received much of its earliest archival materials and a sustaining link between these two historic archives in Chicago. For the items that came to the Field Museum from the Ayer collection, very little accession information exists. However, the blue beaded dress that captured my attention was acquired later,[22] and so Jamie sent me the accession card (Figure 2), which she described as "a very detailed provenance for the third dress."[23]

A look at the accession information for this particular dress offers very little understanding of either the dress, itself, or the people to whom it is related.[24] In fact, the accession card reveals both how little is understood about the dress and shows an Western approach to the material world, steeped in the nexus of white supremacy, settler-colonialism, and capitalism. Concerned with the "fineness" and "rarity" of the object, the card's inscription turns the dress into a showpiece and a commodity. The recording also highlights the racist and patriarchal lens of the institution, starting with the use of a slur for Native women, which has since been crossed out and replaced with the word "woman" scrawled



A

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY 8-8

56666 ENT

LOCATION:
Hall 5
Case 29
Room

Field No. 2

Neg. No.

Acc. 2293

Provenance: Northern Plains, U.S.A.

People: Dakota

Description: Heavily beaded ~~squaw's~~ woman's dress of buckskin. Sleeves and across front and back beaded solid, background blue, with stripe of white on shoulders, front and back.
Very handsome, rare and only one in existance.
Originally owned by ~~squaw~~ woman of Red Coud, war chief of Sioux, noted for his hostility to the Whites, leader of the famous Fort Kearney massacre, in the sixties and the Indian that closed the Bozeman trail in the gold days of Montana. Upon the death of "Mrs" Red Cloud the dress passed to the ownership of "Jim" Red Cloud, son

Collection: Gift of Wallis Huidekoper, Twodot, Montana.

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INDEX GUIDES
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of the chief, who gave it to his wife. After retaining it for a number of years, the latter was compelled by stress of circumstances to sell the dress, it being bought by M.I.Asay, trader at Pine Ridge, S.D., Indian agency and then came to Montana and has been at the American Ranch for many years. When W.Huidekoper was at the Fort Robinson Remount Depot of the U.S.Army he questioned Jim Red Cloud concerning this dress and got all the facts as to its history and genuineness. The dress is old, was highly prized by its Indian owners and was considered one of the finest of the fine.

Fig. 2. Accession Card, front and back, for Dakota dress owned by Pretty Owl. © The Field Museum, Cat. No. 5666.

over in pen. I also want to draw attention to the gender bias toward the famous male leader, Red Cloud, who is connected only tangentially to the dress. It is Red Cloud and his son who give the dress its historical relevance, according the card's description, and offer "all the facts as to its history and genuineness." However, Red Cloud's wife, who goes not only unnamed but degraded with slurs on the card, is a known figure of equal importance for Lakota people. One does not need to do much more than a simple Google search to find Pretty Owl's name and photograph and to learn something of her contributions. However, she is twice erased on the card and by the ubiquitous "Sioux Woman" title card in the museum display.[25] The accession card also speaks to the acquisition and connections of the White-American handlers of the dress, who both procure the item and transmit its story into the archive. We must read between the lines to see that the story of the dress's acquisition situates it within a passively framed narrative of colonialism ("compelled by stress of circumstances to sell the dress") versus a story of Native American aggression ("noted for his hostility" and "leader of the Fort Kearney massacre," etc.). Coupled with the limitations and biases of the accession card, the display of the dress, itself, served as an example of outdated museum practices with the antiquated label "Sioux" as the only context for the object. This reveals what's at stake in Susan Power's references to the dress and what I've shown in my reading of the dress in the museum and the dress in Power's writing. Understanding Dakota object ontology transforms the way we read the dress and the way it might perform for future generations of Dakota people—for Pretty Owl's ancestors.

I approached my visit to Chicago and the Field Museum as a literary scholar. I wanted to find and read the dress like I read a text, like I read *The Grass Dancer*, as an object that produces meaning in such a way that material reality recedes and becomes secondary to imagined reality. However, the dress and the objects on display in the room confronted me with the urgency of their materiality and my own in relation to them. The display underscored the fact that material and imagined realities are entangled in important ways. Having been so confronted by the objects in the Native North American Hall, I felt a deep sense of responsibility toward them. In the intervening years, The Field Museum hired some Native artists and experts who worked to dismantle and replace the Native North American Hall. I believe we will hear about their work and their continued challenges in the process for years to

come. In May of 2022, the museum opened a new permanent exhibit titled *Native Truths: Our Voices, Our Stories*. It was created in partnerships with Native artists and Native nations. When I returned to tour the new *Native Truths* exhibit in July 2022, I was once again overcome with emotion when I turned a corner to meet another blue beaded Dakota-made dress. This dress's story is told in detail with the use of an interactive digital panel that provides information about the items on display but also includes multimedia features like written and spoken interviews with artists and Native community members as well as photos and other forms of contextual engagement. As the panel notes, the display includes a "Beaded dress created by Maisie Lone Dog (Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes), ca 1915. / Buckskin or deerskin, glass beads / Gifted to the Field Museum by Alice H. Gregory in 1961." The display includes quotes and a photo from Diane Alexander White (Menominee), who worked at the Field Museum in the 1990s and took care of the dress. White writes, "These objects aren't dead. The spirit still exists in that object." The story about Dakota blue beaded dresses, their liveliness and agential power, has changed remarkably at The Field Museum. But is a revised story enough?

The blue beaded dress I encountered in 2016, in its multiple iterations, still lives in the museum as well as in Susan Power's fiction and nonfiction. Pretty Owl's dress remains detained, albeit resting, in storage after its long, heavy, and undoubtedly damaging lift over so many years in poor display. The questions—where such items should reside? who they belong to?—seems more pressing than ever. How might material beings like the dress continue to perform their necessary cultural and relational work if they are returned to Dakota people after (in many cases) being treated with poisonous chemicals in the name of preservation? While I would argue that dresses like Pretty Owl's continue to connect Dakota kinship, even from inside the museum space and in our imaginations through literary arts like Power's works, Dakota blue beaded dresses are meant to perform practically and culturally in our everyday and ceremonial lives. When they stand in museum rooms under glass they cease to perform as the same objects in their intended relational contexts. Even with the belated success of the *Native Truths* exhibit, museums like the Field in Museum Chicago have a long way to go in rethinking their purpose; they must contend with the racist and racialized narratives that such intuitions have constructed historically

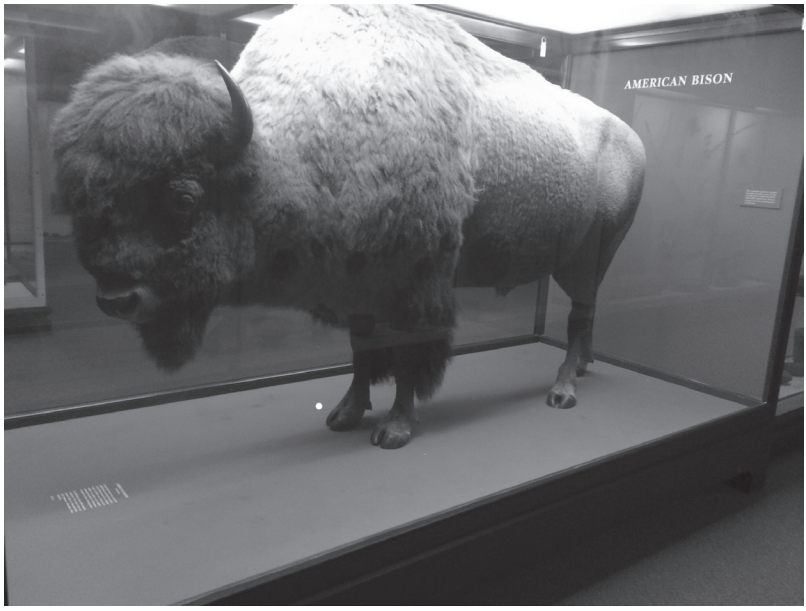

Fig. 3. Bison at the Field Museum of Natural History. Photograph taken by Samantha Majhor, July 22, 2016.

and continue to perpetuate today. When their permanent exhibits are comprised of rocks, dinosaurs, stuffed animals (many extinct or endangered), and cultural things made exclusively by peoples of color, the racist narratives of vanishing and primitivism remain intact no matter how one rearranges or recasts the accompanying literature. In the meantime, the works of Susan Power continue to imagine our material liberation.

Near the end of my visit to the Field Museum in the summer of 2016, I remember that I lingered across from the large display case that holds the stuffed bison. I watched families pass quickly through the hall. Very few stopped to look at the objects displayed there. But they all stopped at the bison (Figure 3). This bison makes an appearance in Susan Power's essay, "Museum Indians." In this short nonfiction work, Power renders the blue beaded dress in a way that compliments her imaginative liberation of this object in *The Grass Dancer* by highlighting her personal relationship with the dress and thinking about how the dress in *this* place speaks to her own sense of belonging. She writes:

> We always visit my great-grandmother's buckskin dress. We mount the stairs and walk through the museum's main hall—past the dinosaur bones all strung together, and the stuffed elephants lifting their trunks in a mute trumpet.
>
> The clothed figures are disconcerting because they have no heads. I think of them as dead Indians. We reach the traditional outfits of the Sioux in the Plains Indian section, and there is the dress, as magnificent as I remembered. The yoke is completely beaded—I know the garment must be heavy to wear. My great-grandmother used blue beads as a background for the geometrical design [. . . .]
>
> "I don't know how this got out of the family," Mom murmurs. I feel helpless beside her, wishing I could reach through the glass to disrobe the headless mannequin.[26]

On the way out of the museum, Power describes how she and her mother would sometimes greet the stuffed buffalo down the hall. Her mother would say to him, "I am just like you . . . I don't belong here either. We should be in the Dakotas, somewhere a little bit east of the Missouri River. This crazy city is not a fit home for buffalo or Dakotas."

Native American and Indigenous Studies has established the centrality of mapping, place, and landscape to Indigenous worldviews. Paying attention to place in concert with Indigenous object ontologies helps us to look more closely at the way place and landscape also impact the story of the dress (and the dress as story). While Power's mother expresses a sense of kinship with the buffalo in that "we don't belong here," and she graphically locates the Yankton Dakota homelands just east of the Missouri River, Power, as a young girl in the nonfiction narrative, makes a powerful intervention at the close of the essay. She writes:

> I take my mother's hand to hold her in place. I am a city child, nervous around livestock and lonely on the plains. I am afraid of a sky without light pollution—I never knew there could be so many stars. I lead my mother from the museum so she will forget the sense of loss. From the marble steps we can see Lake Shore Drive spill ahead of us, and I sweep my arm to the side as if I were responsible for this view. I introduce my mother to the city she gave me. I call her home.[27]

I think there are many ways to read these provocative lines. Like Margaret Many Wounds supplants one of the most recognizable moments of American imperialism when she, for all intents and purposes, counts coup on Neil Armstrong in her grandmother's blue beaded dress on the moon, it strikes me that Susan Power does something similar at the end of her nonfiction essay as she sweeps her arm across Lake Shore Drive and asserts her own material presence, reclamation, and belonging to place in steep juxtaposition to the stuffed bison and the blue beaded dress held under smudged museum glass. Power's writings evoke the blue beaded dress in order to imagine the liberation of human and other-than-human beings through a distinct lens of Dakota material philosophies. In reading both her works, I interpret the liberatory strategies she depicts as calls to imagine the reality of material return and the restoration of kinship work undertaken by object-beings like the Dakota blue beaded dress outside of the museum.

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NOTES

1. Susan Power, *The Grass Dancer* (New York: Berkley Books, 1994), 3.
2. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 161.
3. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 162.
4. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 163.
5. For extended discussion of ceremonial sweats and the treatment of gender participation, see Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983). See also Waziyatawin, *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005). Notably, some ceremonial practices vary across Očeti Šakowin communities, and I offer only one view for contextualizing this scene in the novel.
6. Power, *The Grass Dancer,* 163.
7. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 164.
8. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 181.
9. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 182–83.
10. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 183.
11. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 184.
12. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 184.
13. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 187.

14. See, for example, Power's interview with Leah Greenblatt, "After a Long and Painful Absence, Writing her Way Home Again," *New York Times*, Aug 7, 2023. Also see Lee Schweninger's "Myth Launchings and Moon Landings: Parallel Realities in Susan Power's The Grass Dancer," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 16, no. 3 (2004): 47–69.

15. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 3.

16. Power, *Grass Dancer,* 113.

17. Colette Hyman, *Dakota Women's Work: Creativity, Culture, and Exile* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012), 38.

18. Power, *The Grass Dancer*, 319.

19. Power, *The Grass Dancer*, 321.

20. Power, *The Grass Dancer*, 322.

21. Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 130.

22. See Figure 1.

23. Jamie Lewis, Email to author, 15 Aug. 2016.

24. See Figure 2, accession card, front and back. Its reads: "Heavily beaded woman's dress of buckskin. Sleeves and across front and back beaded solid, background blue, with stripe of white on shoulders, front and back. Very handsome, rare and only one in existence. Originally owned by woman of Red Cloud, war chief of the Sioux, noted for his hostility to the Whites, leader of the famous Fort Kearney massacre, in the sixties and the Indian that closed the Bozeman trail in the gold days of Montana. Upon the death of 'Mrs' Red Cloud the dress passed to the ownership of 'Jim' Red Cloud, son of the chief, who gave it to his wife. After retaining it for a number of years, the latter was compelled by stress of circumstances to sell the dress, it being bought by M. I. Asay, trader at Pine Ridge, SD., Indian agency and then came to Montana and has been at the American Ranch for many years. When W. Huidekoper was at the Fort Robinson Remount Depot of the U.S. Army he questioned Jim Red Cloud concerning this dress and got all the facts as to its history and genuineness. The dress is old, was highly prized by its Indian owners and was considered one of the finest of the fine." [Note: the card includes two uses of the slur "squ*w" in the original typeface, which have since been crossed out with pen and replaced by "woman" in handwriting.]

25. See Figure 1.

26. Susan Power, "Museum Indians," Roofwalker (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2002), 160.

27. Power, "Museum Indians,"165.

Mona Susan Power. *A Council of Dolls: A Novel.* Boston: Mariner Books, 2023. 296 pp., paper, $18.99.

Gabrielle Tateyuskanskan, Oceti Sakowin Writers Society

One of the most egregious harms American society has inflicted on vulnerable children is the trauma caused by the ill-advised federal boarding school system. The devastating impact of these educational institutions has left generations to recover from racist harms that were deliberately inflicted to cause the cultural, spiritual and total annihilation of the original people of this continent by targeting helpless wakaneja or children. American society purposefully directed these inhumane policies toward the first people of this continent in order to take possession of the ancestral territories of tribal nations.

It is the important creative work of Oceti Sakowin or Seven Council Fires writers like Susan Mona Power to educate, communicate truth and ask difficult questions in their work. This story informs how the Oyate or Nation through the generations has shown resiliency and healing from a terrible and painful chapter in Oceti Sakowin history. That is the forced taking of Oyate children from their parents in order to annihilate the Oceti Sakowin through policies of separation, assimilation and boarding school education. These actions were intentional to accomplish the exertion of American authority onto the homeland of the Oyate in order to take the natural resources and aboriginal territory for American expansion.

This book relates a story of three generations of survivors of the perpetration of mass trauma caused by colonization, boarding schools and racism. These effects are seen through the eyes of Cora, Lillian, and Sissy and their dolls Winona, Mae, and Ethel. Attention is brought to the brutality inflicted on helpless children by American policies. This account acknowledges the suffering of boarding school survivors, intergenerational trauma and empowers the voices of many heartbroken innocent wakaneja who then became traumatized adults. The narrative describes

the agony of parents, the sorrow of the tiwahe or family and the distress of the Oyate. All were powerless during the boarding school era to safeguard children from a system that failed miserably to protect innocent wakaneja in their care. These schools were in operation between approximately 1819 to 1969 and have left unaddressed the long-term consequences from trauma and violence of an assimilation education.

A Council of Dolls illustrates the horrible legacy and emotional toll of medical neglect, mental abuse, disease, malnourishment, use of child labor, sexual abuse, and physically abusive conditions that wakaneja endured while attending boarding school. Due to adverse childhood experiences, many young people did not survive boarding school and their resting places are in marked and unmarked school graveyards across America. These children were never returned to their grieving families. In many cases the records of burial sites and their locations have been lost. Families then suffer as a result of those wakaneja who have disappeared. This story describes the results of 150 years of stress, anguish, and feelings of powerlessness of parents, the tiwahe and the Oyate due to the loss of their cherished children to inhumane educational institutions. These schools were places where wakaneja should have been protected, educated and nurtured.

The "Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report" states: "Federal Indian boarding school rules were often enforced through punishment, including corporal punishment such as solitary confinement; flogging; withholding food; whipping; slapping; and cuffing. The federal Indian boarding school system at times made older Indian children punish younger Indian children (Newland 2022, 8)." These punishments were a part of assimilation education efforts. The purpose of this system was to turn children against their identity and community of origin, so America could acquire the ancestral territories of the original people of this continent.

To paraphrase Oceti Sakowin writer Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, who has stated many times during Oceti Sakowin Writers retreat discussions and public forums, "You cannot steal millions of acres from a people and expect the succeeding generations to be alright." Human suffering is found in the damaged familial relationships. The Oceti Sakowin societal structure was disrupted along with language, cultural, and spiritual practice losses due to assimilation. Present-day American society has not atoned for or repaired these harms. In fact, South Dakota in

2010 changed the statute of limitations for bringing civil claims for sexual abuse against institutions. This makes it difficult for boarding school survivors in South Dakota to bring charges of sexual abuse that happened in Christian and government boarding schools.

Little has changed in regard to America's attitude toward First Nations as explained in the 1969 Report "Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge." This report states, "*The coercive assimilation policy has had a strong negative influence on national attitudes. It has resulted in*: A. A nation that is massively uniformed and misinformed about the American Indian, and his past and present. B. Prejudice, racial intolerance, and discrimination towards Indians far more widespread and serious than generally recognized (Kennedy 1969, 21)." Most importantly, America has not yet provided survivors or descendants of survivors an opportunity to relate their boarding school experiences in a documented forum. This is necessary to understand and record the impacts and losses to the Oceti Sakowin and other First Nations during the boarding school era. Reparative work is required so that the emotional health, respect and dignity of those who suffered as children and who have been forgotten by America can be restored. Pidamayaye to Susan Mona Power for bringing this important, challenging, heart-wrenching, and long-neglected human rights issue to light. It is now the responsibility of a humane society to acknowledge the harms and help repair the dignity of those who have suffered. To provide healing resources to those who were traumatized and most importantly justice must be served.

Philip J. Deloria. *Becoming Mary Sully, Toward an American Abstract*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019. 324 pp., paper, $34.95.

Lanniko Lee, Oceti Sakowin Writers Society

Philip J. Deloria, author and descendant of Susan Mabel Deloria (1896–1963), examines the itinerant life and works of this self-taught emergent artist, who in 1927 took her mother's name and worked as Mary Sully. Deloria states that before his great aunt's colored-pencil drawings ended up stored away in a small but heavy paperboard box in his mother's basement, the box, like its owner, traveled about with the artist's sister and Dakota anthropologist, Ella Cara Deloria.

Philip J. Deloria's exploration into his great aunt's drawings takes him on a quest for meaning that proves to be a convergence of influences:

First there is the mixed-blood familial lineage, starting with Alfred Sully, son of English portraiture painter Thomas Sully (Mary Sully's great-grandfather) and Red Crane Woman, Yanktonai Dakota.

Second, there are the acculturating vehicles of the Episcopal Church and the St. Elizabeth School in Wakpala, South Dakota. The first administering priest was none other than Sully's brother Vine Deloria Sr.. Both Mary Sully and her sister Ella Cara Deloria attended the church and the school.

Third, there is Sully's sister Ella, whose educational pursuits proved to be essential personally, professionally, and financially to Sully, thanks to Ella's relationship with linguistic anthropologist Franz Boas. He required Ella to return to South Dakota many times as cultural informant for his linguistic anthropology project. For most of their adult lives the two single women lived together in New York City. While there, Sully frequented museums, art centers, and cultural events.

Fourth, there is the emerging communication technology of the times led by Thomas Edison. His inventions captured and utilized electricity in novel ways, providing to the general public the light bulb, photography, the kinetoscope, and sound recording. Indeed, *Becoming Mary Sully* is

not only an art history overview of Art Modern and the Modernism period but also an examination of Sully's drawings of popular cultural figures gleaned from various sources. In his introduction, Deloria gives special attention to Sully's "personality prints," including one titled *Thomas Edison*. Deloria writes, "[Mary Sully] gathered much of her intelligence from newspapers, magazines, film and radio" (147). Clearly, Sully spent a great deal of time observing popular American culture through available media sources of her time, as evidenced by her "personality prints" (17). Deloria explicates approximately eighty of Sully's personality prints, which were rendered as colored-pencil vertical triptych panels, rather than in the traditional horizontal form.

Finally, Deloria is attempting to not only interpret the artist's numerous colored-pencil and paper renderings but also understand who his obscure great-aunt was as an artist. After her sister Ella's death, Deloria writes, like Mary Sully's gray box of drawings, her own existence posed a mystery to her family. "No one would have cared much if the drawings disappeared, for Mary Sully had been an odd bird with few friends" (5).

Certainly, Mary Sully lived during interesting times, when the American enterprises of invention and innovation were driving forces. New fields of disciplinary studies were emerging, such as anthropology and its divergent fields, including linguistics. Freud and other key figures ushered in the field of psychology, exploring human mental development as well as its aberrations. These fields of interest raised probing questions, fueling the invention of specialized tools to illuminate perceived differences in race, intelligence, and the mental health of individuals and groups. Mary Sully herself was subjected to the Hermann Rorschach tool. Its influence is demonstrated in Mary Sully's triptychs, which are executed as representative mirrored images. It would be difficult to overlook this repetitive method of expression, though Deloria does not expound on it.

However, Deloria does frequently raise questions about the mental state of his great aunt, who was subjected to various psychological tests and medications, and for a brief time was institutionalized. He theorizes that because she was reclusive and isolated, she may have suffered from synesthesia and agoraphobia. He also refers to her as queer, which may have explained her eccentric behavior and her sexual orientation. In this writer's opinion, she likely was extremely introverted, as she had diffi-

culty relating to family members, especially her father and at times her sister Ella.

Furthermore, Deloria provides many examples of Sully's fascination with marginal personalities. These were individuals who challenged established traditions. For instance, he discusses Mary Sully's interest in child actress Jane Withers, who played the foil to Shirley Temple in a few early motion pictures. Jane Withers was a self-proclaimed tomboy and had no misgivings about being cast as the "dark" counterpart to Shirley Temple, who the public perceived as the child princess of the silver screen. Interestingly, it is Jane Withers and not Shirley Temple who captures Sully's interest, although Temple is among those listed in the typewritten page "PERSONALITY PRINTS INSPIRED BY" (17).

Mary Sully spent most of her life in the company of her sister Ella. Though Ella provided Mary Sully financial support, she provided emotional and inspirational support as well. Deloria lightly touches on the parallel educational pursuits of the two women. He also points out the numerous failures Sully experienced in pursuit of her interest in art, at a time when studio art was in transition. Though Sully embraced these new art forms, Deloria reminds us that Mary Sully also stepped back from numerous opportunities: rather than to step forward. "By the 1960s Native forms of abstraction, symbolism, cubism, and expressionism would be state of the art in Indian Country." Furthermore, Deloria offers few acknowledgments of Sully's genius, instead writes more about Sully's failures throughout her life.

Philip J. Deloria's book is revelatory about the life and work of his great aunt Mary Sully and is recommended reading, despite its overly academic writing and pedantic style.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn. *In Defense of Loose Translations: An Indian Life in an Academic World*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018. 211pp., hardcover, $30.00.

Sarah Hernandez, The University of New Mexico

Dakota scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux) struggled to write *In Defense of Loose Translations*, a memoir about her many decades in the academy. In western society, the memoir is often an individualistic, self-centered, and self-serving exercise. However, in tribal society, Cook-Lynn observes: "Dakota stories seldom say 'I am a great man. Look at me.' More often, they say, 'We are a great people" (6). For this reason, Cook-Lynn has long shunned this genre, and harshly condemned Native American writers who indulge in "look at me" culture. Always the sharp tongued literary critic, Cook-Lynn even uses her memoir to rebuke Sherman Alexie one last time with a scathing critique of his 2017 book, *You Don't Have to Say You Love Me: A Memoir*, a personal exploration of his strained relationship with his mother.

An introspective and critical thinker, Cook-Lynn continuously questions her decision to write a memoir. Such self-reflection allows her to avoid some of the same self-indulgent shortcomings she criticized Alexie and many other writers for over the years. Further, this approach empowers her to compose what some literary scholars now refer to as the "hybrid memoir," a personal reflection that consciously and deliberately provides insights into important cultural / historical / political movements. With this book, Cook-Lynn joins a growing list of BIWOC writers and scholars (such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Audre Lorde and belle hooks), who draw on personal experience to address broader community concerns and responsibilities. As a result, Cook-Lynn's memoir is not just a self-centered story filled with interpersonal drama or inane gossip, but rather her hybrid memoir offers a broader reflection on her "intellectual and political priorities," which included Native American

studies, tribal politics, treaties, sovereignty, history, and literature to name a few (5).

In *In Defense of Loose Translations*, Cook-Lynn describes herself as "a hapless Magoo" who fumbled her way through the academy "blindly and narrowly missing catastrophes" (0). Admittedly, Cook-Lynn did not take the "traditional" academic route (i.e., the back-to-back BA, MA, and PhD). Instead she forged her own path and helped lay the groundwork for future Native American / American Indian / Indigenous studies scholars to follow. Although Cook-Lynn is often regarded as a political writer, it is important to note that she actually began her academic career in her early forties as a literary scholar at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. As a doctoral candidate, she attended several prestigious literature seminars and workshops that left her disillusioned and frustrated with the field of American literary studies, which she realized often silenced and erased the tribal voice. In the opening chapters of her memoir, Cook-Lynn recalls attending one such workshop in Palo Alto at the home of an eccentric professor who owned a pet boa constrictor. Throughout her memoir, Cook-Lynn uses this image of the snake as an extended metaphor to foreshadow the many challenges she would face in "America's colonial academic world" (4).

Cook-Lynn eventually withdrew from her doctoral program in English and embarked on a very successful career at Eastern Washington State University, where she held a dual appointment in English and Native American studies. While she briefly addresses her personal experiences with racism and sexism in her memoir, she primarily uses this hybrid format to reflect further upon her work in the field of Native American / American Indian / Indigenous studies (which she calls, "Indian studies," for short). As Cook-Lynn states in her memoir: "*Do not just write about me, me, me stuff. Move on*" (121). Brushing past her personal life rather quickly in this memoir, Cook-Lynn uses this text to remind Native writers and scholars that Indian studies is an inherently political discipline that was created in defense of our tribal nations. Therefore, Indian studies' scholarship must critically interrogate who governs our nations, how, and to what effect. Specifically, she examines how several settler institutions and practices (e.g., churches, schools, publishers, and federal Indian laws and policies) have threatened and continue to threaten Indigenous nationhood today—both in the U.S. and abroad.

Cook-Lynn played an integral role in the development of Native American / American Indian / Indigenous studies. During her lifetime, she published fourteen books that are now critical and foundational to Indian studies. She wrote NAS curriculum and formally and informally mentored countless Native graduate students across the country. She co-founded the Oak Lake Writers' Society, a first of its kind tribal group for Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota writers. And also, co-founded and edited one of the first Native American studies journals in the country, the *Wicazo Sa Review*. In her memoir, she reflects fondly upon the journal as one of her greatest academic achievements.

The *Wicazo Sa Review* is an intellectual platform that Cook-Lynn and her co-founders, Bea Medicine, William Willard, and Roger Buffalohead, created for Native scholars to define and shape Indian studies on their own terms. Initially, some contributors misconstrued the *Wicazo Sa Review* as a literary studies journal to share personal musings, work through personal trauma, or promote their own personal academic agendas. However, Cook-Lynn, often regarded as "the conscience" of Native American studies, was adamant from the very beginning that Native American / American Indian / Indigenous studies is a legitimate academic discipline with its own theories and methodologies that must work toward strengthening and empower our tribal nations. She was adamant that Indian studies should expose, critique, and further challenge anti-Indianism in modern America (to borrow the title of one of her many superb books). Ultimately, Cook-Lynn's memoir is a reminder to contemporary Native American / American Indian / Indigenous scholars that our writing and research—regardless of our discipline—is responsible for protecting and defending, not further eroding, the sovereignty of our tribal nations.

Cook-Lynn warns that contemporary Native scholars are at a crossroads. She says: "I noticed that many of the newest generation of educated Natives are not as interested in overthrowing the oppressor as they are in getting oppressive systems to work for them" (210). Throughout her memoir, she emphasizes that we will never get these oppressive systems to "work" for us. In many ways, her memoir implies that contemporary Native scholars are left with the same two options we've always had as tribal people—assimilate or resist. Professor Elizabeth Cook-Lynn spent a lifetime resisting and challenging "America's colonial aca-

demic world"—often at great personal expense to herself, her family, and even her own career. As Cook-Lynn concludes, there is still much work to be done in the field of Indian studies. Fortunately, she has left behind an incredibly rich intellectual legacy to help guide and embolden future Native scholars and writers for generations to come.

What's in the Shadow of a Name?

Cook-Lynn's Invocations of Greek and Roman Classics in the *Aurelia* Trilogy

FORD PEAY

Abstract: "Though classicists have always believed in endings," Elizabeth Cook-Lynn writes in *Aurelia*, "the real Dakotah storytellers like Aurelia do not." Throughout her 1999 novella collection, *Aurelia: A Crow Creek Trilogy*, Cook-Lynn enacts a project of literary nationalism. Cook-Lynn also juxtaposes the Dakota topics and literary practices of her narrative against occasional but pointed references to Greek and Roman antiquity and to classicism: the scholarly mode that has enshrined Greek and Roman antiquity in both etiologies and ideals of "Western civilization" for centuries. A superficial reading might suggest that Cook-Lynn's classical invocations implicitly prioritize Western classicism or distract from *Aurelia*'s Dakota literary nationalism. While such invocations do create multiple effects, their primary thrust is to redirect the reader to a Dakota-centered orientation of philosophical-artistic priorities. Ultimately, this examination of Cook-Lynn's classical invocations illuminates in action a provocative and deftly challenging authorial stance that Cook-Lynn identifies with literary greatness in her own criticism.

Keywords: *Aurelia*, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, classics, Dakota, Latin, Greek, classical reception, literary nationalism

INTRODUCTION

Some studies of classical reception in colonial contexts may focus on articulating the histories of classics as a tool for establishing or assimilating colonized people to a Western colonial cultural hegemony.[1] Other studies may show people who use classics to challenge such hegemony or who find inspiration from Greek or Roman writings in their struggles against and under colonial oppression.[2] Others still describe the

roles of classics in postcolonial literary hybrids that may affirm or center ideas of Western classical tradition, even while challenging, adapting, and recontextualizing them.[3] In *Aurelia: A Crow Creek Trilogy*, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn plays with classics in a different key. Working in a continuing history of American settler colonialism, Cook-Lynn constructs a Dakota story that draws occasionally, deftly, and significantly on classicisms; rather than creating a cultural synthesis where the Dakota takes an ambiguous or deferential relation to the classical, she consistently subordinates classicisms to a Dakota orientation of philosophical-artistic priorities.

Before examining passages from the *Aurelia* novella trilogy and relevant comparands elsewhere in Cook-Lynn's work, it is useful to briefly clarify this article's understanding of "classics" and related terms, as well as to highlight *Aurelia*'s significant features and its context in Cook-Lynn's work as a whole. For brevity and because of the term's history, I primarily use "classics" to refer to both the content of ancient Greek and Roman cultural productions and the practice of studying them. In turn, by a "classicism" I mean any moment in which a post-antiquity subject turns to classics; for example, overt discussion of classics, allusion or apostrophe to classics, or use of ancient Greek and Latin language. By at least the late seventeenth century, English authors used "the classics" to refer to ancient Greek and Roman texts, their authors, and the scholars and disciplines studying them (a study long established in grammar schools as well as elite universities). In turn, by the early eighteenth century, writers discussed contemporary English classics, and "classic" is presently used to canonize virtually any category of cultural production.[4] As it is relevant based on Cook-Lynn's usage, my discussion of classics also extends to this topic-flexible mode of canonicity. So, it should be unsurprising, for instance, when I quote Cook-Lynn later on receiving criticism from "classically trained historians" about her essay collection *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner*, which contains no essays about ancient Greece or Rome.[5] I focus primarily on the occurrences of Greek and Roman classicisms because they are more frequent in *Aurelia* and because, as Edith Hall and Henry Stead put it, the ancient Greek and Roman classics have been "the supposed *primi inter pares* or 'first amongst equals' when compared with all the cultural *Classici* produced in world history."[6] Classics, as discipline and concept, has long and often been either a tool for actively grooming European ideologies

of racial and socioeconomic hierarchy, or a project passively compatible with these ideologies.

The Dakota scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (1930–2023), on the other hand, has spent her career actively opposing such ideologies in her work as a poet, novelist, professor of Native American studies, co-founder and editor of the seminal *Wicazo Sa Review*, founding member of the Oak Lake Writers' Society, and author of multiple essays and monographs in advocacy for Native and particularly Oceti Sakowin political and cultural concerns. Her *Aurelia* trilogy comprises three novellas: *From the River's Edge* (first published separately in 1991), *A Circle of Dancers*, and *In the Presence of the River Gods*. The three were published together in 1999, and all focus on life on the Crow Creek reservation during the twentieth century. *River's Edge* follows the aging John Tatekeya as he undergoes the legal processing of the theft of his cattle. The next two novellas trace the adult life of his younger partner, Aurelia Blue, as she adapts Dakota womanhood to the circumstances of her life and becomes a storyteller witness to the ruinous effects of the Pick-Sloan Program's dams; the emergence of the American Indian Movement; the 1980 US Supreme Court ruling on the *United States v. Sioux Nation* case offering cash settlement for but not repatriation of the sacred He Sapa or Black Hills; and fictional or fictionalized instances of rape, murder, and suicide in and around Crow Creek. The trilogy is not a closed cycle, and Cook-Lynn published a fourth novella separately in 2014. *That Guy Wolf Dancing* shifts focus to Philip Big Pipe, Aurelia's young nephew, as he reconciles Dakota manhood and the long-term effects of the genocidal U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 with his own circumstances after moving to work in a border town hospital.

Sarah Hernandez argues that Cook-Lynn's nation-centered literary practice in the Crow Creek series comprises an adaptive and regenerative written-text synthesis of *o-hun-ka-ka* and *ke-ya-pi* narratives,[7] which divide oral tradition narratives into those about ancient people and those about ordinary people, respectively. Furthermore, *Aurelia*'s prioritization in style and content of meta-deliberation on storytelling, history, and futurity helps manifest this purpose of cultural renewal.[8] Hernandez argues that the Crow Creek series, from *River's Edge* to *Wolf Dancing*, explores modes of both internal and external decolonization, following the paradigm of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang.[9] Specifically, the *Aurelia* trilogy deliberates on modes of internal decolonization, and

Wolf Dancing concerns itself with how to begin integrating the work of internal decolonization into actions of external decolonization.[10] Classicisms are not frequent in *Aurelia* nor in Cook-Lynn's publications generally, but for an author who operates on a fine-grained level of structural and stylistic detail to establish her work as Dakota national literature, any repeated choice to also detail allusions to Greek and Roman material is neither incidental nor inconsequential, given the historic and continued use of classics as a field foundational to the idea of a Western tradition. While classicisms are an apparently rare feature in Cook-Lynn's writing in general, a superficial reading (or one that presumes a particularly low level of authorial self-awareness) might find that their very presence calls into question *Aurelia*'s integrity as nation-centered Dakota literature by distracting from Dakota cultural discourse or, perhaps, performing an assimilatory translation of Dakota cultural discourse into Western tradition. However, in close reading I find the total effect is a centering of Dakota cultural concerns and a translation of Latin authors into Dakota contexts. Additionally, the challenge that the relative obscurity of some classicisms may pose to her audience is one that Cook-Lynn's own literary criticism has valorized as a counterpart to the frequent reception of Native authors as obscure by predominantly Western publishers and critics, a perspective that yields insight into how Cook-Lynn's intentions for *Aurelia* have aligned with her work as a critic.

Though, again, infrequent, Cook-Lynn's use of classicisms in *Aurelia*—eight instances in forms such as allusion to historical and literary figures and practices, quotation in Latin, and observation about classicists—does not make the trilogy unique in her oeuvre, though it occurs even more rarely outside the second *Aurelia* novella. For example, in *Wolf Dancing*, while waiting on an estate judgment, Philip observes that lawyers' weaponization of knowledge and rhetoric goes back to "even those early self-taught lawyers from ancient Greek and Roman civilizations."[11] In her 2018 memoir, *In Defense of Loose Translations*, Cook-Lynn employs Latin twice, first with a Juvenal quote (*crambe repetita*) used as casual aphorism and second with a brief introduction and explanation of the term *terra nullius* in discussion of colonial legal self-legitimization.[12] Likewise, in the 1996 essay collection *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner*, Cook-Lynn describes Ray Young Bear's *Black Eagle Child: The Facepaint Narratives* as presenting "an articu-

late, bilingual, tribal Phaedrus."[13] Like those in *Aurelia*, these classicisms speak to Cook-Lynn's investments in politics, language, law, and literature; although many today, especially Christians, associate Latin with Roman Catholic Christianity, Cook-Lynn's usage of classicisms is much more often disinterested in this aspect than not, in sympathy with Cook-Lynn's own pointed distance from Christianity.[14] And, of course, it is unsurprising that, from an author who states in broad retrospect that "there is an elaborate attempt in my fictional work to overburden it with history and law,"[15] some references to Roman law or Greek literary history should appear in *Aurelia* or in Cook-Lynn's other works. But in *Aurelia*, a work centered on Dakota experiences, aesthetics, history, and culture, almost all of the occasional historical and legal and mythic references that are not to Dakota subjects are to classical ones.

These eight allusions in *Aurelia* variously contrast classicisms with Dakota history and culture or reorient a momentary focus on the former to center the latter, sometimes by radically revising the meaning of the allusion at hand. In sum, they are two Latin quotes, one from Lucan's *Pharsalia* and another from Horace's *Ars Poetica*; one comment on classicists' literary expectations; one invocation of Justinian; one cluster of references to sun deities (three Roman, one Greek, one Egyptian); one invocation of Aesop (alongside Scheherazade); one allusion to the *Aeneid*; and one invocation of the Greek Acropolis. All but the Justinian invocation, which is in the first novella, occur in the second novella, *A Circle of Dancers*, and were therefore developed or consciously retained in the wake of initial critical responses to *From the River's Edge*.

This timeline is significant because there is a general compatibility between the rhetorical effects of these classicisms and some of the accusations of lapse in taste or skill that are made in the most negative early reviews of *River's Edge*. These early reviews emerged from influential publications such as the *New York Times*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, and *Kirkus Reviews*, and took issue variously with both the novella's political concerns and with features, such as its deliberative narratorial tone or the deviation of its structure from a simple beginning-middle-end, that characterize Cook-Lynn's writing as an adaption of oral tradition.[16] For instance, Cook-Lynn may raise classicisms in a contrastive manner, invoking an ancient Greek or Roman figure in order to state that what she is talking about is *not* like that classicism; the overtness of this statement is compatible with one negative reviewer's accusation of

telling rather than showing.[17] At other times, the author avails herself of a lesser-known Latin phrase without mentioning the author, or invokes Aesop by oblique description rather than name; here, her obscurantism is surely compatible with another complaint, the "monotone sacrosanct."[18] This relative obscurity and the Western-elite connotation of classicisms may align with yet another reviewer accusation: unrealistic narratorial interpolations into a story that is "simple and folkloric" in its best moments.[19] Since these invocations seem to lean into the just-listed tendencies that those critics decried, the exceptional frequency of classical invocations in *Circle of Dancers* could be read as a response to the most negative critics of *From the River's Edge*.

Furthermore, Cook-Lynn records meeting similar resistance from commenters on some of her other writing in the form of complaints that she is incorrect on details of usage or historical accuracy. In *Loose Translations*'s 2018 retrospect, Cook-Lynn makes a pertinent comment while discussing her first academic volume, the essay collection *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner*, which was published in 1996, five years after the publication of *River's Edge* and three years before the full release of the *Aurelia* trilogy: "Writing it got me invited to all kinds of events arranged by classically trained historians so they could argue with me about my inaccuracies."[20] If pedant-baiting has its upshots, then the revision of original meaning that is occasionally present in Cook-Lynn's *Aurelia* classicisms already makes sense as a deliberate move.

But several of *Aurelia*'s classicisms are relatively unobscure, offering little provocation to critics; and many do not seem to revise the original meaning of their referents, offering little provocation to historians. So, with the capacity for provocation acknowledged, it would be premature to read *Aurelia*'s classicisms as a merely contrarian statement, much less to dismiss them by presuming that we should silently equate with artistic ineptitude those moments that are not so much simple and folkloric as difficult and historically canny. In the following sections, I group *Aurelia*'s classicisms in three general forms: the allusive comparison, the Latin quotation, and the temporal comment. Since instances of the same form execute rhetorical motions similar to one another, this is less confusing than would be addressing each passage sequentially by page number, although I maintain an orientation to the book's timeline through context descriptions during close reading and by terming each passage as the first, second, etc., classicism in *Aurelia* where appropriate.

ALLUSIVE COMPARISONS

By "allusive comparison," I mean a passage that invokes two or more figures of major cultural stature, comparing (explicitly or implicitly) the domains they represent. The first classicism in *Aurelia*, and the only one in *From the River's Edge*, is an allusive comparison that occurs in the eleventh episode of that novella. The latter two thirds of this chapter is written in the stark Q&A form of a courtroom transcription in which Jason Big Pipe bears false witness against John Tatekeya during a trial on the theft of Tatekeya's cattle. Before this, the chapter consists of a third person omniscient section on the moral gravity of Tatekeya's humiliation and betrayal, as well as his reflections thereon. The section at hand occurs during this part, just before the fateful testimony begins:

> Justinian, the Roman lawyer and politician, who codified law in the context of Christianity, wrote in the sixth century that neither God nor human law could forbid all evil deeds, and if John Tatekeya had been a scholar of European history and religion, which he knew concentrated on the nature of evil, he might have agreed. But what he did know as a Dakotah was that the ethical aspect of "natural law," that to which a man is inclined naturally, the kind of law that the Dakotapi had always believed they specialized in, fails only when it is encouraged by reason and practicality and fate. There was no doubt that John considered this action of Jason's outside of the category of natural inclinations, and he would have to wait and see what explanations might emerge.[21]

In the first sentence, we see an explicit contrast of the work of a "scholar of European history and religion" with the real moral work with which Tatekeya and his story are concerned. Here, then, classical subject and its scholar both are introduced in order to be set aside, so that their contrast can underscore with finality the Dakota philosophical discourse of moral nature that is at hand.

The comparative allusion next manifests with two comparands in *Aurelia*'s third classicism, in the first chapter of *A Circle of Dancers*, in the following paragraph about Aurelia.

> In the silence of her life with her grandmother, then, which was moving toward wrenching change, she was unpossessed of the joy and vibrance of the famous tellers of the world's stories. She

> was not, after all, the stunning singer and dancer from the East, Sheherezade. Nor was she one who went to Delphi. She was just an American Indian woman who carried the fear in her heart that the stories of her land and her people, the Dakotahs, were invisible and unrecoverable in an alien world.[22]

Aurelia's characterization culminates an otherwise contrasting tricolon; before we are to understand what Aurelia is, we are to understand that she is not a joyous and vibrant Scheherazade, nor such a "one who went to Delphi." "One who went to Delphi" is a much more subtle allusion than are the direct namings of Justinian or Scheherazade. The lack of a definite article, too, coats the allusion in a gloss of vagueness about whether Cook-Lynn means one specific person rather than a type of person. It gestures to archetypicality, appropriately for Aesop, the storyteller to whom it refers.[23] The presence of both Scheherazade and Aesop evokes a multicultural pantheon of great mythic storytellers as worthy comparands for Aurelia. However, Cook-Lynn invokes both non-Dakota figures in order to supplant them with Dakota specificity. That is to say, what ultimately characterizes Aurelia here is a fear of the loss of Dakota culture within "an alien world"; this explicitly and immediately problematizes the sense of globality that Scheherazade and the Delphic traveler evoke as associates of Arabic and Greek cultural contexts.

Further important work characterizing Aurelia's particular Dakota identity is done by the allusions' negative aspect. Both Aesop and Scheherazade are socially precarious, legally disenfranchised figures in their own lives—Aesop a slave, Scheherazade the wife of a femicidal tyrant—whose oppressors reward with special privilege and scrutiny the cleverness and wisdom of their exceptional storytelling. Separating Aurelia from these storytellers, then, can send a message to the audience: don't expect an Aurelia who will sing for her supper, be the center of attention, or perform on settler terms of cultural validation. Such collaboration is rejected in the story's plot, as well, when Aurelia makes a major decision not to sell items of her cultural inheritance to a museum.[24]

So, this brief comparison to "one who went to Delphi" and to Scheherazade furthers *Aurelia*'s Dakota centrality in several mutually reinforcing ways. It does so by warning readers not to collapse Aurelia into the types of non-Dakota storytellers; reinforcing the plot's rejection

of cultural commodification; and clarifying a conceptual place for Dakota storytelling as existing on a world stage—but, at the same time, also by privileging its specific internal anxieties of erasure as well as an emphasis on Aurelia's everydayness. These specific anxieties and this everydayness, respectively, constitute the Dakota storyteller as both internally sensitive (rather than just outwardly performative) and as normal.

In *Aurelia*'s sixth classicism, another suite of allusions also comes in a set not limited to the Dakota and ancient Greek or Roman. As Aurelia travels with Jason Big Pipe (now her partner) and Jason's old uncle Lewis Grey Iron to visit another relative, a young man on trial for the murder of a white man and the rape of his wife, Aurelia meditates on the sun.

> The late afternoon sunlight blinded them as they left the dim hallways of justice, and they squinted into the sky. There are these places in the universe, thought Aurelia as she followed the men to the car, where the sunlight is most luminous, crystal clear and splendid, especially in the days just before the hot, muggy days of summer. Out of three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, she mused, more than three hundred of them bear such phosphorescence as this into the human soul and it is this fact of nature, they say, which accounts for the Lakota/Dakotah way of life.
>
> She wanted to talk about it. Like this: *Other peoples have called it Phoebus, Aurora, Helios, Venus, Ra. Names recognized as verbal custodians of great mythic sensibilities. Few know or care that the Sioux want to call it "grandfather," the important companion of Wi-win. Even fewer know that this is a profound recognition of the course of all life, and that this recognition makes the behavior and responsibility of old men like Lewis Grey Iron the more manifest.*
>
> But, of course, she said nothing. Only the men and women who have connections to the spirit world have words in the ancient language to say these things to others. But Aurelia, herself a sensitive and thoughtful woman of some maturity, felt the profound nature of the moment.[25]

This passage contributes a moment of meditative development to one of the major character arcs of the trilogy and especially of this novella: Aurelia's growth as a storyteller. This gestation of storytelling as a way of experiencing the world contributes to the even greater

theme of Aurelia's slow, sometimes unintentional and even unwilling adoption and adaption of what the trilogy terms traditional Dakota womanhood's roles, emblematized by the figure of the Corn Woman: as "bearer of children, feeder of the people, companion to men, and keeper of the stories."[26] Of additional note, the primary qualification of the grandfather sun as "the important companion of Wi-win," the female moon, informs with an expectation of reciprocity the trilogy's proposition of women's companionship to men. This reciprocity returns in the ending of the third novella, in a tender moment of resolution when Jason and Aurelia, having separated, finally reunite for a moment to cook together for the funeral of Jason's brother Tony. Here, they cook together, both acting as feeders of the people.[27]

The mythological invocations in the second paragraph of this section include one Egyptian and four Greek and Roman deities. This time in the internal voice of Aurelia, Cook-Lynn gestures to a more global array of archetypes, here centered on the ancient Mediterranean; she then re-centers her focus to an Oceti Sakowin context of meaning shared in terms of Dakota and Lakota together. This shared name and context for the grandfather sun are consonant with its additive presentation in relation to the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman deities; unlike the previous two allusive comparisons, this passage does not turn away from its classical comparands with a negative statement. Instead, within the context of Aurelia's own knowledge (a limiting context that may explain the unusual inclusion of Venus as sun, unless that is also a provocative mistake or an allusion too obscure for this reader to locate), there seems to be a desire for intercultural relationality.

This intercultural relationality is not an equivocation of attention; the urgent attention paid to the Oceti Sakowin sun makes this clear. Nor is it an equivocation of quality in what is being invoked. While the Oceti Sakowin sun is contemplated in connection to land and the perpetuation of a traditional way of life, in turn related to the individual responsibilities and abilities of Aurelia and Lewis Grey Iron, the other names exist as names, "verbal custodians of great mythic sensibilities."[28] This division perhaps echoes what Cook-Lynn wrote elsewhere on the contrasting significance of myth and legend:

> The function of legend, we are told, is not only something that is handed down but something that relates to the earth, not just a

> place but rather a setting, a specific place. Legends happen on the earth. Myth, on the other hand, can be said to happen in the imagination or the outer world. Both are essential to complete understanding of American Indian literary expression.[29]

The reorientation to Dakota and Lakota context in Aurelia's contemplation of the sun also incorporates a reorientation from a mythic to a legendary set of priorities, prioritizing land as place, as do others of the following classicisms. Examining all three of the allusive comparisons together and noting their differences clarifies that Cook-Lynn's vitalizing focus on Dakota culture in *Aurelia* is effectively just that: a focus on part of what is, rather than a categorical dismissal of what is not.

LATIN QUOTATIONS

Turning to a different form of classicism in *Aurelia*, two Latin quotations bookend *A Circle of Dancers*. A quotation from Lucan is the second classicism in the trilogy, at almost the very beginning of the novella, and a quotation from Horace is the series's eighth and final classicism, at almost the very end of *A Circle of Dancers*. We find the Lucan quotation in the following passage. "It has been said that any story begins in the memory of its cause. In Aurelia's case, and, perhaps, in the case of all the stories the Dakotahs tell, the cause may have been a desperate fear of *nominis umbra*, *the fear that when one cannot know one's name and place, there is only outrage*."[30] At a glance, this might seem to give lie to the idea of *Aurelia* as a nation-centered literary project; by Cook-Lynn's choosing a Latin head word for what the text identifies as a salient feature of Dakota storytelling, it may seem that she is both translating and subordinating Dakota literature and *Aurelia* itself to a Western aesthetic and linguistic order. On close examination, however, the opposite appears to be true.

Nominis umbra, "shadow of a name," originates in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, which is also known as the *De Bello Civili* and by similar titles, or simply in English as the *Civil War*.[31] Written during the reign of Nero, this unfinished epic tells of the civil war between Magnus Pompey and Julius Caesar as the end of the Roman republic. It enjoyed a wide and consistent audience in the Latin-reading population and in some vernacular translations and adaptions through the early modern period. Over four

hundred medieval manuscripts and fragments of the poem and its commentaries survive, and it seems that the only single ancient Latin poem with a larger number of surviving witnesses is Vergil's *Aeneid* itself.[32] By Cook-Lynn's time, Lucan had become unpopular in the Anglophone academic world and virtually unknown in popular culture;[33] however, even though the poem as a whole became more obscure, the manuscript and reception traditions of the *Pharsalia* had also resulted in the dissemination and appreciation of some of its *sententiae*, short quotes, as autonomous nuggets of cultural wisdom that can move far beyond their original contexts.[34]

The phrase *nominis umbra* is one such Lucanian *sententia*; in fact, one of the best known and therefore most obviously subject to the mutating power of a broad and dismembering reception history. In its original context (*Pharsalia* book I, line 135), it is part of the first explicit comparison between Pompey and Caesar, and therefore of a passage (lines 135–45) that instigates a major thematic and narrative tension of the epic:

> stat magni nominis umbra,
> qualis frugifero quercus sublimis in agro
> exuuias ueteris populi sacrataque gestans
> dona ducum nec iam ualidis radicibus haerens
> pondere fixa suo est, nudosque per aera ramos
> effundens, trunco non frondibus efficit umbram,
> et quamuis primo nutet casura sub Euro,
> tot circum siluae firmo se robore tollant,
> sola tamen colitur. sed non in Caesare tantum
> nomen erat nec fama ducis, sed nescia uirtus
> stare loco, solusque pudor non uincere bello.

> [Magnus Pompey] stands, the shadow of a great name,
> like an oak on high in a fruitful field,
> bearing veteran spoils of the people and sacred
> gifts of leaders; no longer hanging on with strong roots,
> he is fixed in place by his own weight, and through the heaven
> reaching out naked branches; with trunk, not branches, he casts shade;
> and, although he totters, the first about to fall under Eurus [the east wind],
> so many trees uplift themselves around him with oak-hard might,
> only he is worshiped. But in Caesar, there was not only

> a name, nor the reputation of a leader, but a strength unable
> to stand in one place, and [this was] his sole shame: not to conquer
> by war.[35]

Here, Pompey is entirely the shadow, even the ghost of his name (*umbra* commonly indicates a person's postmortem spirit as well as a literal or figurative shadow).[36] It is the most substantial thing about him after the dead weight of his living corpse. While there is a fear underlying *nominis umbra* in Lucan, it lies less precisely in the insubstantiality of a name, the disappearing of a name (or place) itself, than in the relative insubstantiality of the political power that should accompany or undergird a name. At first blush, Lucan's use of the phrase is apparently miles away from Cook-Lynn's "fear of *nominis umbra*, *the fear that when one cannot know one's name and place, there is only outrage*." In Lucan's usage, *nominis umbra* is a plain statement about Pompey's character that is elaborated into a metaphorical image that comments evocatively; in Cook-Lynn's usage, it is an obscure statement that is explicated to invoke a particular mode of fear. Here, the outrage that qualifies that fear may be interpreted in two senses simultaneously: as an emotional statement of anger at loss of knowledge of name and place, and as a moral statement of enormity subsequent to such a loss. Her statement is ambiguous about whether this knowledge loss causes the enormity or merely recognizes it.

Beyond the obvious level of its direct attribution of *nominis umbra* to Dakota storytellers as a tentatively characteristic fear, this moral dimension of Cook-Lynn's passage performs another reorientation of the story's focus, and its Latinity, toward Dakota sensibilities. This emerges not only in Cook-Lynn's turn from the original meaning of *nominis umbra* but also in her turn to this fear's particular synthesis of erasure and outrage. As a fear of loss of knowledge, it speaks to internally colonizing pressures to devalue and abandon traditional tribal knowledge and relationships, exerted for instance in the long operation of boarding schools. Additionally, as a fear of loss of knowledge about self in relation to others and the land, it prioritizes the legendary capacity of storytelling by speaking to the land as place, much like the previously examined passage on Aurelia's contemplation of the sun and its relation to other beings within and without Oceti Sakowin cosmology, including Dakota and Lakota ways of daily life on the land.

These main points are accessible to a careful reader, to greater or lesser degree depending on the individual's carefulness and the relevance of their literary experience, regardless of that reader's awareness of any other meaning of *nominis umbra*. And it is unremarkable per se that *nominis umbra*, like other *sententiae*, is changed in meaning as it spreads through various reception contexts.[37] But an awareness of any other meaning for *nominis umbra* may allow the reader an additional perspective on the passage, one which furthers the coherence of the novella's artistic priorities. Cook-Lynn's radical revision of *nominis umbra* functions as part of *Aurelia*'s and Aurelia's priority of literary innovation—not only innovation as an experiment in combining *o-hun-ka-ka* and *ke-ya-pi* forms but innovation as an individual's practice of desire. The very first page of *A Circle of Dancers* presents the following account of Aurelia as a mature storyteller.

> If there was anything Aurelia was noted for throughout her long life, it was her exemplary memory and her self-possession concerning its function. She did not always tell the stories of remembrance. But when she did she did not tell what happened as it really happened or even as she remembered it happening; rather, she told stories as she desired them to be. Because of this passionate selfishness, and because those who loved her recognized a melancholia about the stories, and mostly because they could not help but believe the stories as she told them, her inconsistency was rarely challenged.[38]

This practice of desire in changing stories of remembrance is left conspicuously unproblematized, much less corrected, in Aurelia's character and in *Aurelia*'s narrative practice. To that last point, such a practice also seems to be enacted by Cook-Lynn's narratorial treatment of *nominis umbra*, as she redefines the saying to suit her artistic aims, rather than adjusting her writing to what the *sententia* meant in a previous context.

So, this approach to redefinition is a technique that creates coherence between storytelling practices on two levels by showing the rule of redefinition according to desire that the narrator relates concerning Aurelia's character. The doubleness of this literary practice is similar to the "allegory within an allegory" that Hernandez identifies in *Aurelia*'s and Aurelia's treatment of the Mni Sosa, where Aurelia interprets the river as she herself becomes a site and model of reader interpretation.[39]

While telling rather than showing is not necessarily a literary sin, unlike what reviewer Robert Houston assumed about Cook-Lynn's apparent preference for it in *From the River's Edge*, Houston may also have been looking in the wrong places for "showing." In addition, Cook-Lynn's invocation of *nominis umbra* seems to demonstrate how what Hernandez calls a tribally specific regenerative literary practice is capable of cultivating Latinity in its own image, rather than (as it might initially seem) translating tribally specific cultural elements into Latin and therefore subordinating them to a Western ideological hierarchy of culture.[40]

There is a similar but not identical set of implications in Cook-Lynn's eighth and final classicism in *A Circle of Dancers* and in *Aurelia* as a whole. This use occurs in the epilogue to *A Circle of Dancers*, a particularly auspicious location because of the important thematic and plot developments that this section introduces. Leading up to the epilogue, Jason Big Pipe's troubled and troubling older brother Sheridan has fled from a false murder accusation to Houston. He spends his days there "oddly surrounding himself in a bookish, library-like atmosphere with historical papers and manuscripts and reading materials of every sort," many on political history and theory.[41] Under the weight of realizing the loss of his culture and family, Sheridan ultimately suffers a mental break that leaves him unable to care for himself, lying in his own filth, and (in the very last words of the novella) "Mumbling. Incoherent."[42]

As related in the pages immediately preceding this final incoherence, it is explicitly not meant as a damnation or exile, as it might be in a story set in a more Christian moral cosmos. Instead, Sheridan's story is simply unable to be continued coherently by the Dakota storytellers—or, it seems, even by himself.

> For them he was a paradox, a puzzle, and he no longer entered into the continuum of their stories. *Dignus vendice nodus*. No longer prime or fathomable in the heart of the tribe. No longer in that place where everything tribal belongs, *Dak o ta hoc 'aka*, where everything is known, enclosed in the sacred location of the first ancestor, no longer prolonging the possibility for knowledge of the people.[43]

The phrase *dignus vendice nodus* ("a knot worthy of a champion") as it is deployed here provides a paratactic comment to its paragraph;

Sheridan's knotty situation requires some great intercessor if it is to be untangled.[44] *Dignus vindice nodus*, "problem worthy of an intercessor," is, like *nominis umbra*, another *sententia*. Horace wrote it concerning his standards for literary decorum, advising in lines 191–92 of his *Ars Poetica* that *nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus*. "Nor should a god intervene, unless a problem worthy of such an intercessor occurs." Since no such intercessor appears, Cook-Lynn's use of only the last portion of the quotation may imply that Sheridan is not worthy of aid, but the story does not explicitly label him unworthy. Instead, the story raises the question of its worth in order to demonstrate its own committed alignment with a tribal place and relationality that Sheridan is now beyond.

Quoting the *Ars*, a canonical text in many handbooks and histories of Western literary criticism, creates another moment of metadeliberation, where *Aurelia* notes the contours of what its story is and could be. But Cook-Lynn is not simply subscribing to the standards of the *Ars* by her quotation of it; while more subtly than with *nominis umbra*, her quotation here also revises the expectations of its original. Horace's recommendation on *deus ex machina* offers a clear-cut set of two options: under certain conditions, a god as intercessor either wholly should or wholly shouldn't appear in a story. However, the bare fact that Cook-Lynn raises an unfulfilled possibility of or need for an intercessor for Sheridan means that she writes not so much to follow Horace's intent as to adapt it. Horace is providing behind-the-scenes instruction on how good writing should work: writing that truly and merely follows this advice would either introduce some clear intercessor or make it clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that Sheridan does not deserve one. Instead, by raising the unfulfilled possibility of intercession on his behalf, left open as this chapter of the story closes, Cook-Lynn reinforces one of the most elegant and distinctive structural features of *Aurelia* as a work of Dakota literature and as a work committed to decolonization, a feature explored at greater length at the end of the next and final set of passages: that is, a committed disbelief in endings.

TEMPORAL COMMENTS

The last type of classicism I identify in *Aurelia* is defined by its explicit meditation on modes of time: historical, present, and future. The tril-

ogy's fifth classicism presents the most straightforward example. Here, Aurelia's reflection on her relationship with Jason Big Pipe turns into an extended meditation on the history of the land and its colonization, in context of Native remembrance.

> As usually happens when one race bears the rage of another, when long and bitter wars are ended, a separate peace ensued. The new colonizers saying, in the tradition of the heroic Aeneas, who was ordained by Jupiter to promulgate a new, ersatz race of people: "I would never have come here had not destiny allotted me this land to be my home." The natives, sick of one of the bloodiest wars known to mankind, put down their arms and said, in the tradition of their own ancestors: "Our lands are sacred. The Earth is our Mother. And we shall live." It was a separate peace that stopped time and the future.

Again, the classical element is introduced in order to be supplanted, this time by a response that is neither explicitly limited to nor in conflict with a Dakota specificity (i.e., the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862). Here, it highlights the novelty and artificiality of American settler race-making as an echo and appropriation of that of the culturally and politically foundational Roman *Aeneid*, a smooth inheritance of a tradition of entitlement. The key contrast is between an assertion of will over unknown land, on the one hand, and an assertion of relation to place on the other; again, the opposition of place-related legend and portable myth is reproduced.

This critique of colonial classical inheritance is more elaborately conveyed and the legitimacy of its inheritance is cast into doubt by a passage preceding it, the fourth classicism in *Aurelia*. Here, Aurelia watches the movements of external colonialism on the river.

> The people watched dust rise from the wheels of slow-moving dump trucks moving away from the ruined river; huge orange trucks still moving rocks and earth and history and god's rare future as they might have done had they been in Greece at the building of the Acropolis. Miles and miles of treaty-protected Indian reservation land, like the stricken people who watched, seemed docile and expressionless. Everything was muted. Life and land and estate changed beyond tribal fears and extinction.[45]

The machines mutilating the Mni Sosa would seem to be extended into the past, positing a well-greased figurative machine of classical antecedent for US external colonialism much like Aeneas's legacy of manifest destiny above. But there is a unique ambiguity here that creates a slightly different effect. It is not explicit whether these machines, projected back to an ancient Greece that their operators might later claim to inherit, would build or plow over the Acropolis: they accomplish an indifferent and indifferentiable construction and destruction. The very strength of the indifference of the present machines of external colonialism questions a linear inheritance of time, shadowing with uncertainty the matter of to what extent their way of being was inherited from the Greeks and to what extent it might overpower the Greeks' memory into its own image.

In the seventh classicism of the trilogy, the significance of Cook-Lynn's temporal comment moves again beyond exposure and repudiation of Western archetypes or colonialism. *Aurelia*'s rejection of endings, mentioned above in relation to *dignus vindice nodus*, is explicated on the same page as that passage, as a characteristic feature of the work as Dakota storytelling. Following a short poem, this passage opens the epilogue on Sheridan. "Though classicists have always believed in endings, the real Dakotah storytellers like Aurelia do not. You see, she thinks of the story only if it goes on and on into the next story and the next and beyond."[46] The narrator here provides clear instruction on rejection of endings as a structural principle emerging from Dakota storytelling, by contrast to the expectations of "classicists," which would better seem to mean those who traffic in literary classics in general, rather than exclusively meaning scholars of ancient Greece and Rome. As Hernandez has observed, Cook-Lynn's rejection of endings was derogated as experimentality by early reviewer Robert Houston; his response to *From the River's Edge* on that matter may have something to do with the explicit location of this statement about endings in *A Circle of Dancers*.[47] But it speaks also to the characterization of time in the novella itself, which reiterates statements of a dead or otherwise nullified future.[48] A rejection of endings seems to balance such bleakness. As a demonstration of hope in the wake of outrages, this balance offers an unassuming and sober realism: there is no future, and there are no endings.

This double insistence on no future and no endings is not a resolution or rectification of outrage but rather a philosophical place from which

continuance and growth can emerge in the next story, and the next, and the next. If Aurelia's stories chart a movement of internal decolonization, balancing no future with no endings is an important demonstration of one of its philosophical underpinnings; and, as Philip's story grows out from Aurelia's through *In the Presence of the River Gods* and into *That Guy Wolf Dancing*, the movements to external decolonization in which he participates do not have endings, either. In *Wolf Dancing*, as Hernandez points out, the ceremonial rematriation of a war shirt looted from the 1862 mass hanging of Dakota men offers not so much an ending as a renewal, a re-centering of Dakota women, including Aurelia, as keepers of its story.[49] *Wolf Dancing*'s ending, likewise, is a renewal of Philip's journey as he sets out to study law in college, searching for a road on which he can better advocate for his people. So, in her rejection of endings, Cook-Lynn's use of the "classic" is informed by and in service of a philosophical keystone in the decolonizing motive of her literary project.

CONCLUSION

Because of her nation-centered literary ethos and not despite it, Cook-Lynn incorporates classicisms into *Aurelia* in ways that overwhelmingly subordinate them to and place them in service of her project of Dakota literary practice. Even while they may also stand as a response to, signpost for, or provocation of the early negative critics of *From the River's Edge*, these classicisms contribute in multiple demonstrated ways to the integrity of the Crow Creek Series's development of characters, argument of cultural vitalization, and innovation in literary form; and, while her radical revisions of meaning and uncited quotations (as in *nominis umbra* and *dignus vindice nodus*) or her direct comment against "classicist" literary expectations may risk being misread as unaware or merely contrarian moves, context from Cook-Lynn's own critical work gives another perspective on this risk as a deterrent to an incurious audience and a challenge to a persistent one.

Cook-Lynn writes of being troubled by the prejudice in criticism and publishing toward literary "accessibility," meant in the sense of writing for the broadest and easiest possible readership appeal. She deems it an "unfortunate truth" that this prejudice has been a roadblock to publica-

tion and recognition of the worth of now-classic Western writers such as Kafka and Joyce "whose works are notorious for excluding the reader," just as it is true for Native writers in her own moment.[50] Cook-Lynn follows this with an explication of the many ways in which Aurelia defies common requirements of character accessibility—"She lacks dialogue. Purpose."—defending the intentionality of her choices.[51] While Cook-Lynn hardly valorizes excluding the general reader for its own sake, her commentary aligns *Aurelia* by its obscurity as an aspirational companion of Kafka and Joyce in greatness, and it mounts a defense for *Aurelia* by characterizing it as a challenge to which readers are meant to rise.

Cook-Lynn's archival collection at South Dakota State University preserves a 1993 anonymous reader review from the University of Oklahoma Press. The review is of what would be Cook-Lynn's first essay collection, *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner*, and the responsible editor attributes to this review's extensive criticisms the press's decision to reject the manuscript. For acceptance, as the editor explains, both reviewers would have to have provided a more positive response; the second reviewer was unable to provide their review by the appointed deadline, but the first negative review spoiled *Wallace Stegner*'s chances regardless.[52] Some of Cook-Lynn's responses to the review document are preserved as handwritten marginal comments on it. Written between publication of *From the River's Edge* and publication of the *Aurelia* trilogy as a whole, this reader review and its marginalia contain comments on two classicisms that cement Cook-Lynn's approach to classical allusion both in defiance of literary double standards against Native writers and as an encouragement to her audience to self-select for a curious readership. One poem in the manuscript and eventually in the published *Wallace Stegner*, "Collaborator," featured the phrase "mythological Hades." The reader writes the following.

> "Mythological Hades" does not make sense: Hades is a mythical place, so a "mythological Hades" is some kind of myth-in-a-myth or else redundant. Not clear what the picture is in wands [*sic*] disrupting questions. Perhaps the poem should be introduced with some explanation of what it means and why it is the author's best way of explaining her point.[53]

Cook-Lynn responds:

> Allusion is allusion. I'm not sure T. S. Eliot would be asked by editors to provide an explanation of every allusion. Why should Indian poets have to do it?? We are more obscure, of course–but! we should leave some work for literary critics.[54]

Another comment from the reader says this:

> There is a stylistic habit that needs attending to here and elsewhere in the book: the practice of cryptic identifying tags attached to authors or characters. "Greek heroic figure" and "epic poet Homer" are the examples here. (Also, Homer did not invent Sisyphus, who is presumably the heroic figure referred to.) The problem is related to the problem of audience: can the audience be expected to know that Homer was a Greek epic poet and the [*sic*] Sisyphus is a figure in Greek mythology?[55]

"Can't they look it up? Will they be curious enough to go to other texts?" is Cook-Lynn's annotating response. The anonymous reader themself was, it seems, not curious enough to go to other texts in the case of a section comparing Sisyphus and Smutty Bear; the reader assumed the latter—a historical figure and treaty signatory, as Cook-Lynn marks in the margin—to be a fictional character.

Neither Smutty Bear nor Sisyphus nor Homer is mentioned in the published *Wallace Stegner*. But Cook-Lynn presented an increased use of classicisms in *A Circle of Dancers*. She risks their misreading by some readers in favor of writing to those who would already know or who would exercise curiosity about both Smutty Bear and Sisyphus. And, by developing her classicisms to speak in multiple, integral ways to her project of literary nationalism, she ensures that her allusions pull the reader beyond their direct classical referents and toward Dakota priorities, extending the normal motion of allusion beyond itself—again like how Hernandez argues the Mni Sosa facilitates "an allegory within an allegory" as Aurelia's interpretative practice toward it represents, in turn, a model and site for readerly interpretative practice.[56] While Lucan may have invoked the shadow of a name to direct us to its emptiness, each classicism in *Aurelia* is filled with shades of meaning, and each draws us back to the Dakota ground on which they are cast.

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reception (especially of Lucan) and literary uses of blood. New to Oceti Sakowin literature, he particularly appreciates the work of Elizabeth Cook-Lynn.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, Thomas Macaulay's desire for colonized India to regard English as the English regarded Greek and Latin; an overview may be found in Harish Trivedi, "Western Classics, Indian Classics: Postcolonial Contestations," in *Classics in Post-Colonial Worlds*, ed. Lorna Hardwick and Carol Gillespie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 286–304. Or see another case study in Marguerite Johnson, "Black Out: Classicizing Indigeneity in Australia and New Zealand," in *Antipodean Antiquities: Classical Reception Down Under*, ed. Marguerite Johnson (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 13–28.

2. See the cases presented in Michael Lambert, *The Classics and South African Identities* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011). While it does not focus on colonial receptions per se, also relevant is Edith Hall and Henry Stead, *A People's History of Classics* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2020) for a collection of working-class engagements with classics across a variety of socioeconomic circumstances in Britain and Ireland from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries.

3. For some insights into this hybridity, its complications, and classicist responses to it, see Lorna Hardwick, "Translated Classics Around the Millennium: Vibrant Hybrids or Shattered Icons?" in *Translation and the Classic: Identity as Change in the History of Culture*, ed. Alexandra Lianeri and Vanda Zajko (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 341–66.

4. Hall and Stead, *A People's History*, 21–27.

5. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *In Defense of Loose Translations: An Indian Life in an Academic World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 15.

6. Hall and Stead, *A People's History*, 25.

7. Since I have no relevant linguistic background in the multiple approaches to Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota orthography, I try to follow the example of the source I am considering in relation to a given term.

8. Sarah Hernandez, "'Words Have Consequences': Reconstructing and Implementing Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's Nation-Centered Literary Theory," *Wicazo Sa Review* 31, no. 1 (2016): 70–72.

9. External colonialism, in this formulation, is the exertion of material extractive and military power over a region, replacing Indigenous relations to land with Western ones; internal colonialism, the exertion of biopower over the inhabitants, human and nonhuman, of the land, including the ideological replacement of Indigenous relations to self and the world with Western ones. Decolonization, in turn, cannot occur on only one of these levels in order to be really fulfilled. Sarah Hernandez, *We Are the Stars: Colonizing and Decolonizing the Oceti Sakowin Literary Tradition* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2023), 7–8. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 4–5.

10. Hernandez, *We Are the Stars*, 131–32.

11. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *That Guy Wolf Dancing* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 76–77.

12. *Crambe repetita* and *terra nullius* appear in Cook-Lynn, *Loose Translations*, 41 and 61, respectively. The former emerges from Juvenal's *Satires* 7.154: *occidit miseros crambe repetita magistros*, "repeat cabbage [i.e., uninvested student work] kills the wretched school teachers." (All translations from Latin are my own.) *Terra nullius*, "nobody's land," has circulated since the early modern period in discourses of European colonization and international law as a term used to delegitimize Native sovereignty and designate Native lands and people as fair game for subjugation. For a comparative overview of *terra nullius* in colonial legal history of America, Australia, and Canada, see Robert Miller et al., *Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 260–62.

13. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 17.

14. See Cook-Lynn on her childhood exposure to and persistent distance from Christianity in Cook-Lynn *Loose Translations*, 124–27; see also the personal threat on page 96 of the same volume to haunt eulogists who wax poetic about any supposed spirituality on her part. On pages 126–27 of *Loose Translations*, Cook-Lynn particularly invokes the obfuscatory and domineering use of classicisms in Catholic mission operation: she incorporates quotation of the Vulgate rendering of John 1:1 by way of a quotation from Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, noting next that it "shows an Indian con man as he preached very much like the Dominican priests and nuns in my mission school in South Dakota, talking to me and Billy Feather and my sister and a hundred other 'captured' Native children in 1940, and it was, as I say ironically now, 'all Greek to us.' Tosamah in the Momaday novel ends his diatribe by saying, 'Good night and get yours.' If not Greek, then what? Revenge?" This instance, too keen to pass up quoting, demonstrates an otherwise atypical use of classicisms to comment on Christianity's role in settler colonialism.

15. Cook-Lynn, *Loose Translations*, 202.

16. Robert Houston, "Stealing Cattle and a Way of Life," *The New York Times Book Review* 96 (September 8, 1991): 35. Kirkus Reviews, "From the River's Edge" (*Arcade*, July 10, 1991). Carol Kino, "From the River's Edge," *Times Literary Supplement* 4620 (1991): 22. As Hernandez observes, this is part of a long-term double standard in which Oceti Sakowin literary works receive continuing positive attention and material support, despite being sloppily translated or willfully mistranslated, when curated by missionary colonizers; however, Oceti Sakowin literature by Oceti Sakowin women may often be deemed, as in Cook-Lynn's case, shoddy work without adequate interrogation of its artistic intent and principles. Hernandez, *We Are the Stars*, 130.

17. Houston, "Stealing Cattle," 35.

18. Kirkus Reviews, "From the River's Edge."

19. Kino, "From the River's Edge," 22.

20. Cook-Lynn, *Loose Translations*, 15.

21. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia: A Crow Creek Trilogy* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1999), 59.

22. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia*, 162.

23. Lloyd W. Daly, *Aesop Without Morals: The Famous Fables, and a Life of Aesop* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1961), 85–90.

24. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia,* 186–87.

25. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia,* 235. Italics in original.

26. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia,* 254. Aurelia is also described as her grandmother's companion (54), and Grandmother Blue as her companion (227); Aurelia is also John Tatekeya's companion (165), "a companion to the aged" (208), and a companion to Jason, a partner younger than she (251). The spectrum of relationships termed companionship in *Aurelia* is not limited to what passes for (hetero)sexual.

27. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia,* 452.

28. The relation of humans and natural entities in terms of responsibility also evokes what Christopher Pexa describes as thióšpaye ethics, a critical relationality that connects human and nonhuman entities and manifests throughout Dakota written and oral literatures. Christopher Pexa, *Translated Nation: Rewriting the Dakhóta Oyáte* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 21–22.

29. Cook-Lynn, *Loose Translations*, 206.

30. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia,* 155. Italics in original.

31. No definite title as such survives from the author or his contemporaries. I use "Pharsalia" because it is the location of the central event of the poem (the battle at Pharsalus) and the most distinctive option. Titles varying on "Civil War" are inconveniently similar to Julius Caesar's currently more popular work, *Commentarii De Bello Civili* (*Commentaries on the Civil War*), which is also sometimes shortened to *De Bello Civili*.

32. Harold Gotoff, *The Transmission of the Text of Lucan in the Ninth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 2.

33. For an overview of some causes for the shifts in Lucan's popularity, see Frederick Ahl, *Lucan: An Introduction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), 58–59. Among other complaints, Lucan's poem has been variously smeared by Anglophone critics as pedantic, too concerned with history, historically inaccurate, poetically hyperbolic, structurally confused, and flying in the face of the conventions of Latin epic as a genre—complaints not dissimilar to the early negative reviews of *From the River's Edge*. Lucan has enjoyed a renaissance among classicists since the last quarter of the twentieth century, though, which saw classicist academics ready to take the *Pharsalia* on its own terms while, simultaneously, other critics' misreadings of *From the River's Edge* pushed *Aurelia* toward hardscrabble obscurity.

34. See, for instance, Quintilian's first-century commendation of Lucan's *sententiae* to orators in the *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.90. Martin Dinter provides another example in his overview of the 1695 collection of 300 Lucanian proverbs and epigrams that was edited by Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff; see Martin Dinter, *Anatomizing Civil War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 114–18.

35. Lucan, *"De Bello Civili" Book I*, ed. Paul Roche (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 71.

36. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "umbra," 3d, 8, 9.

37. For instance, there is the evolution of *nominis umbra* itself in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century English literature. In the 1770s, a series of open letters criticizing England's monarch George III was circulated and published under the pseudonym Junius, and the collection was titled *Stat Nominis Umbra*, "He/It Stands, the Shadow of a Name"; in this case, the "shadow of a name" gestures to the protection of pseudonymity for political dissent.

38. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia,* 151.

39. Hernandez, *We Are the Stars*, 122.

40. Hernandez, *We Are the Stars*, 72.

41. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia,* 342.

42. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia,* 344.

43. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia,* 341.

44. An apparent typographical error in the text renders *vendice* instead of the typical spelling *vindice*. *Lewis and Short*, s.v. "vindex (*n.*)." https://logeion.uchicago.edu/vindex.

45. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia,* 164.

46. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia,* 341.

47. Hernandez, *We Are the Stars*, 130.

48. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia*, 223, 300, 329, 335.

49. Hernandez, *We Are the Stars*, 127–28. This is the largest hanging in recorded history. At the end of the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862, the US government held speedy trials for nearly four hundred Dakota prisoners of war, trying them as if they had committed civilian crimes rather than acts of war. Three hundred and three prisoners were convicted with death sentences. Following review by Abraham Lincoln, thirty-eight of these men were hanged simultaneously on December 26, 1862, in Mankato, Minnesota. On November 11, 1865, two more Dakota leaders who had for a time escaped capture were tried and hanged likewise. For this event and its context within a U.S. genocidal program against the Dakota, see Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in the Dakota Homeland* (St. Paul: Living Justice Press, 2008), 38-41.

50. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Anti-Indianism in Modern America: A Voice from Tatekeya's Earth* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 133.

51. Cook-Lynn, *Anti-Indianism*, 133.

52. Kimberly War to Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, January 26, 1994, Series 4, Box 7, Folder 14, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn Papers, South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections, South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota.

53. Anonymous reader's report, University of Oklahoma Press, December 1993, Series 4, Box 7, Folder 14, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn Papers, South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections, South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota.

54. Anonymous reader's report, University of Oklahoma Press. Emphasis in original.

55. Anonymous reader's report, University of Oklahoma Press. The generosity of "some work for literary critics" is soundly appreciated.

56. Hernandez, *We Are the Stars*, 122.

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Elizabeth Cook-Lynn. *A Separate Country and the Illegal Architecture of He Sapa. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2012. 216 pp.*, hardcover $65, paper, $35.

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We are NOT postcolonial. The overarching position taken by Elizabeth Cook-Lynn in her 2012 book *A Separate Country: Postcoloniality and American Indian Nations* threads through a self-curated selection of essays and reviews that critically examine the political applications of colonialism and nation building. Cook-Lynn's words have bite; her thoughts carefully expand the singularity of postcolonial positions present in academia by unpacking the complex connections between Indigenous theory, United States policy and colonial power. The "we" she addresses includes these multiple locations, but she also warns "to suggest, then, that the North American continent, and particularly its relationship with its Indigenous peoples, can be called postcolonial is an outrageous fraud perpetuated by scholars, thinkers, politicians, and historians" (xvi). The book, then, is a charge for ALL scholars to discontinue the spread and practice of the postcolonial fallacy.

As a Native scholar in architecture, I understand the book as a call to action. Globally, the profession of architecture and the institutes that guide it reflect the ideologies of the nation-states they belong to. Postcolonial theory runs rampant and continues to underpin architectural and construction practices, even in He Sapa (Black Hills) where the "ownership" defined by the United States legal apparatus is arguably illegal. By extending Cook-Lynn's calls for action from "A Separate Country" to current architectural and construction practices, one must question and challenge the legality of any new construction in He Sapa given the explicit definitions and language of "ownership" in U.S. contract documents.

The book, of course, is not directed toward architects but rather educators—Native scholars, especially in Native Studies, non-Native scholars throughout academia, those seeking careers in teaching, those who wish to decolonize academia, and anyone willing to disavow the plenary power claimed by the U.S. in relation to Indigenous nations (7). Collective themes examine the historiography of U.S. nationalism, plenary power, and Federal Indian Law; structured within parts and chapters that allow for repetition of key points and sentences within multiple contexts.

Writing this review/short critical essay ten-plus years after the publication of *A Separate Country*, I am struck by recent major shifts in the legal cases and documents Cook-Lynn had initially addressed. The supposedly "settled law" of *Roe v. Wade* discussed in "Politics of Misogyny" was overruled by the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2022. In March 2023, the Doctrine of Discovery unpacked in "Is Now the Moment?" was officially repudiated by the Vatican. The unfurling of precedent and a 550-year-old document that implicitly underlies the U.S. legal system, should set in motion paradigm shifts, yet they have not. Cook-Lynn anticipates and accounts for this apathy by stating "because the policies set forth in this history have been codified in law in the courts of the land and are meant to be historicized as legal activity, we must talk about the matters in terms of what happens when law itself becomes illegal and goes unchallenged" (68). How then, do we challenge illegal law?

The He Sapa (Black Hills) land theft provides us some guidance. In the chapter "The Assault on a Nation through the Political Applications of Colonization (1888)" case study, Cook-Lynn describes the political history leading to illegal land claims. This includes the 1877 Black Hills Act, in which U.S. Congress poached seven million acres of Sioux Nation lands. Nearly one-hundred years later, the "U.S. Supreme Court described this act by Congress thus: 'A more ripe and rank case of dishonorable dealings will never, in all probability, be found in our history.' The Court made it clear that the Act must be called a 'theft' in legal terms, not a 'taking'" (142). After the 1980 *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians* decision, millions of dollars were offered to the Sioux Nation as compensation for the Black Hills, which are considered settled. The payment currently gathers interest in a Bureau of Indian Affairs Bank Account with no lands returned either.

Yet physical settlements in He Sapa continue construction despite the suspended legal status of the lands. Because contract documents for construction reflect U.S. national ideologies through templated formats, an ownership exception like He Sapa is unaccounted for. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) issues contract templates for use in construction to set forth the rights, responsibilities, and relationship of the owner, contractor, and architect. AIA Document A201™–2017, for example, establishes the general conditions for construction of large-scale projects and always names a single, proprietary, entity as "the Owner." As part of the agreement, the owner must give to the contractor a "correct statement of the record legal title to the property on which the Project is located, usually referred to as the site, and the Owner's interest therein."[1]

Given decades of cracks in Federal Indian Policy, especially in He Sapa (Black Hills), who "owns" the land must be considered. The 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, the 1980 *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians* case, and the Vatican's recent repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery all challenge proprietary ownership and the construction contracts made within the Black Hills. While scholars are quick to use postcoloniality, obvious colonial frameworks continue to advance paradoxical practices and laws, while shifting focus from Indigenous nations. It is our role as scholars to make these paradoxes visible to the students we educate and in the case of architecture, the publics we serve. In giving Elizabeth Cook-Lynn the last word, "current and former leaders of the Native nations across the country and the Native academics who are toiling away in graduate and undergraduate vineyards of university life must know that this is where the tools for nation building will be designed" (122).

NOTE

1. "AIA Document A201™–2017," General Conditions for the Contract of Construction. https://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2017-04/A201_2017%20sample%20%28002%29.pdf.

“Leaves on the Trees”

Ecological Placemaking and Dakota Identity in Zitkala-Ša and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn

ALEX HENKLE

Abstract: This article draws a parallel between Zitkala-Ša’s *Atlantic Monthly* trilogy and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn’s *Aurelia* trilogy to demonstrate the methods of placemaking and ecological description that continue an oral narrative tradition, preserving placemarkers in land narrative and demonstrating Dakota methods of survivance and resistance to settler colonial ideology. An ecocritical consideration of Native relationships to placemaking paired with Gerald Vizenor’s theories of ironic subversion demonstrates an active landscape essential to the maintenance of Dakota modes of signification and the use of narrative as a decolonial tool. Both authors use the oral tradition (as defined by Waziyatawin, formerly Angela Wilson) to demonstrate the importance of memory and preservation of Oceti Sakowin discourse, drawing on natural imagery of rivers to refer to birth and creation. By demonstrating the power of narrative as a tool for decolonization and resistance, this article underscores the continued importance of preserving oral traditions as a model for preserving Dakota epistemology.

Keywords: survivance, decolonization, tradition, memory, nature, narrative, Dakota, identity

INTRODUCTION

Western canonizations of literature have suppressed the Dakota literary tradition, both within and outside the printed word. Many scholars have worked to resist the problematic rejection of Native literatures and reconsider Indigenous narratives in a literary context, and scholars must continue this work. Oftentimes, proponents of decolonization face the impositions of what P. Jane Hafen (Taos Pueblo) terms “paternalistic sentimentalism,” a kind of sympathetic, yet appropriative

and often fetishized embrace of Native culture by settler colonial culture wherein "the voice of the sentimentalist is louder than the voice of the Native."[1] Both this paternalistic treatment and the aforementioned dismissive treatment by non-Native critics epitomize a colonial failure to acknowledge the merits of Native literary traditions. An ethical Native scholarship that resists colonial ideology must interrogate colonial reception of Native texts while analyzing the texts from a Native-centered perspective.

This article examines the significance of narrative and literature in a decolonial context, highlighting their role in maintaining a continuous Native perspective and placemaking despite attacks from settlers. A large portion of this methodology relies on Gerard Vizenor's (Minnesota Chippewa) theory of survivance through trickster subversions of narrative. The theory's importance to Dakota placemaking stems from the ironic "subversion" of colonial definitions of territory established through oppressive means, stripping the colonizer's linguistic power of demarcation and instead, utilize land narratives, a term used by Stephanie Fitzgerald to refer to the "palimpsestic landscape . . . imprinted with physical, cultural, and spiritual narratives that have retained their resonance throughout the centuries."[2] Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (1930–2023, Crow Creek Sioux) and Zitkala-Ša (1876–1938, Yankton Dakota) ironically utilize the language and ideology of the colonizer, using colonized place-definitions of territorial and ideological spaces only to interrupt them with understandings from the oral tradition. These authors focus especially on the importance of the Mni Sosa (Missouri) River in Dakota land narratives, an importance ignored by settlers of Native lands. To understand these authors' methods, I read these works through the bifurcated lens of a Dakota worldview and colonized reception.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Zitkala-Ša contribute to a Dakota-centered epistemology, challenging and resisting the dominant settler-colonial ideology imposed on their language and expressions. One must note that these authors, while both Dakota, come from different places and times. Zitkala-Ša's *Atlantic Monthly* trilogy was published in 1900 while the first book of Cook-Lynn's *Aurelia* was published in 1991. Due to differences, they employ radically different methods of placemaking and decolonial conceptions of identity. Cook-Lynn employs explicit place-marking through a Dakota intellectual tradition, but her outspoken

commentary on Dakota political concerns and potentially tangential insertions explaining Dakota modes of signification have generated controversy among scholars. On the other hand, Zitkala-Ša incorporates mystical reflections on nature, inviting a universalist understanding of a Native epistemology implicit with Dakota land narrative, but doing so through Western autobiography has led to scholarly accusations of assimilationist individualism. Despite their differences, both authors engage in similar cultural transmission of identity by transforming and applying elements of Dakota river stories to their modernized worlds, river stories being "old and new modes of expression to describe the river" through the oral tradition.[3] In this article, I pair these authors together to display the strengths and shortcomings of different methods while showing how textual strategies of identity and decolonization have changed in different sociocultural times and contexts. Their efforts reclaim place and space, dismantling the effects of colonialism and asserting a foundational Dakota epistemology outside the confines of the colonizer's worldview. This outside domain, rooted in the preservation and continuation of the oral tradition manifested in written form, serves as a powerful means of resistance and cultural survival.

NARRATIVE AS DECOLONIAL TOOL

In constructing a decolonial methodology, I aim to create models from which Zitkala-Ša and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn divert and develop, a context to understand how their approach to place and identity coincide with and depart from general scholarship. Elements of these Dakota writers' texts incorporate placemaking and survivance, but I show the relationship so the strengths and limitations of the theory become apparent in close reading.

When the Dakota people write about their intellectual tradition, the texts produced actively resist the domination of settler colonialism. Just as the language of deceitful treaties has contributed to anti-Native policies in the United States, the process of decolonization must also occur through the written word. The use of English by Dakota writers complicates this process; these authors use the language of their oppressor, who has already belittled their culture, to establish identity. The painful Dakota–United States relationship included war, forced relocation, and abusive boarding schools, which stripped Dakota people of their iden-

tity. Part of this "education" involved the forced acquisition of English. Treaties and military mandates that harmed Dakota tribes were also written in English. I would argue English was used as a tool by oppressors in Dakota–U.S. interactions. English does not universally oppress, but in this context where language influences action, language helped to colonize the Dakota people.

Audrey Lorde reminds us that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change."[4] The key, according to Lorde, lies in community—an embodiment of a powerful way of life that exists in opposition to the master's force. This kind of community creates a dialectical opposition that dismantles the hegemonic assumptions of superiority, highlighting the otherness of the marginalized rather than operating within the presumed structure of the master's house.

Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and K. Wayne Yang advocate for this kind of opposition in their development of a Native-centered epistemology for decolonization. They aim to "de-metaphorize" conceptions of colonialism that inadvertently offers absolution for settler guilt, aligning their stance with Frantz Fanon's call for understanding historical processes. According to Tuck and Yang, much like colonialism itself, decolonization must unsettle everyone involved.[5] Scholars must acknowledge both the importance of concrete action and limitations faced by the narrative approach. Narrative writing alone does not equate to legal reclamation of territory, but it does serve as a means of reclaiming real-world identity dynamics. Tuck and Yang emphasize the erasure of Indigenous people's real existence in the process of colonization:

> Indigenous peoples are those who have creation stories, not colonization stories, about how we/they came to be in a particular place—indeed how we/they came to *be a place*. Our/their relationships to land comprise our/their epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies. [. . .] land is recast [through colonialism] as property and as a resource. Indigenous peoples must be erased, must be made into ghosts.[6]

For Tuck and Yang, the concept of community relies on the narratives embedded within place, resisting colonial seizure of space by preserving the active landscape, interpreting objects through Dakota intellec-

tual traditions. To resist the erasure of Indigenous perspectives, scholars must center Dakota perspectives and stories, favoring these over abstract understandings.

The writings of Zitkala-Ša and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, by emphasizing precolonized consciousness and placemaking in the face of colonial forces, serve to highlight the presence of Indigenous people at the core of their stories. The two authors' stories, written almost a century apart, maintain a simultaneous socialized relationship with the culture of Dakota oral tradition, but also adjust that understanding to situate identity in modernity. By inscribing a living form of memory, these writings fit well with Gerald Vizenor's theory of survivance—"an active sense of presence, the continuance of Native stories."[7] This process allows Dakota authors to inject dominant discourse with preservation of land narratives. Concerning settler colonialism, Vizenor asserts:

> Native American Indians have resisted empires, negotiated treaties, and as strategies of survivance, participated by stealth and cultural irony in the simulations of absence in order to secure the chance of a decisive presence in national literature, history, and canonry. Native resistance of dominance, however serious, evasive and ironic, is an undeniable trace of presence over absence, nihility, and victimry.[8]

Stories of survivance establish a sense of presence rather than victimhood. They employ descriptive placemaking techniques that utilize natural imagery, metaphor, and strategic irony to emphasize the differences between communities. Through these narrative elements, stories of survivance create a counterforce against the ideological communities of settler colonialism.

When brought together, the works of Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Zitkala-Ša elucidate how Dakota writers in different times can utilize oral traditions with the colonizer's language to create an embodied text. They articulate both the hardships inflicted by settlers and the resilience displayed by Dakota communities in the face of pain. Tuck and Yang emphasizes "colonization stories" are to be avoided in favor of "creation stories," stories that refuse victimhood. Submitting to colonial hardship would represent settler colonialism's success in replacing Dakota epistemologies. Survivance demonstrates that Dakota identity exists outside colonial ideology. Zitkala-Ša's autobiographical writing

establishes a space where Dakota perspective not only survives but also works ironically against colonial modes of ideological inscription. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's work, while often delving into the tragedies of Dakota history, highlights the significance of community as a foundation for reform through memory. Their shared use of river imagery connects symbolically to creation narratives.

The oral tradition particularly integrates Native perspective with natural placemaking by creating a parallel between the ideologically mythic and physically communal space. Scholar Waziyatawin (Wahpentuwan Dakota) has reflected on the oral tradition, emphasizing that the survival of Native communities depends on cultural transmission through the transmission of story. She states, "When our stories die, so will we."[9] This understanding of cultural transmission aligns with Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's account of memory in her work "Circle of Dancers," where she explains that Dakota people "clung to the idea that memory was not only an individual matter; that it operated, as always, for the sake of a kind of unconscious collective no matter how fragmented a people, no matter their oppression. They knew that no story, no matter its inception, was prehistoric if the people remembered it."[10] As an expression of cultural memory, the oral tradition encompasses the interest not only of the individual but the of culture of the Dakota community. Even if the act of remembrance does not repair generational trauma, memory preserves cultural identity beyond trauma.

The oral tradition of Native cultures intimately intertwines with the environment and the narratives that emerge from it. Waziyatawin highlights this unique aspect of Native writing, which "often incorporate[s] the experiences of both human and nonhuman beings as well as the experiences of their ancestors."[11] This quality blurs the distinction between history and personal narrative as the characters in Cook-Lynn and Zitkala-Ša's stories incorporate more of their personal experiences into the larger fabric of tradition even as they reflect on traditional Dakota myths and values. According to Waziyatawin, "Personal experiences, pieces of information, events, incidents, etc., can become a part of the oral tradition at the moment it happens or the moment it is told, as long as the person adopting the memory is part of an oral tradition."[12] The nature of these memories allows for a metanarrative context that connects tradition to the present.

The oral tradition connects individuals to a broader ecosystem of

culture through community. Waziyatawin describes the oral tradition as "a kind of web in which each strand is part of a whole. The individual strands, which may be compared to a single story, are most powerful when connected to make an entire web."[13] This approach aligns with Timothy Morton's ecocritical perspective of the environment as a "mesh." Morton explains,

> the mesh consists of infinite connections and infinitesimal differences. [. . .] Each being in the mesh interacts with others. The mesh isn't static. If there is no background and therefore no foreground, then where are we? We orient ourselves according to backgrounds against which we stand out.[14]

Just as the oral tradition undergoes transformation, the mesh transforms the relationships between people and their environment. It allows for a reciprocal relationship between environmental and human interactions, forming an "active landscape" of narrative and memory, situating individuals within an epistemological place. Cook-Lynn and Zitkala-Ša emphasize this interconnected relationship between land and narrative when writing about place. Their writing embodies the ecological approach of the mesh as it depicts Dakota identity in direct relation to the land and nature, directly linking identity to place. Kimberly Blaeser (Minnesota Chippewa) claims

> as Native writers, we do well to hone our abilities to center our words in the land, in writing to create or carry a sense of place. In rendering the land/human relationship, we explore a powerful element of the reality of the human condition, one that has long preoccupied our ancestors, cultural and literary. [. . .] In writing earth we may in fact write ourselves more clearly than we have ever done before.[15]

Land and nature-centered writing reveals a geography of identity that has often been overlooked in discussions of Native reparations. The survival of Indigenous communities depends on placemaking traditions as much as the land itself. Cook-Lynn emphasizes memory's importance in placemaking, highlighting that "the Sioux won more battles than they lost because their warriors were honorable [. . .] and by being so they made memory synonymous with geography and event and they became phenomenal in the universe of tribal nations."[16] Nature writing

goes beyond metaphorical expressions of decolonization, instead engaging in metonymic preservation of cultural value, actively resisting the forces of colonization by reclaiming the language used to describe the Dakota world. These Dakota authors push back against colonial acquisitions of territory and identity by writing their place, demonstrating a deeper understanding of the land than the settlers who coveted that land. Through writing, these authors reclaim their land.

The works of Zitkala-Ša and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn explore diverse symbols that hold Dakota-centered significance within the natural imagery surrounding them. Both authors share a common method highlighting the persistence of Dakota-centered understandings amidst the emergence of modernity. These authors depict a modernity mediated through colonial processes alongside societal technological developments in their respective boarding school or the Crow Creek reservation. As the characters in these works become more immersed in the colonizer's world, the representation of their symbols may evolve, but their traditional meanings remain intact.

NATURE AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

To fully understand Zitkala-Ša's place in Dakota literature, scholars must understand the context in which she wrote and the intended audience of her works. Zitkala-Ša published three autobiographical essays—"Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl," and "An Indian Teacher among Indians"—in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1900. These accounts chronicle the life of a young Zitkala-Ša, who learns the oral tradition from her mother and Dakota elders, encounters missionaries who convince her to leave for boarding school, and eventually teaches at the infamous Carlisle School. The fact that she wrote in English and published her writings in *The Atlantic Monthly* suggests that her target audience was not Native. Scholars such as Ruth Spack and Betty Bell argue that Zitkala-Ša was focused more on writing stories to align with colonizer's expectations instead of exploring her Dakota identity in-depth, implying assimilative focus. This interpretation raises questions about Zitkala-Ša's portrayal of Dakota identity, creating an uneasily rigid dichotomy of cultural "either/or" which reduces the difficult nuance of Native experiences in modernity. Her experience in boarding school education influenced her

writing style. Still, Zitkala-Ša subverts her readers' expectations to find new ways to establish her place in the world.

An example demonstrating subversion of her colonizer's worldview comes from "The Land of Red Apples" in "The School Days of an Indian Girl," wherein Zitkala-Ša watches telegraph poles from the window of a moving train. The poles symbolize the westward expansion and the transformation of nature by settler colonialism. However, Zitkala-Ša imbues the telegraph pole with a voice, depicting it as a living entity with voice when, in a memory of a previous encounter, she presses her ear "against the pole, and, hearing its low moaning [. . .] wonder[s] what the paleface had done to hurt it."[17] By giving the telegraph pole a voice and depicting its suffering, Zitkala-Ša reconfigures the modernist electric symbol of westward expansion back to its natural source—the reconfigured tree. This portrayal emphasizes the harm caused by settler encroachment on the natural world and parallels the girl's experience of colonial modernity as the train takes her to an oppressive nineteenth-century Native American boarding school. The headmaster strips her of her Dakota identity by taking her hair and moccasins, distancing her from her Dakota roots and subjecting her to the incomprehensible codes of the colonizer's world. She receives unjust punishment resulting from misunderstandings of "bad passwords," English words the girl does not understand but uses unsuccessfully to please her boarding-school elders and avoid punishment.[18] Zitkala-Ša critiques the destructive effects of colonization and the loss of Dakota cultural signifiers. She challenges the dominant narrative by giving voice to the oppressed, highlighting the dissonance between the natural world and the imposition of settler ideology.

Despite depicting the reality of the boarding school's violent oppression, the stories do not present a narrative of victimhood, but rather utilize ironic signification through nature, establishing survivance. Gerald Vizenor highlights that "The presence of animals, birds, and other creatures in Dakota literature is a trace of natural reason, by right, irony, precise syntax, literary figuration, and the heartfelt practice of survivance."[19] Zitkala-Ša features an episode of ironic signification in "The Snow Episode" from "The School Days of an Indian Girl." The girl's schoolmasters command her to mash turnips for dinner as punishment for an unnamed, but trivial infraction. In a "mischievous and vengeful spirit," she gleefully declares, "mash them I would!" and beats the

turnips into a pulp, creating a hole in the bottom of the jar.[20] In this act, the girl ironically carries out the command to "mash" to a violent conclusion, subverting the "civilized" preparation of food through the "natural," or perhaps "wild," destructive mashing. She acts as a trickster figure, ironically reversing the order of power. As Ruth Spack suggests, Zitkala-Ša "uses the English language in subversive ways [. . .] to dupe white readers into recognizing the value of her linguistic and cultural background."[21] Zitkala-Ša's narrative confronts the ideology of settler-colonialism and defiantly proclaims, "No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!"[22] Thus, her memoir embodies a story of active survivance rather than victimhood.

In Zitkala-Ša's stories, nature imagery alludes to Dakota experience in the world. She recounts the story of "The Dead Man's Plum Bush" from "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," wherein her mother teaches her not to pluck plums from a bush intertwined with an Indian's skeleton. The roots of the bush support the man's body, and from the seeds buried in his hands, the bush grows and bears plums. While observing the bush, the young girl hears a "long-drawn-out whistle rise from the roots of [the bush]. Though I had never heard with my own ears this strange whistle of departed spirits, yet I had listened so frequently to hear the old folks describe it that I knew I should recognize it at once."[23] This illustrates the active survivance of the man's spirit, as the whistle resonates through the bush, keeping his presence alive in the natural world. The bush, as symbol of the man's life, and the body, as marker of his physical identity, subvert the colonial identification of the Dakota's dead body (a marker of "the only good Indian" by settlers), instead asserting his survival.

Furthermore, the transmission of the Dakota intellectual tradition through the stories told by the elders and her mother's account of the man beneath the bush leads Zitkala-Ša to view the ecological marker as "sacred ground."[24] She associates the bush with cultural knowledge and gains an understanding of her Dakota ancestry, perceiving the world through the lens of her tribe. The reference to the plums as the "forbidden fruit," akin to the tree of knowledge, ironically enlightens her to the interconnectedness between Dakota perspectives and the natural environment, rather than corrupting her. The plum bush serves as an environmental marker that allows Dakota epistemology to predominate, preserving the relationship between Dakota identity and environment.

Along with the tree, the river plays an important environmental and narratological role in Zitkala-Ša's stories, highlighting the intricate dynamics of memory. Rivers play a significant role in Dakota oral traditions, often pointing toward creation, but Zitkala-Ša omits the explicit reference to creation narratives. For example, in "The Ground Squirrel" from "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," Zitkala-Ša recounts receiving a bag of multicolored marbles from missionaries. One day, she gazes into the ice of a frozen lake and sees "the colors of the rainbow in crystal ice," attempting to grasp them like marbles, but experiencing pain from the harsh cold. She concludes that "glass marbles had river ice inside of them."[25] Just as Zitkala-Ša perceives beautiful colors through the river's frozen waters, she grasps the beauty of her childhood days through a memory which belong to the inaccessible past. Similarly, her colonial experience has distanced her from explicitly articulating her roots in the Dakota intellectual tradition. "Why I am a Pagan" similarly portrays the difficulty of colonized description, wherein her spiritual connection with nature lies a "loving Mystery round about us." She writes this as she lies "on the brink of the murmuring Missouri," here giving birth to an obfuscated connection.[26]

Zitkala-Ša's realization that the river ice exists inside the marbles signifies a profound shift in perspective. It suggests that the settler colonial world's manipulation of natural objects into new forms do not define the essence of those objects. By subverting this abstraction of signification, Zitkala-Ša accesses precolonial forms of interpretation. She recognizes the inherent presence of the natural world within these transformed objects, reclaiming a perspective that predates colonial intervention. This realization allows Zitkala-Ša to transcend the limitations imposed by the colonial context and tap into the deeper layers of Indigenous knowledge. It underscores her ability to find traditional cultural meanings that persist despite the colonial forces at play. Even as Zitkala-Ša encases her reference to creation narratives in the icy language of her oppressors, the water within creates understanding rooted in the Dakota oral tradition. By locating the essence of the natural world within these reconfigured objects, Zitkala-Ša challenges the dominant colonial discourse and asserts the enduring Indigenous understanding that transcends limitations of settler ideology.

Some scholars interpret her ambiguous symbolism and controversial inconsistencies in her activism as an attempt to assimilate Dakota

perspectives into the colonizer's society. For example, Betty Bell argued that "she failed to see that the act of assimilation, or even the appearance of it, in postcolonial cultures does not rearrange hierarchies of power but stabilizes them."[27] The symbolic, yet ambiguous imagery in Zitkala-Ša's texts opens the door for paternalistic sympathy and appropriation. Zitkala-Ša's use of the autobiographical form prioritizes individual survivance over communal resistance, assimilating Westernized ideas of the subject to articulate her position. Zitkala-Ša reflects on these issues in the trilogy, as "The School Days of an Indian Girl" ends with the pain of having lost contact with her mother and tribal past. She examines the problems caused by the colonial doubling of identity but risks leaving the oral tradition and its accompanying tribal community behind without explicit language to bolster it. Nonetheless, Zitkala-Ša's texts still utilize the Dakota intellectual tradition to elucidate the complexity of her experience. Her inability to fully explain the water imagery in her writing reflects the challenges of memory and modernity, but memory's echo still connects her to traditional Dakota roots. Waziyatawin explains:

> Often the messages contained within the stories are not easily decipherable, even for those from within a culture. [. . .] These stories are reflected upon throughout our lifetimes, first we hear our elders tell the stories and then we retell them as the elders. Thus, our historical consciousness is well developed and our connection to the past is intimate.[28]

Much like the immediate experience of the landscape, which gives birth to land narratives, the intimate historical consciousness ensures that accounts of experience open modern listeners to Dakota traditions. The ambiguity within these images does not diminish their narratological power; instead, it allows for a multiplicity of interpretations. The river, as an intellectual and topographical marker, points to this fluid potential for growth. Just as the river continues to shape the landscape, Dakota symbols evolve, adapt, and give birth to new layers of meaning. Scholars must read Zitkala-Ša's work with an understanding of the complexities and challenges she faced as an Indigenous writer navigating a difficult colonial context (especially turbulent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) without omitting the Indigenous perspectives and placemaking efforts present in her writings. Her individual struggle

brought a focus to Dakota and indigenous struggle. While her essays focus on her individual survival, their significance for Dakota identity in 1900 helped create a platform for Dakota rights and resistance.

TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn published ninety-one years after Zitkala-Ša. While she writes more explicitly than Zitkala-Ša about Dakota-land relationships, especially in relation to colonial legal structures, she exercises similar methods of Dakota placemaking through river stories. Written between Cook-Lynn's scholarly and activist work, *Aurelia: A Crow Creek Trilogy* consists of three novellas—*From the River's Edge*, *Circle of Dancers*, and *In the Presence of River Gods*—each published after 1991 and collected as one work in 1999. While the first book focuses on John Tatekeya, the trilogy mainly follows Aurelia Blue (his lover in the first novella) from her 1960s late youth to the mid-90s, chronicling developments in her community, relationship, and events affecting the Dakota people as she struggles, according to Cook-Lynn, to become a modern version of the Corn Wife.[29] Cook-Lynn's conscious approach to the oral tradition aims to balance the conflict between autonomy and identity, recognizing that "like many contemporary Dakotahs, [Aurelia] is defined not by her culture but by her need to control her destiny," that destiny partially meeting the responsibility of the Corn Wife.[30] She adapts elements of the Dakota Corn Wife narrative to suit her specific needs while rejecting others, thereby situating herself within the oral tradition while also asserting her role as a cultural builder. Oceti Sakowin scholar Sarah Hernandez (Sicangu Lakota) highlights the significance of Aurelia's stories, suggesting "Aurelia's stories have the potential to ensure the survival of the tiospaye [. . .] [and] allow her to reclaim and revitalize the Dakota oral storytelling tradition for future generations."[31] Characters' efforts at survival fail when they stray from Aurelia's stories and disregard the matriarchal roles of storytelling in Dakota identity as evident in scenes involving the American Indian Movement (AIM), where misguided attempts to revive decolonial efforts overlook the fundamental importance of the oral tradition. Hernandez identifies AIM's silencing of woman in *Aurelia* as a problematic move in Dakota culture which "represents a shift from matriarchy to patriarchy" in line with Westernized American ideals at large.[32] For Cook-Lynn,

decolonization must center women and the oral tradition to successfully combat colonial ideology.

Cook-Lynn often explicitly portrays the importance of place for community and myth. Women in Dakota culture, as the keepers of the oral tradition, pass down stories to build community. This act of place-making marks a communal, ideological space in language through shared oral narrative and physical land narrative. These stories also mark places in the physical world, especially as land narratives about the Mni Sosa bring cultural significance to place without possession. The use of nature imagery, particularly rivers and water, embodies the transformations of the intellectual tradition in Dakota works. As shown in the trilogy, the damming of the Missouri River symbolizes a disastrous alteration of Dakota ways of life. Hernandez argues, "the river is more than an abstract metaphor. This land narrative is also a creation story that conveys important cultural values and life lessons."[33] The lessons derived from the river include notions of origination, adaptation, and resistance to colonialism within modern Dakota cultures. Despite the river being dammed and causing flooding, it continues to serve as a vital place-marker in the characters' imaginations and realities.

At a critical moment in Aurelia's dreams, the river emerges with a haunting image of water "darkly lapping at the barren shore. Withered, whitened cottonwoods sank into the cold sandy shoreline and coyotes were the only silent prowlers on the land."[34] This imagery foreshadows both Aurelia's literal pregnancy with Jason's child and her symbolic growth into the Corn Wife, the keeper of stories. The cottonwoods, too, hold significance when Aurelia's grandmother explains her desire for a ceremonial burial among the cottonwood trees along the river. "They would grow there and eventually, either when you die or when you come upon them in your dreams, *they will reveal themselves as human beings* that live and thrive along the river," as, in Dakota creation narratives, the Dakota people came from spirits in the water who searched for dry land.[35] The cottonwoods symbolize stories and people through time, emerging at different moments in simultaneous transformation and preservation. They represent the regeneration and birth of Dakota intellectual markings, preserving the spirits that emerge from the waters. Land narratives establish a culture's place in the world, meaning that the preservation of these narratives ensure an active survivance through maintenance of these Dakota-centered understandings.

As a scene in *From the River's Edge* demonstrates, a narratological understanding of place requires community. The character takes her son to the countryside amidst personal and community crises. When standing in a field by the Mni Sosa, Aurelia tells her son, "Each of us, Blue, carries that knowledge about this place. That we are alone. The spirits that surround us are alone too [. . .] It's when you connect to the alone-ness of the place, acknowledge it, it's like growing up, you see. And it is the most important thing to know."[36] Rather than directly suggesting a relationship between place and narrative wherein place communicates its meaning (as in Zitkala-Ša's work), the "alone-ness" of place initially inhibits communication. People overcome this lack of meaning through spirits and language that interpret place into land narrative. Even as she seems to negate the presence of narrative in this passage, Aurelia's description of place in this passage demonstrates the invention of myth as she tells her son (an event of oral transmission) the important lesson of place. The "alone-ness" of the riverbank offers, like the traditional river, a place for creation. The centrality of isolation in this passage ensures that the oral tradition does not overshadow intimate understandings of place, instead connecting the oral tradition to the individual in their present state. Even as the narratological significance fills place with meaning, that meaning necessarily derives from alone-ness, an underlying isolation that invites the need for community.

These themes around "alone-ness" and community appear in the first novella. Two children, Rose and John, find a cottonwood tree, whereupon Rose tells John a "secret," that "the cottonwood tree, the sacred tree that is used at the Sun Dance, holds inside of it the perfect five-point star [. . .] a direct link to the time when the Sioux were the Star People."[37] The secret star makes John jealous, as he did not know these "secrets," which connect a place to spirits and Dakota-centered understandings outside his knowledge. The isolation of place limits his knowledge and requires that he recognizes the importance of women who keep the tradition of these land narratives. This isolation before knowledge offers an identity through presence in space, which the carrier of the intellectual tradition (women in Dakota tribes) can fill with significance. Communal exchange and isolated presence are both necessary for place to offer knowledge. Aurelia ponders later in this first text about "the Sioux belief that the universe has known them since before they were the Star peo-

ple, maybe even when they were made from water. And the Sioux people, in turn, have known every place in the universe."[38] Knowledge of place precedes knowledge of narrative and self, so communal language links understanding to place like the water the Sioux were made from.

This place-based knowledge transforms as these places change, as when Aurelia, after the Mni Sosa's destruction,

> looked upon the dead and dying whitened trees along the banks and knew that in spite of the river's grotesque new image and what it meant to the uncharted future, she would constantly have to remind herself of her disavowal of its avuncular nature. It would take great discipline. For here, in this place which represented the cyclical dramas of her people's past, it seemed certain that the wretchedness inflicted upon human beings by other human beings was inseparable from the violation of the earth.[39]

The dead river's place catches Aurelia's immediate experience, giving access to the real destruction even before its symbolic representation through land narrative. The destruction inseparably links interpersonal with ecological conflict, but even as the place may "represent" the ideas in the intellectual tradition, the river itself creates the source of the tradition's intellectual progression as a marker of lost futurity as well as past memory. In Cook-Lynn's stories, the characters explore symbols even as their presence in the natural landscape is lost, consulting memory as the cyclical change requires adaptation. Their names still live on.

When rooted in Dakota experience of the landscape, the preservation of naming combats "*nominis umbra, the fear that when one cannot know one's name and place, there is only outrage*."[40] Names link individuals to community, ideas to the world. In one example, Cook-Lynn invokes the names of the sun: "Other peoples have called it Phoebus, Aurora, Helios, Venus, Ra. Names recognized as verbal custodians of great mythic sensibilities. Few know or care that the Sioux want to call it 'grandfather,' the important companion of Wi-win. Even fewer know that this is a profound recognition of the course of all life."[41] These insertions allow Cook-Lynn to frame her character's conflicts in a cosmological context in the oral tradition. Here, she establishes a framework that acknowledges the sun as the "grandfather" of the universe, rejecting the cosmology of Eurocentric perspectives (e.g., Platonic forms). Similar

reflections occur using the original name of the Missouri River ("Mni Sosa") and using Dakota names of dinosaurs.[42] These Dakota names invite readers to a precolonial understanding of the Dakota world.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's insistence on the use of Dakota terminology within English-language literature reflects a deeper need to understand Dakota culture on its own terms rather than by outsiders looking in. Waziyatawin has reflected on historians' apprehension toward consulting Indigenous sources, claiming "actual people would have to be consulted instead of pieces of paper or microfiche [. . .] a historian would not have to deal with live people who might object."[43] This exposes a double standard in academia, wherein few historians learn Indigenous languages when studying their culture, citing a lack of value or consistency in the accounts. Waziyatawin counters, "Knowledge of Indigenous languages will only deepen understanding and enhance interpretations of Indigenous history [. . .] it is also the area that is most difficult to engage in, to interpret, and to incorporate into standard texts, because for non-Natives it means attempting to understand a completely foreign worldview."[44] Cook-Lynn's intentional interjection of linguistic markers in her stories serves as a means to challenge colonial epistemology supported in this context by the English language, shifting the center of power away from the academy's colonial dogma.

By including these names, she writes her stories for a Dakota audience. This sets her apart from Zitkala-Ša's anticipation of a White readership, meaning that rather than adhering to certain colonial expectations to subvert them later, she resists colonial expectations from the start. The ironic play of subversion still plays a part in her method through linguistic disruption via Dakota terminology, but the subversion rejects ambiguity, instead explicitly forming a Dakota worldview. In her recapitulation of the oral tradition, Cook-Lynn recognizes the significance of engaging with the language from which that tradition originates. As Hernandez points out, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn was pressured by her doctoral program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to "compromise her knowledge of Native culture and language, and willingly contribute to scholarly research that implicitly, and at times explicitly, reinforced negative stereotypes about Native people and communities."[45] In response to these challenges, Cook-Lynn deliberately interjects Dakota terminology into her writing, creating genuine depictions of Native

life rather than adhering to stereotypical colonized understandings of Native identity.

The focus on the destruction settler colonialism caused complicates Vizenor's theory of survivance, as what he might term too much emphasis on the tragic in Cook-Lynn (an argument she'd clearly disagree with) creates a narrative of victimhood. Cook-Lynn already found other scholarly issues with survivance theory, claiming that rather than survival of the tribe, survivance theory cynically focuses too much on individualism, submits to colonialist assimilation, and offers "few useful expressions of resistance and opposition to the colonial history at the core of Indian/White relations."[46] Departing from survivance, Cook-Lynn finds a way to acknowledge Dakota tragedies while overcoming their effects. Cook-Lynn recognizes that preserving Dakota identity requires grappling with difficult memories, which she views as moments of natural change, much like the flow of the Missouri River. Describing the destruction of the landscape in her stories also signifies a deeper truth, suggesting the potential for transformation of the world both inside and outside myth. She notes that the storytelling tradition evolves "like the leaves on the trees [. . .] as some wither, more bud forth."[47] Just as the oral tradition must adapt to endure, with some stories fading away while new ones emerge, Cook-Lynn establishes a sense of adaptive survivance that involves continuous transformation for not only the Dakota individual but the Dakota community at large.

CONCLUSION

While narrative efforts cannot replace the requisite reparations the Dakota people deserve, readers' recognition of Dakota epistemologies via land narratives helps highlight the significance of Dakota cultural survival in the form of an Oceti Sakowin literary tradition. The works of Zitkala-Ša and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn embody a de-colonial resistance against these forces by subverting settler dominance and discourse. Through Vizenor's lens of survivance, readers can identify their reclamation of an identity outside colonial conceptions of Native American victimhood. While the ambitions of Dakota survivance point to an important facet of placemaking's role, both authors transcend the notion of trickster survivance by interrupting deconstructed colonial

discourses with a traditional Dakota discourse. Zitkala-Ša's work established a recognizable presence of Dakota autonomy in a time where that very basic level of cultural identity was not recognized. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's depictions of community struggle alongside Aurelia's difficulty fulfilling her traditional role emphasize the importance of oral tradition in contemporary Dakota culture.

While some contemporary scholars like Betty Bell may retroactively criticize Zitkala-Ša's efforts, she fundamentally relies on the same ecological perspective through placemaking that inform Cook-Lynn's own practice. Looking at either writer alone would decenter the importance of placemaking in continuing the Dakota oral tradition. The ambiguity inherent in Zitkala-Ša's work informs the "alone-ness" of place Aurelia discovers alongside the Mni Sosa, an ecologically incoherent "alone-ness" which only gains the foreground of context and understanding through communal knowledge. This ambiguous "alone-ness" also allows Dakota storytellers to adapt land narratives to modern times so long as it refers back to its roots in Dakota oral tradition. The central importance of placemaking in Native American literature, particularly within the Oceti Sakowin tradition, serves as a resistance against the colonial forces that impact the Dakota people.

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3. Sarah Hernandez, "Mnisose / The Missouri River: A Comparative Literary Analysis of River Stories from the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the #NoDAPL Movement," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 30, nos. 3–4 (Fall 2018), 81.

4. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), 114.

5. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 7.

6. Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," 6.

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12. Waziyatawin, "Grandmother to Granddaughter," 8.

13. Waziyatawin, "Okiciyaka Unyanpi (Oral Tradition)," 30.

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19. Vizenor, *Survivance*, 12.

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21. Ruth Spack, "Re-visioning Sioux Women: Zitkala-Ša's Revolutionary American Indian Stories," *Legacy* 14, no. 1 (1997): 26.

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26. Zitkala-Ša (Gertrude Bonnin), "Why I Am a Pagan," *The Atlantic*, December 1902, 801–2.

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29. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Anti-Indianism in Modern America: A Voice from Tatekeya's Earth* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 135.

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31. Hernandez, "Mnisose / The Missouri River," 71.

32. Sarah Hernandez, *We Are the Stars: Colonizing and Decolonizing the Oceti Sakowin Literary Tradition* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2023), 121.

33. Hernandez, "Mnisose / The Missouri River," 75.

34. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia*, 172.

35. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia*, 421. Italics in original text.

36. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia*, 373.

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38. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia*, 374.

39. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia*, 138.

40. Cook-Lynn, *Aurelia*, 155. Italics in original text.

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43. Waziyatawin, "Okiciyaka Unyanpi (Oral Tradition)," 24.

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Edward C Valandra, *Not Without Our Consent: Lakota Resistance to Termination, 1950–59*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006. 320 pp., hardcover, $39.00.

Winya Luta Win Patty Bordeaux Nelson

This appeal goes out to all Lakota people of this Nation. Our Tribal sovereignty is being threatened by the State of South Dakota. Now is the time to make a stand as Lakota People. There is no tomorrow. We must stand as one on this issue of Lakota sovereignty. . . . A great majority of us have volunteered to fight for our Country the United States and all that it stands for. Now, we must fight again; against the same country we fought for—to enjoy our right to be Indian and live in peace amongst ourselves. . . . In closing, once again as Lakota People, let's fight the good fight as one people. Lay everything aside and let's stand together as our forefathers the Lakota of Little Big Horn fame and we will win.

—Lakota Elder Marvin Thin Elk (3)

We Lakota know and remember the battle of the Greasy Grass, which took place on June 25, 1876. Under the leadership of Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, and others, the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho routed Long Hair (Custer) and defeated his army. This victory caused great disorder and crushing defeat to the United States Seventh Cavalry. What many of us do not know is the battle that occurred during the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s against the United States Termination Policy. This battle was fought by the contemporary Lakota leaders of the nine tribal Nations of South Dakota to defend our sovereignty. What is most striking about this battle is how dangerously close we Lakota came to losing all of our land to South Dakota's present day settler ranchers and homesteaders. Settler terminationists possessed the political clout to accomplish a land grab that would have had a catastrophic outcome for our tribal nations. However, our tribal leaders pressed on against all odds just as Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull had done. They battled against the wasicu insti-

tutions of the South Dakota Legislature, Supreme Court, and the United States Congress.

Edward C. Valandra (Waŋblí Wapȟáha Hokšíla) explores this battle of equal importance to the Battle of Greasy Grass in his 2006 book, *Not Without Our Consent*. Valandra, an enrolled member of the Sicangu Oyate, Rosebud Lakota Nation, South Dakota, holds a PhD in American Studies from SUNY-Buffalo. He is currently Senior Editor for Living Justice Press in St. Paul, Minnesota. Valandra is a long-time member of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society (formerly Oak Lake Writers' Society). His research is comprehensive; appended are the supporting documents of the powerful settler political system intended to sabotage the Lakota.

Valandra's book tells the story of how our leaders from the nine Tribal Nations persevered in the face of disappointments and defeats. The wasicu political powers continued to devise new plots when Lakota advanced toward a win for our sovereignty. The final wasicu scheme was to put the termination of Indians to a statewide referendum. It seemed that the Lakota leaders had run out of options when this statewide referendum was proposed. Despite what seemed an automatic defeat for Lakota sovereignty, our tribal leaders brilliantly strategized a plan to inform South Dakota settlers about what termination would mean financially to the state of South Dakota. Tribal leadership then spoke to the oyate of the nine tribal Nations alerting them to what was at stake; and that they must vote in this South Dakota statewide referendum to terminate us. Valandra writes: "Finally, the state termination forces have never fully recovered from the 1964 Lakota-engineered upset, especially since PL 83–280 was amended in April, 1968 to include a Native consent provision. Lakota consent is an established reality in South Dakota state politics. For this, we have the Lakota people and the Lakota leaders of the 1950s and 1960s—the generations of our parents and grandparents—to thank" (253).

It is noteworthy that when this treacherous plot by the South Dakota settler ranchers and homesteaders was taking place, those of us who are now grandparents were merely children. We must not be complacent. *Not Without Our Consent* is a mandatory read for our generation to tell the story to our children and grandchildren. We must encourage our youth to know this important history of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ. It is through our stories that future generations will know why the fight for

our sovereignty is a fight to retain what homelands we have remaining and for our Lakota way of life.

This epic drama of our tribal leaders to defend our sovereignty against United States Termination Policy is a contender for a screenplay. Valandra's *Not Without Our Consent* has the makings of a strong story line of the legacy of Očhéthi Šakówiŋ leadership and the devious politics of the settler characters. Valandra exposes the deceit, racism, corruption, and greed of the wasicu politicians, ranchers, and homesteaders. Yet, the underdog Lakota are victorious.

Teresa Peterson and Walter Labatte Jr. *Voices From Pejuhutazizi: Dakota Stories and Storytellers.* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2022. 206 pp., paper, $18.95.

Kateri Bird, Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Writers Society

Voices from Pejuhutazizi: Dakota Stories and Storytellers is a beautiful compilation of family stories gathered by multiple generations with final publication by *thakoža* (granddaughter), Teresa Peterson. Peterson's *thuŋwiŋ* (auntie) collected the stories, and *dekši* (uncle) Walter Labatte Jr.[1] provided fuller context and direct connection to their *ate* (father) and *uŋkaŋna* (grandfather) written stories. By describing and articulating stories, lands, and language from a grandfather and other relatives, this book brings together information about the Dakota way of life. It fills empty pieces of Dakota history, traditional foods, kinship relationships, language, and ways of thinking. Readers will find rich familial oral traditions that explain historical and intergenerational connections. It's made clear throughout this book that our Dakota language and stories are the way we connect ourselves to our ancestors, ourselves, our land, and our future children and grandchildren.

Flipping through the pages, as I often do with a new book, the subject titles of "Waskuya," "Pašdayapi," "Čhaŋpha," were easy to spot, and quickly captured my interest. Many Dakotas have heard these words throughout their life—maybe at social gatherings or between their relatives. However, these words and concepts have rarely been explained. The mechanics of harvesting, processing, and preserving, are sometimes left out as older relatives are visiting. As a young person you don't interrupt to ask questions. Ehaŋna, long ago, Dakota people learned these teachings from watching their relatives doing them, and gently participating a little at a time. This book brings that inclusiveness and gentleness of teaching back to our people; an understanding that this old knowledge is for all our people to have and share with each other through stories. This is a sentiment that Dekší "Super" (aka Walter

Labatte Jr.) expresses many times in the book: He was given this information and shares it with others because that is the way it is supposed to be.

The preface greets the reader as relatives. As a Dakota, the preface brought me into this book, and everything felt familiar. The authors' decision to insert Dakota language throughout the book provides a way for us to become comfortable using our language. It brings it to life in everyday ways, details the relationship of the authors to their relatives—where the authors fit in their family—shows their responsibilities and obligations to each other. The authors also bring Dakota *héčhed ečhuŋ* (the way it should be done) to life through their editing choices, side bar notes, and glossary of Dakota words. These elements show values of inclusion, directness, relationship, connection, and importance of place.

There are many distinctive formatting and content choices in this book that I haven't seen in other nonfiction historical texts. One is that the author addresses a contemporary conversation among our Očhéthi Šakówiŋ communities about the use of differing Dakota orthographies and who "owns" oral intellectual property. By explaining their orthographic choice, the authors make it possible for the reader to respect their choice. They model a way forward for themselves to describe their individual orthographic choices. However contentious the argument is for or against a certain Dakota orthography, as Očhéthi Šakówiŋ we must show courage and figure these things out for ourselves. I am glad the authors spent time in this book addressing their language choice.

Further, I appreciated Teresa Peterson's decision to include historical information from local newspapers and archival documents, like military correspondence alongside the stories of her great-grandfather. It is a fascinating mix and emphasizes the closeness of our family stories to the history around us. We *are* our stories.

After reading Teresa Peterson's book *Voices from Pejuhutazizi: Dakota Stories and Storytellers*, I feel I have a format for documenting the stories of *mithiyošpaye* (my family). Over the years hearing this story and that from aunties, uncles, and cousins and sharing the things we have heard helps us feel connected. It tells us how we are rooted together. Also, I now feel I know better how to express how we are rooted together *wótakuye* (other families) within our tribal communities. These stories help us know who knew who and who sang at which drum with who.

For example, once when I was visiting with an elder, he said, "Hey my dad would sing songs with your grandpa" and then proceed to tell me how they would make songs for the drum their family carried. Stories such as these bring us back to the history of where our relatives were during the Dakota War of 1862 and the geography our people traveled following the war. Stories bring us back to the relatives we lost, their resistance made visible again through those stories. Our stories give us strength and provide insight into a time when borders and family relationships were not designated by settler colonial rules but by Očetí Šakoŋwin hečed ičuŋ (the way it is supposed to be).

NOTE

1. Translations and spellings based upon the Lakota Language Consortium's online dictionary: https://lakhota.org/mobile-applications/.

The Challenges of the Literary Tradition of the Oceti Sakowin

GABRIELLE TATEYUSKANSKAN

Abstract: The historic harms that tribal nations have endured are detrimental to the Oceti Sakowin or Seven Council Fires' literary tradition. Ongoing challenges exist in tribal communities due to U.S. government policies that took away the freedom to take part in cultural activities, participate in spiritual practices, and to speak one's language. The Oceti Sakowin Writers Society, formerly the Oak Lake Writers' Society, have discussed these issues during their annual writers' retreats, including challenges facing language revitalization and creating a contemporary orthography from a language that is originally oral. Important work remains for the Oceti Sakowin to continue language recovery efforts and the critical development of a contemporary orthography by the Oyate. These works are vital to continue the Oceti Sakowin literary tradition.

Keywords: Oceti Sakowin, Oyate, orthography, Dakota, dialects, fluency, colonization, revitalization

The Oceti Sakowin or Seven Council Fires include four Isanyanti bands or the Dakota dialect speakers, the Ihanktuwan and Ihanktuwanna or the Nakota speakers, and the Titunwan or the Lakota. The language of the Oyate or Nation is originally an oral language. There are pictographs, petroglyphs, and waniyetu wowapi or winter counts that were used to visually communicate important information from the ancestors to future generations. The development of a contemporary orthography began with the early Presbyterian missionaries who worked with Dakota language speakers. This created challenges in translation and spelling system development, since the primary interest of the missionaries was acculturation and the introduction of Christianity. Therefore, there were lapses in vocabulary that resulted in many cultural concepts that were excluded in these early dictionaries.

The Dakota have historical roots in Mni Sota Makoce, or what is present day Minnesota. The language, culture, and spirituality of the Isanyanti are based on an ancient relationship with the environment of this landscape. Vehement racial discrimination and the forced separation of the Oceti Sakowin onto reservations by the U.S. government affected the development of a uniform orthography for the Oyate. Americans coveted the territory of the Oceti Sakowin and used treaty betrayal, violence, forced removal, and other injustices as a means to acquire it. The Americans used their legal system and federal policies to outlaw the language, culture, and spirituality in an attempt to assimilate the Oyate into American society.

Communities hid many aspects of Oceti Sakowin culture for protection due to the insidious nature of racism. In my tiwahe or family, children were taught the language and the culture of the ancestors by female relatives. The history, ideals, and spiritual concepts were communicated primarily through the oral tradition. The tiwahe can trace our lineage to Itancan Mahpiya Wicasta or the leader Cloud Man (c.1780–1862/1863) and his wife Canpa Duta Win, who lived in Dakota aboriginal territory. Their youngest daughter Wakan Inaji Win or Stands Sacred (1815–1859) had one child, Wakan Tanka Win or Mary Nancy Eastman (1831–1858), who married Ta Wakan Hdi Ota or Jacob His Many Lightnings (1825–1847). They had five children: Winona Tipi Wakan Win or Mary Eastman (1847–1937), Hepan Mahpiya Wakan Kidan or John Eastman, Hepi Tateiyotanna or David Eastman (1848–1918), Catan or James Eastman, and Hakada Ohiyesa or Charles Eastman (1858–1939). This ancestral knowledge has given our family access to the oral tradition going back many generations.

My great-great grandfather is Tateiyotanna, one of the older brothers of the noted writer and physician Ohiyesa. Through the written works of Ohiyesa and other members of the Oyate who were also writing, I became aware as a child of the emerging written literary tradition of the Oceti Sakowin as well as the oral tradition. Kunsi or grandmother taught us from the Dakota oral tradition and my mother provided books from Oceti Sakowin writers. Many families instilled Dakota knowledge in the younger generation as American society did not acknowledge this traditional Oyate education structure or recognize Oceti Sakowin knowledge as worthy of study.

In 1870, the Reverend Alfred R. Riggs, with the support of the Amer-

ican Missionary Association and the federal government, established the Santee Normal Training School, located in Santee, Nebraska. The majority of the students were from Isanyati families that had been exiled from Dakota Makoce or Territory, by an 1863 Act of the U.S. Congress, in what is today Minnesota. The school published a school newspaper *Iapi Oaye* or the "Word Carrier" in the Dakota language. It also published education texts that were printed in the Dakota language for its students. The school taught literacy in the Dakota language; this curriculum went against government policies of the time that promoted the eradication of the Dakota language. This educational facility was closed in 1909 due to the loss of government support.

In the Sisseton and Wahpeton Community on the Lake Traverse Reservation there was the Tipi Sa school, which was managed by the Presbyterian Church, and Tipi Zi, which was administered by the federal government. Elders from my hunkakepi or grandparent's generation were educated at these schools in their youth and became literate in the Dakota language. When the Civilization Fund Code was passed in 1819 the emphasis of the curriculum in these schools changed to focus only on the English language and western civilization subject matter to promote acculturation into American society.

Many of the early written works by the first Oceti Sakowin authors were based on oral narratives. They were translated and published in English with some Dakota words or phrases. Transmission of these stories into print did help to preserve aspects of the language, culture, and ideals of the Oyate. To the detriment of Oyate language retention and development, English translations do not convey the same vocabulary concepts as the dialects of the Oceti Sakowin. The language of the Oyate is rich and complex in different kinds of terminology. There is gender speech, everyday language, eloquent oratory, and the language of the spiritual people. These Oceti Sakowin views are not always translatable into English.

In the traditional education structure of the Dakota, the first teachers were the wise grandmothers. My relative and namesake Wakan Iyotake Win (1837–1923) was appreciated for her intellect during her lifetime in the Dakota community, where she resided on her allotment near the southern shore of Toka Nuwan Bde or Enemy Swim Lake on the Lake Traverse Reservation. Many people came to her home to hear historical narratives from the oral tradition, discuss important tribal matters, fam-

ily issues, and learn from her perspective as a knowledgeable, skilled, and wise culture bearer. Her daughter, Tiyo Maza Win (1858–1947), continued this tradition.

My relatives were a part of the flight from Minnesota during the U.S.–Dakota War in 1862. They escaped to Toka Nuwan Bde and Canada during this tumultuous and dangerous time. They were looking for safety, fearful of the violence perpetrated by citizen militia and the U.S. military. They sought to avoid the bounties, capture, and incarceration as prisoners of war, or of being casualties of the death and destruction of war. Relatives understood Americans wanted to establish authority over the Dakota homelands and would take it from the Oyate at every opportunity. They experienced the direct impact of the racism of American society during the enforcement of misguided government policies that caused further harms to the Oceti Sakowin through the purposeful attempts to erase the language, culture, and spirituality of the Oyate. For these many reasons, relatives have a deep distrust of Americans and their institutions.

Kunsi, Tahca Ska Win or Ida Vivian (1903–1981) is a Dakota first-language speaker and a wise teacher to her takoja or grandchildren. Through the instruction of Kunsi and other relatives, her takoja were immersed in the oral tradition of the people. The Oceti Sakowin consists of the Isanyati bands, which are the Bdewakantunwan, Sissetunwan, Wahpekute, and Wahpetunwan. They are the Dakota dialect speakers. The Nakota dialect speakers are the Ihanktunwan and Ihanktunwanna. The Lakota dialect speakers are the Titunwan and they consist of seven bands, which are the Hunkpapa, Itazipcola, Mnikowoju, Oglala, Oohenunpa, Sicangu, and Sihasapa. Kunsi had a great respect for the language, culture, and spirituality of the Oyate. She was well aware of the necessity and realities in relating this knowledge to her takoja during the uncertain times of intolerance and cultural bias that destabilized Oceti Sakowin society.

According to the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report of May 2022, for over 150 years over seventy-five thousand children were removed from their families to attend federally funded boarding schools. The purpose of these schools was to carry out a policy of acculturation. My grandmother is a survivor of the boarding school era as is as my mother. These schools punished children for speaking their language of origin and harshly discouraged the open display

of cultural practices. Kunsi and my mother were witness to the terrible anguish and suffering of other children, their classmates, who were emotionally and physically brutalized while attending boarding schools. My grandmother ran away from boarding school. To prevent further harm to my mother and her siblings they were taken out of Pipestone Boarding School without the approval of school administrators by their parents when they learned of the mistreatment of their children. To prevent their children from being sent back to Pipestone, they hid with relatives in Fort Thompson, South Dakota. Our families and communities are still being affected by boarding school trauma and its devastating impact. Damaging to the Oceti Sakowin are the generations whose identities have been affected by culture and language loss.

The Toka Nuwan community established a school in the Guild Hall of St. James Church. Tiyo Maza Win or Alice Onihan allowed for her allotment to be sold so that a permanent school building could be constructed. Children would not have to leave the watchful eye of their community or the protection of their family to be educated. The Enemy Swim Day School was then built and began operation in 1938. In this way my kunsi sampa or great-great grandmother resisted the taking of children from the Toka Nuwan community. It was the lack of tolerance for Dakota history, language, and culture of the American education system that my relatives objected to and of equal concern was the harsh physical punishment of children. Kunsi was fiercely protective of her takoja and was quick to react if she learned her grandchildren had been mistreated in school. Yet these negative experiences did not deter the family love of learning in both the Dakota knowledge systems and American education structures. They modeled and encouraged the pursuit of formal and informal education onto their children and grandchildren.

My siblings and I developed an attentiveness while listening to the Dakota oral tradition and an appreciation for reading literature. Vine Deloria Sr., Mary Louise Defender Wilson, Clifford Canku, and other elders who were first-language speakers would come to my grandmother's and our home for an evening of storytelling. We were fortunate that our mother provided us with the published work of Ohiyesa, as well as Ota Kte or Luther Standing Bear (1868–1939), Zitkala Ša or Gertrude Bonin (1876–1938), and Anpetu Waste Win or Ella Deloria (1889–1971). We were also very much aware that this literature was lacking in American classrooms and public libraries. Our tiwahe

understood the racist reasons for the lapse in the education of American students. Past government policies and historical trends favored the erasure of Dakota culture and language. Dakota children, far from the protection of their families, experienced harsh physical punishment in government-sponsored boarding schools for speaking their language or carrying out cultural practices. Vestiges of this kind of racist thinking still exist today in America. In 2023 the governor of South Dakota supported the erasure of the Oyate from the social studies standards for South Dakota public schools. American educators have been misguided in believing the culture of the Oceti Sakowin is inferior to that of Western societies.

Yet in spite of a brutal and repressive historic past, self-expression was encouraged by my mother and grandmothers. My heart was driven to write, explore dance, sing, tell stories, and to create traditional and contemporary visual works of art. My siblings and I had the many examples of family members that reinforced that the art of creation is an important part of life, culture, and education. The beadwork of Tiyo Maza Win is displayed in the local county museum in Webster, South Dakota. Our relatives—the Seaboy, Tiyona, and Red Bear families—are well-known traditional singers and they excelled as dancers. Todd Red Bear, a fancy dancer, performed on the *Arsenio Hall Show*. My mother sketched our childhood portraits and did landscape paintings. Kunsi and her peers enjoyed quilting and traditional outfit-making. My grandmother also played the piano, harmonica, and guitar. She encouraged us to sing with her while she played the piano. The arts were all around us in our family life; the joy of creation is a part of the healing from harms in ourselves, our families, and the Oyate.

When I was in elementary school I wrote an essay explaining that Christopher Columbus did not discover America. Kunsi and my mother were happy and proud of my essay. They asked how my teacher responded. I replied, "I didn't hand it in because I knew it wasn't what my teacher wanted." As young children, we learned at an early age the majority of American society wasn't interested in Indigenous voices. The restrictive and prejudicial atmosphere of American schools was not conducive to Dakota expression. We were resilient young people who were curious about the world and this attitude did not stop our desire to learn, our devotion to art, and the need to create.

I attended the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New

Mexico. Here I had the support of Indigenous instructors who were also published writers and successful artists. I was mentored by Paula Gunn Allen, Allen Hauser-Haozous, Ottlie Pasiyava Loloma, and Simon Ortiz. My writing and exposure to First Nation authors nurtured self-expression through the written word. It was also the era of Dee Brown, Tony Hillerman, Ruth Beebe Hill, John Gneisenau Neihardt, and others who had Indigenous subject matter in their published books. These writers were all writing about a culture that was foreign to them. The issue of cultural appropriation and cultural authenticity was on the minds and discourse of First Nation students, artists, and writers at this school. Our instructors helped us to be aware of the importance of cultural authenticity. They guided us to be vigilant in our humanity and to express the truth of our reality in our artwork and writing as emerging artists and authors.

I became a member of the then Oak Lake Writers Society in 1993. The members of this writing society have since changed the name to the Oceti Sakowin Writers as the members are all writers who are enrolled citizens of their respective bands that are a part of the Oceti Sakowin. I again found a space where my writing as a citizen of the Oyate was encouraged and nurtured. The path forward was heartened through the strength and determination of our long-time mentor Elizabeth Cook-Lynn. As writers, Cook-Lynn guided us to carry out our responsibility to inform and educate our readers on the realities of the Oceti Sakowin. She inspired the society to value creativity as a means to ask important questions about who we are, our purpose, what we live for as members of the Oyate, and to seek out the answers in our writing. Together the members of the society support one another to navigate the difficulties of the world of publishing. The issue of cultural authenticity is often an essential part of the society discourse. In seeking publishing opportunities for my work, I have found that cultural truth and realities are difficult for non-Native editors to authenticate and understand as they are from a foreign culture. There have been times when there is a frustrating and blatant disregard for Oyate authors and their insights into authenticity. This has been a long-standing issue from the time of Ohiyesa, Ota Kte, Anpetu Waste Win, and Zitikala-Ša to the present.

In working as a contributor to the Ohiyesa text, *In the Beginning, The Sun: The Dakota Legend of Creation*, parts of the work struck me as unusual. Was it the result of the restrictive nature of racism during the

time period that this text was written? Did Ohiyesa or the potential publisher feel that this work had to be made more palatable for American society? For instance, the manuscript states, "All the legends of the various nations relating to this animal world lead us to believe that Unktomi was the son of the Crab and a Water Spider princess."[1] This statement is culturally inaccurate as there are no royalty titles in the culture of the Oyate. My mother, Yvonne Wynde, who is also a contributing writer, went through the manuscript pointing out the many princess references and other misinformation. Her cultural knowledge and understanding on these matters were not included in the final printing of the book. These miscommunications between author, editor, and publisher are of concern, and poor editing can lead to culturally inaccurate or misleading information being published. These misconceptions cause harm as they misinform readers and can further reinforce cultural misinterpretation. As writers from the Oceti Sakowin, we must continue to require more of editors so that our voices are not silenced.

Another challenge to publishing is the orthography that is selected for printing the Dakota language. The original Dakota language is an oral language. It is also tonal in nature: a slight change in tone or inflection can indicate a different word or meaning. As a result, when putting a Dakota voice into the written word some writers prefer phonetic spelling. When Kunsi would correct our speech, she would explain proper pronunciation matters. For example, there is a difference between the pronunciation of maga or goose; maka or earth, or magaa or skunk. They may sound similar to the untrained ear, but there is a difference. At the present there are many orthographies in development and in use by the Oceti Sakowin. None of the bands of the Oyate have officially sanctioned an orthography. The *Dakota-English Dictionary,* which was edited by Stephen R. Riggs and assembled by Samuel and Gideon Pond and Dr. Thomas S. Williams, was published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1852. The *English-Dakota Dictionary* was compiled by John Williamson in 1902. These dictionaries are the oldest in use by Dakota communities. This work has its challenges as the dictionaries focus on vocabulary that supports Christian principles. The contemporary Dakota orthography that is being developed by the University of Minnesota has flaws and many pronunciation errors. For example, the word Dakota contains the root word koda or friend. The way the University of Minnesota orthography is written changes

the emphasis in the spoken word to sound like hota or gray. For many first-language Dakota speakers, this orthography in its current early-developed form is unacceptable as there continues to be use of the English alphabet with diacritics. An Oyate system of written letters must be developed. In addition, many citizens of the Oceti Sakowin find it objectionable and offensive for a foreign education institution to be developing an orthography without the participation of first-language speakers who are citizens of the Oceti Sakowin and to whom the language belongs.

Oyate writers serve an important function in transmitting culture, language, and principles in contemporary society. Oceti Sakowin storytellers have endured, they have transitioned from the spoken words of traditional first-language speakers, to compulsory English and to finding our way back to our language of origin. These efforts must be community-led and done on our own terms. Stories have the power to educate and communicate truth. They are necessary for humanity to make meaningful and informed societal improvements.

Work remains for the Oyate to recover and repair the harms to the language, culture, and spirituality of the Oceti Sakowin from restrictive government policies, inaccurate harmful stereotypes, and racist perceptions by American society of who we are as people. Our communities need the understanding from our historical past to find solutions to the dilemmas we presently face. To ensure the revitalization and transmission of authentic language, cultural knowledge and ideals of the Oyate, the written work of its writers is imperative to achieve a contemporary Oceti Sakowin knowledge system. Cultural and language accuracy in publishing the work of Oceti Sakowin authors is necessary to accomplish this task.

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Diane Wilson and Zibiquah Denny, *Voices Rising: Native Women Writers;* and she is a contributor to Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa), *The Beginning, The Sun: The Dakota Legend of Creation*. She is profiled in Diane Wilson's *Beloved Child: A Dakota Way of Life*. Gabrielle is one of six Oceti Sakowin women featured in Leya Hales documentary film *Saksanica*.

NOTE

1. Charles Eastman, *In the Beginning, the Sun: The Dakota Legend of Creation* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2023), 79–80.

David Heska Wanbli Weiden. *Winter Counts*. New York: Ecco/ HarperCollins, 2020. 336 pp., hardcover, $27.99.

Lanniko Lee, Oceti Sakowin Writers Society

Make no mistake, David Heska Wanbli Weiden's *Winter Counts* is not a historical review of traditional Lakota winter counts of the pre-reservation era as the title suggests. It is the story of Virgil Wounded Horse, fictional vigilante-for-hire Indian of the Rosebud tribal nation, an unrealistic character portrayal of the Oyate, the people. He doesn't espouse the traditional Lakota values of Crazy Horse, the man who was made popular by non-Native novelists of innumerable American Westerns.

From birth *Jiji Kin,* or "Light Hair," was not only physically different, but also demonstrated a memorable rightful character. His parents taught him how to live in an honorable way. As a young man he earned the good name of his father Tasunke Witko, Crazy Horse. Young Crazy Horse grew to be a humble and solitary man, known among many Plains tribes and non-Indians alike for his remarkable hunting prowess and generosity. A truth seeker, he faced the enemies of his day with a courage and dignity that is remembered even today.

Winter Counts is a revenge novel; its opening chapter sets the tone of violence and unrestrained aggression, depicted in graphic images accompanied with equally vulgar profanity. The reader is introduced to protagonist Virgil Wounded Horse as he emerges victor from a brawl with gym teacher and pedophile Guv Yellowhawk in a bar parking lot. Yellowhawk has raped a young girl and school officials have done nothing to punish him. That's when the girl's parents hire Wounded Horse to carry out their revenge.

Throughout the novel, Weiden uses flashbacks to build Wounded Horse's backstory of being the childhood victim of bullying and abuses for being *iyeska*, a mixed-blood person. He justifies his deep-seated per-

sonal revenge for his mercenary business. This is the first of Weiden's many failed efforts to reveal the complex internal social strata on the Rosebud tribal homeland. The closely knit tapestry of kinship groups that reside in this beautiful landscape still hold fast to a value system that fictional character Virgil Wounded Horse does not possess, let alone exemplify. He would be perceived as an urban outsider whose worldview is through the lens of that cultural setting. A true Lakota provider and protector of the Oyate is shaped by strength of character and is witnessed among those of the community as possessing personal confidence and self-awareness. This is not present in Weiden's main character, Virgil Wounded Horse.

When Nathan, Wounded Horse's fourteen-year-old nephew for whom he is guardian, nearly overdoses on fentanyl-laced heroin, Virgil's revenge is ratcheted up the novel's supporting characters begin to intersect.

After the fight with Yellowhawk, politically ambitious tribal councilman Ben Short Bear and father of Marie Short Bear, Virgil's ex-girlfriend, hires Virgil. Short Bear wants Virgil to rid the reservation of drug dealers bringing dangerous Mexican cartel drugs from Denver and recruiting young dealers on his watch.

The plot thickens when Marie visits Nathan in ICU and Virgil is waiting his nephew's prognosis and trying to sort things out. She reveals that she was Rick Crow's rebound lover after she and Virgil broke up and confesses to her relationship to Rick, the suspected drug flow conduit and reservation dealer. With this, Virgil's revengeful anger earns compound interest. "So I'm an asshole and a hired thug and won't talk, but you take up with a drug dealer? The way I see it, you're just as bad as him if you were with him" (56).

After much back and forth and Marie's rationalizing to him the reason for their failed relationship was Virgil's silence, she professes to know where Rick the suspect can be located and she becomes Virgil's partner to track him down.

Wieden builds Marie's backstory of a good girl with high aspirations to become a doctor. She is depicted as wealthy when compared to the locals because her mother is from old Osage oil country.

Mainstream readers of hard-hitting crime thriller novels will not be disappointed with *Winter Counts*, which follows along the well-worn

path of numerous non-Native authors who frequent Indian Country in search of stories. Tony Hillerman's serial fictional characters Navajo detective Joe Leaphorn and his conventional partner Jim Chee might have been an inspiration for Weiden's novel.

Winter Counts is peppered throughout with these cultural tropes that fall short of being authentic and short of fresh creative invention; some are jarringly incongruent. An early example is Weiden's description of Guv, the gym teacher rapist who "was a fat-ass piece of shit, with a frybread gut as big as a buffalo's ass" (1). Anyone who has spent time among the buffalo that provided everything for the survival of the Lakota would know that the smallest business part of the buffalo is its "ass." Here Weiden forces a comparison and ends up with an ineffective stereotypical use of the cultural icon.

Later, when trying to come up with collateral for a bail bondsman for Nathan's release from juvenile detention, Virgil thinks about the possibility of using three small pieces of inherited allotment land that is in BIA trust; he deems that unusable. Once inside the facility, he also notices a "circle of life" mural on a wall painted, not four colors but three by a successfully released "resident" inmate. Four is the number that means centered balance in Lakota teachings, such as there being four directions and four stages of life. Instead, Weiden chooses to use the broad stroke of cultural clichés that would be familiar to the intended mainstream reading audience.

In another instance, conflicted Virgil professes that old Lakota traditional values and practices are passé, a sham, when his prayer quest to save his dying father fails. He thinks, "I knew then that the Native traditions—the ceremonies, prayers, teachings—were horseshit. I believed I'd be the savior of the family, but all I'd done was make a fool of myself. From that moment forward, I'd rely on myself only." However, after vowing to never to be made a fool again or believe in empty rituals, Virgil seeks help from medicine man Jerome Iron Shell by going undercover in a sweat to look, or in this case, to dream for answers.

Weiden's *Winter Counts* is fast-paced exploitative pulp fiction set on the Rosebud in Indian Country and on the road to Denver, a quasi-contrived setting for the avid mainstream reader of crime fiction. The totally unrealistic main character does nothing more than reinforce the most damming stereotypes of tribal people.

To better understand why Virgil Wounded Horse is not a realistic Lakota character and not a representative member of the Rosebud community, compare Weiden's *Winter Counts* to Joseph M. Marshall III's *The Journey of Crazy Horse* (Viking Penguin, 2004) and *Crazy Horse Weeps, the Challenge of Being Lakota in White America* (Fulcrum, 2019).

David Heska Wanbli Weiden. *Winter Counts*. New York: Harper Collins, 2020. 336 pp., hardcover, $27.99.

Winya Luta Win Patty Bordeaux Nelson, Oceti Sakowin Writers Society

It is customary for a Lakota to introduce themselves by stating who their people are. This way of introducing oneself immediately makes a deeper connection, as a relative, that is important to Sicangu Oyate. As an enrolled Sicangu elder writing this review, I wanted to know which tiospaye the author of *Winter Counts* was from. Weiden states he is a citizen of the Sicangu Lakota Nation; however, his deeper relative connections are not made clear. This customary manner of introducing oneself is important. It is about taking responsibility as a Lakota to be a thoughtful and honorable relative. Without this sense of responsibility of being a Lakota relative, there is a disconnect from one's own people. Colonization cruelly interrupted our Lakota way of life and the characters in his novel *Winter Counts* demonstrate this disconnect from the traditional Lakota values of being thoughtful and caring relatives.

This book review is based on five standards established by Oceti Sakowin writers to correct and challenge negative stereotypes about Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota people and their communities. The five standards are: authentic, intergenerational transfer of knowledge; sovereignty; challenging stereotypes; accessibility; and readability. These five standards are to ensure that representations are positive and empowering reflections of our rich cultural heritage. The full-length standards can be read by going to *#NativeReads*.

Basing a book about the Oceti Sakowin Oyate on these five standards to ensure that it represents positive and empowering reflections. In this regard, *Winter Counts* falls short. There is a thin thread woven throughout the novel that touches upon the Lakota culture. For instance, Virgil, the main character, remembers an activity his sister Sybil started doing to remember their late mother: "Brother, you remember when we were kids, and we used to draw winter counts, like the old days." He con-

tinues: "I loved the little pictures in the calendars, each image showing the most significant event from the past year" (11). However, the main theme of this book is reservation drug culture, which is depicted in graphic and brutal detail and ultimately overshadows any positive Lakota cultural references.

Winter Counts is a mystery thriller, a popular genre in settler culture. Virgil Wounded Horse, the main character, is a hero in a somewhat twisted way, seeking justice for Lakota individuals who have been victims of cruel criminal abuse. Virgil is called upon when both the tribal police and the FBI fail to investigate or prosecute offenders. As the story unfolds, Virgil is approached by a tribal council member who asks him to stop a local who is dealing heroin on the reservation. The plot thickens as Virgil accepts the offer. After many dangerous twists and turns, Virgil finds himself in the midst of tribal politics, embezzlement, and other dark developments that nearly cost him his life.

Does *Winter Counts* challenge stereotypes? Settler readers may very well view Rosebud as a dangerous place after reading this thriller mystery novel, furthering negative stereotypes of the reservation. Settler readers have their biases about Lakota people and Weiden's depictions may further negative stereotypes that either sensationalize or romanticize Lakota people in oppressive ways.

Winter Counts presents the image of harsh realities that do not actually exist on the Rosebud. We as Sicangu Oyate do not wish to have this kind of notoriety. My purpose in writing this book review is to remind settler readers that this novel is a story of the undeniable repercussions of colonization. This thrilling mystery novel about drug trafficking, murder, corruption, dark tribal politics, poverty, and addiction omits how these are the result of our lands being stolen, the brutality of boarding schools, and much more.

Settler readers of this novel must examine and ponder the role of their colonizer ancestors and the attitudes that are still held today. Settler readers must acknowledge that we as Oceti Sakowin Oyate are still reeling from intergenerational trauma of colonization. Settler readers must also know that Lakota are still in the process of recovering. There is not one Lakota who is not touched by the trauma of colonization. Settler readers must own the harms that colonization did to the Oceti Sakowin. Settler readers must know that there are many things on the Rosebud that are positive. To its credit, the epilogue of *Winter Counts*

depicts something of this reality, with Virgil returning to the traditional circle of relatives to heal. In spite of the brutal attempts of colonization to destroy our Lakota ways, our culture remains strong. I would challenge the settler reader to go to *#NativeReads, Great Books from Indigenous Communities/Stories of the Oceti Sakowin* to learn more about who we are. Stories of the Oceti Sakowin will open the eyes of settler readers that we are much more than a story in a thriller mystery novel.

As Oceti Sakowin readers, let the narrative of *Winter Counts* awaken us to be determined not to be defined by what colonization has done to us. We now recognize and are speaking out about the effects of colonization. To heal we must begin to ask ourselves: what does decolonization look like for us as individuals and for our families? As we remember to walk in the ways of our Lakota ancestors—humility, perseverance, fortitude, respect, honor and wisdom—we will know that is where healing begins. These Lakota values are the foundation for knowing how to be good relatives. Mitakuye oyasin.

Tohάŋl kiŋháŋ uŋglápi kta he?

TIPIZIWIN TOLMAN

I often refer to my grandfather, Joseph Pretends Eagle Jr., when I talk about the beginning of my language-learning journey. My grandfather, in western American, colonial frameworks of kinship, was technically my great-uncle, as he was the younger brother of my maternal grandmother, Josephine Pretends Eagle. But in our Oceti Sakowin way of life and being, he was my grandpa, lala, grandfather in our Sihasapa and Húŋkpapȟa Lakota dialect, and he loved me and spoke to me often in Lakota. He would use parenting language with me. He used phrases such as "asaŋpi yachiŋ he?," which means, "Do you want milk?" He would care for my needs often in Lakota, such as: Do you want some water? Do you want candy? It is time to eat. He was a World War II Army veteran, and he was a tall, handsome Lakota cowboy. When I hear Lakota, I can hear him still and feel his presence with me, always. My lala, was diagnosed with cancer and he was very distrustful of the western doctors and health system. My parents reached out to some of our spiritual leaders, and they came to share prayers for him. On that day, three men arrived at our home on Boot Hill in Fort Yates, Long Soldier Community on Standing Rock, and I was around seven years old.

This is the gathering that is burned into my heart and memory. I watched my lala, who welcomed them with a big smile, and they sat down in our living room to visit. It was all in Lakota. They were animated and happy and jovial and I was devastatingly outside of it all. *I could not understand a single word*. I felt panic and a deep sadness. I felt desperate and heart sick because I could not understand a word they were saying. It was a mixture of childhood inquisitiveness left unanswered and jealousy for their proximity to my grandfather, and I still feel it every time I circle back to this memory. He was MY lala. But I

couldn't even understand him. I was an outsider in my own home, I was an outsider in our own prayers, and I was an outsider in my own relationship with my lala. I watched him morph into somebody else with these visitors and I felt tragically left behind.

I will never forget that feeling. Many times, reliving this moment has helped reignite a flame and fire I was born with to keep learning and keep falling in love with our Dakota/Lakota language.

I attended school at Standing Rock Elementary School in Fort Yates, North Dakota, USA, on my homelands of Standing Rock. As a supplemental cultural support to the western imposed studies, we also received an hour of Lakota/Dakota language and culture classes every few days. It was in these classes that I remembered learning Lakota and Dakota language and where I was my happiest. I had a wonderful Dakota grandmother, Darlene American Horse, who was our Dakota language and culture teacher, who taught us the children's song, "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?" in Dakota and also used visual aids. I recall sentences hanging in the classroom that said, "How are you?" and "Welcome" in our Dakota language. There was song and dance and language, taught by a couple who were so good to us, Cedric and Sissy Goodhouse, and I remember that I would learn everything they shared with us and take it home to my uncles, my parents and to my lala. I still remember the songs they taught us. All of the language teaching and learning style of Lakota and Dakota language classes from my kindergarten to 8th grade was facilitated by fluent first-language speaker-teachers of our language. I am grateful for those years and to those fluent speaker-teachers.

I attended high school in Kansas City, Missouri, USA, far away from my homelands, my family and my language. Although I did not get the chance to take supplemental Lakota/Dakota language classes while in high school, I had an opportunity to take French language class as a requirement for foreign language requirement. Taking French classes in high school changed my life, although at the time I was not able to articulate or appreciate it. My French instructors employed various methodologies of teaching language, such as communicative lessons, working in pairs, and used a textbook—methodologies I had not experienced before in language learning. By far, the most amazing teaching methodology I experienced in their classroom was the total abandonment of the English language. In my French I class, we were told that

only in our first week of instruction would English language be used. After that, we were not allowed to use English language in our French classroom for the duration of the school year. A year later in my French II class, English was never allowed. I took French for two years in this style of teaching and learning and I loved it. I was very proud of the French language that I learned and would love to jokingly tell my family and friends that I am learning the language of our ancestors, as we are descendants of a French man who came to Dakota territory via the Missouri, Mississippi, and St. Lawrence rivers from Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Although I cannot recall the exact time and moment of it, I had a realization while learning French in high school: I have my own language. I am named in my language. And, unfortunately, I do not speak, nor do I understand my own language. And I began to explore a deep self-inquiry that came from the simple question, *"Why do I not speak my own Lakota/Dakota language?"*

After high school, I returned to my homelands in the Dakotas. When it became time to begin college, I wasn't prepared. I didn't know what I wanted to "be" but I knew I wanted to learn and that I wanted to learn our language. With my parent's prodding I enrolled at Sinte Gleska University in Mission, South Dakota, on the homelands of the Sicangu Lakota. I took Lakota Language 101 and Lakota Language 102 while attending SGU. My instructors were Duane Hollow Horn Bear and the late Neola Spotted Tail. I loved learning from these fluent, first-language speakers who both gave their time and energy to support those of us who wanted to learn. I do recall learning specific vocabulary words, and most importantly, how to say a meal prayer. I had almost a full semester of one-on-one time with Neola, and it was such an honor to learn from such a regal Lakota elder.

I transferred to the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, South Dakota and took an additional language class from a wonderful Lakota elder, Jerome Kills Small. Jerome is also a first-language fluent speaker of Lakota, who gave his time and energy and support to those of us who wanted to learn. During his class, he would have an incentive-based game, called Lakota Verb Jeopardy. He would share small candy and snacks as the prizes for the winners. I do remember vividly that he would only use the third-person singular, base conjugation of a verb. The premise of the game was that the class was split into teams and Mr.

Kills Small would read a verb out loud and the first time to raise their hand and say the correct word aloud was the winner of the round. The whole game consisted of verbs such as work, travel, walk, jump, fight, and so on. I remember how fun and competitive the learning games were and how as young college students, how much we appreciated the snacks and the candy as well.

I dropped out of college at USD soon after taking this language class, due to poor personal choices. I also soon after became a mother younger than I anticipated. When I was twenty-three and twenty-five, I had my oldest children. When they were born, I was gifted a new lens to look through and a new life to live, as a mother. Although I have made many mistakes and many poor choices, I felt the positive change and shift in my life when I had my children. I wanted them to have everything that I never had, and that included our Lakota and Dakota language.

As soon as I had them, I did my best to use what I knew of our language, the parenting language that was gifted to me from my lala and my parents. I also knew some prayer songs and I did my best to use them to sing my babies to sleep. I read to them from Ella Deloria's *Dakota Texts* even though I didn't quite understand what I was reading. I was young and in need of healing, help and guidance in so many ways, but as I reflect, I know that this area, where I did my best and shared what I knew of our language with my babies, was a good and beautiful experience. But it wasn't quite enough for me, and I wanted to learn more. And it wasn't enough for them either, they quickly began asking, "How do you say this in Lakota?" and I didn't know. I would tell them, "Tokša—I will find out!"

In 2007–8, I decided that I was getting too old to not have a degree and to have two children that I wanted to be a better person and provider for, so I returned to school to complete my bachelor's degree at our local tribal college, Sitting Bull College. Concurrently, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal administration were in the beginning stages of exploring language revitalization and language immersion opportunities. Through the efforts of our educated and motivated fluent first-language speakers, the Lakota Language Consortium, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Sitting Bull College collaborated to create a language teacher-training institute called the "Lakota Summer Institute."

The Lakota Summer Institute was a three-week-long intensive teacher preparation program—it was primarily created to support flu-

ent, first-language Lakota speakers who were also teaching the language in the various school systems in the area. When I decided to attend for college credit, I had no idea what the institute was, I only knew that it was a gathering of language speakers and I wanted to attend. On the first day I arrived, I was late. I walked in and was told, "Welcome, we are picking a lesson from one of the units in this book. You will prepare one day and teach the lesson to the rest of the class." I looked around at the group of elder fluent speakers and almost fainted. I picked the simplest unit, which was to teach the numbers one through ten. I had absolutely no teaching and learning background and was petrified. I couldn't speak my language and I could not understand my language. I spent the next twelve hours in an extremely anxious state. I didn't prepare much at all as I did not have a clue what I was going to do or how I would do it. I cried from anxiety late into the night.

I bombed my first ever attempt at teaching a Lakota lesson. My face was red and sweaty, my voice creaked and warbled and trembled the whole time I talked. My hands were shaking but I was determined to just do it. I have always been proud of myself throughout my life that I can read and follow directions. I thought I could do that to power through the lesson. I did great at introducing myself in Lakota—I said my traditional greeting and introduction. Then, I completely had no idea what happened. To top it off, my older sister was taking the class and kept trying to rescue me from my cringe-y trainwreck of a lesson and because of the cultural and familial norms, I was compelled to listen to her on the fly suggestions even though I did have a plan. It was so awful! But something beautiful happened. Some of the fluent speaker teachers and elders who were present had compassion for me. They were gentle, kind and offered words of support and encouragement. Afterwards, the most beautiful Hunkpapa Unci in our Standing Rock world took me aside and talked to me in a firm and gentle way, telling me to keep learning, that our language needed me. It was a defining moment in the journey, but I didn't know it then.

During this initial Lakota Summer Institute, I also met two men who would become my relatives and my mentors: Jan Ullrich and Peter Hill. Both of these men are non-Lakota, one European and one American and both are highly proficient fluent speakers of Lakota. I was immediately inspired by them and believed more than ever that my language was learnable because of their ability to learn our language and speak

fluently with our elders. Over the course of the three weeks, they taught Lakota language utilizing the same second-language acquisition methodologies that I had experienced in my high school French classes: audio-lingual, grammar instruction, and total physical response, communicative and paired learning. Before this learning experience, I had never taken Lakota language in such a way and rapidly increased my ability to understand and speak my language.

I attended the Lakota Summer Institute for eleven years after that first year, and I completed a program called the Lakota Language Education Action Program that was designed to train Lakota language teachers and teach us language at the same time. For example, one of the courses was titled "Lakota History & Culture In the Lakota Language.". Although it seems that a course like this should and could be the norm, it was quite unheard of at the time. During the LLEAP program we also studied Second Language Acquisition theory for adults and for children.

Immediately after completing this two-year program, I began teaching in the Lakota Language Nest, a preschool immersion school for three- and four-year-olds on Standing Rock. I was paired with a first-language fluent speaker of Lakota, Mr. Tom Red Bird, Išná Wíčha, in a Master-Apprentice style based on a co-teaching model. During our time with the students, we committed to not speaking English, like my high school French teacher demonstrated to me. I used lots of repetition and lots of pictures. It was tough and we made lots of mistakes. But it was the best time of my life. I learned to hear our language, my ear for the natural flow and intonation of Lakota was gifted to me by working every day closely with Lala Tom. I have endless gratitude for his contribution to our language and to the children and families.

All of the language teaching and learning methodologies I learned along the way supported me as I put in the energy and effort, as demonstrated to me throughout my life by the fluent speakers who wanted to share our language, and who showed up every day for our language even without training and support, without a map to navigate the untreaded territory we are all in, as this point on the timeline of our people, where we have to revitalize, reclaim, maintain our language for ourselves and for the future. All I was gifted has supported me in turn to share what little I know with my children and with the student relatives I was fortunate to spend time with. I am grateful for all of it, because it has allowed me to come home to our language. Albeit by a zig-zag maze at times, I

did make it home, and I am no longer the little girl left outside of the laughter of the language in my own home. And we can all make it home to our language, but it has to be done with intentional and consistent effort, and it will not be an easy journey, but it will be worth it.

I know when I meet up again with my lala, I can say, iyúškiŋyaŋ wačhíŋyaŋke lala! Wanna Lakhóľiyapi uŋmáspiŋ na Lakhóľiyapi owáglaȟniğe! Nakeš, thiyáta waglí.

TIPIZIWIN TOLMAN is Wičhíyena and Tizaptaŋna Isaŋti Dakota and Húŋkpapȟa and Sihásapa Lakóta, born and raised on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota, USA. She is a representative of the Skunk, Pretends Eagle, and Yellow Lodge extended families of the Standing Rock people and the Young and Longie/Langer extended family from the Crow Hill area Spirit Lake Dakota people. Tipiziwin is currently a doctoral student in Washington State University's Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Education PhD program and a research assistant exploring how WSU can support Nez Perce community tribal language revitalization efforts. She is married to T Tolman, also a former Lakota language immersion instructor at Wičhákini Owáyawa on Standing Rock, and they have six children: MathoSkawin, Itazipalutaslutela, Ptehewoptuha, Wigiiyaothi, Wanblikunzawin, and Wanapheya and one grandchild, Rylen.

my pronouns are super/nova

TATÉ WALKER

someone draws a line between the words
masculine————————feminine
i'm told to balance a solitary somewhere along this lackluster limit
    someone else shows me a gingerbread person
    labeled with the few words that might describe exactly what's in
    the unexplored reaches of my brain and my heart and my pants
many someones tell me
no god will recognize the kind of black hole love
i seek and offer the world

you're trying to tell me i don't fit
into your middle seat narrow narrative
like i haven't lived my whole life threatened by total colonial eclipse
    these spectrums
        these cookies
            these myths
these mind-numbingly basic settler sexpectations
are desperate to enshadow everything
this fat Indigequeer has dragged into the sunshine over 20-some
    years
    you could neither appreciate nor appropriate
    the galactic possibilities of
    my heart

i am Wíŋyaŋ Witkó
the love i carry is medicine and responsibility
for my people and the next seven generations
    i have sang and cried and danced at the sacred tree

my sweat and blood given in prayer
Inípi and Wiwáŋyaŋg Wacípi
and from these sacrifices i became a dying star
a Two Spirit storyteller full of light and matter
imagining a future where more stars grow and shine

ask me what my gender is
and i'll tell you of the revolutions
i've experienced with all kinds of moons and planets
i am not defined by ıs and os
but the beautiful nonbinary
of unconfined change
the universe is my blueprint
and my plans don't include closets
or pigeonholes

our Lakota ancestors tell us to abandon
the colonial urge to overmanage the complexities
of love and relationships
we are not social constructs
we are solar systems forever dancing
each the other's gravity
moving away
always pulled back
bound by rela-sun-ships
to our families and non-human relatives
to lands and languages and time and space
Mitákuye Oyásiŋ

Lakota history and science says
we come from the stars
and to stars we return
know that i have crossed great prairies
and thickets of bigots and Catholic conversions
and i have passed through Wanági Tacáŋku
to clear pathways free of settler trash
to remove the pollution of phobics and haters and TERFs
so that our young people may make whatever orbits they choose

one day this dying star will explode

gassy stardust love finding space to rest within the DNA
of the stories and of the medicines and of the generations to come
    we are unmappable
    undefined by boxes and boundaries
    ask me what my gender is
and i'll tell you my rainbow boasts colors and textures
your senses can't even comprehend
and my pronouns are super/nova

TATÉ WALKER is a Lakota citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. They are an award-winning Two Spirit storyteller for magazine outlets, news publications, and anthologies. Taté is the author of *The Trickster Riots*, a full-length poetry collection from Abalone Mountain Press (2022). Learn more at jtatewalker.com.

Ancestral Rx

TATÉ WALKER

look up.
every night find hanwi
and align your blood and bones
with her sacred moods.
let your sight wander beyond the clouds.
dance with as many stars as you can.
learn their names.
these are the ancestors whose every action
guaranteed your existence (probably).
no blood quantum to cauterize.
no enrollment numbers to validate.
no boxes to fit into. no invisible bootstraps to trip on.
no colonial exceptionalism to dull collective goals.
powwow and protest and binge TV shows.
everything is holy in the moonlight.
call me in the morning.

look down.
every day seek maka and the life she imbues.
touch the smooth and the rough and the prickly.
learn their names.
sing to your land and animal relatives;
give them buffy and backstreet boys and broadway
alongside the two lakota songs you've memorized
and the prayer you can at least hum.
let them know who you are and who you want to be.
practice radical kinship—whatever that means.
stumble in the awkwardness.
embrace humility and the idea that love

means being accountable
to the medicines in and around you.
rage and fist and gnash—
then sweat and sob and smile.
release the fires from your furious veins
and cleanse the world with your tonic tears.
and heal.
and heal.
and heal.
Call me in the morning.

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Oceti Sakowin Writers' Reflections on Storytelling

LANNIKO L. LEE, PATTY BORDEAUX NELSON, JESSICA GARCIA FRITZ, SARAH HERNANDEZ, CHRISTOPHER PEXA, AND KIM TALLBEAR

Abstract: A dialogue among members of the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society was held on Zoom on September 16, 2023. Transcribed conversations have become one of the Society's hallmarks, and are now used to conclude each of the Society's anthologies. This tradition began in 2006 with *This Stretch of the River* (edited by Society members Craig Howe and Kim TallBear) and *He Sapa Woinble* (edited by Society members Craig Howe, Lydia Whirlwind Soldier, and Lanniko L. Lee). These conversations allow Society members to reflect upon topics and issues relevant to the Oceti Sakowin Nation. This particular dialogue focuses upon storytelling and writing.

Keywords: Oceti Sakowin, oral storytelling, print literature, land

[SARAH HERNANDEZ]: Welcome. I'm so glad that all of you can join us for this discussion about storytelling. Over the past few weeks—no, past few months—we've had some really great discussions about our storytelling tradition. I'm glad that we could come together today and record [some of those discussions] for this special issue of *SAIL*.

So, Lanniko was kind enough to work with me and help me develop some of these questions. I'll start with our first question. As Oceti Sakowin citizens, how do we know who we are? How do we know our origins? What stories shaped your identity?

[Long pause]

[SH]: I can go first. Honestly, I didn't grow up with the oral tradition. I grew up in Denver, Colorado, and so I never heard any of our oral stories growing up. I really didn't start to learn about our oral stories

until I began reading writers like Zitkala-Ša, Charles Eastman, Ella Deloria, and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn. So for me, that's where I started to learn about the oral tradition, which I know is very different than actually hearing the stories spoken and having them retold.

I know that my experience is different than many [Society members]. I am grateful that those writers left behind this rich literary tradition for me to read and go back to and access. So I do appreciate that, but I am also very much aware that the oral tradition is much different from print traditions.

[LANNIKO L. LEE]: I'm Lanniko Lee, Mniconjou, but actually, I'll have to say I'm multitribal. I am Ihanktonwanna Dakota and Hidatsa as well. But you know we only get tribally identified by where we're enrolled and, for me, that's in the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

When it comes to oral tradition, this question is asked of me many times. How did the oral tradition get passed on from one generation to another? I say that everything that is shared by our parents and our elders to their offspring and their grandchildren happens as they are working together; it happens during our daily living when we're cooking, gardening, sewing, and cleaning.

I'll use my presentation, "Dakota Modern: Oscar Howe," and its example of young Oscar being raised by his grandmother, Shell Face. No doubt, he accompanied her as she participated in social activities in the community and worked in women's groups, making things like star quilts for giveaway events. So when I hear that question, it's hard to get people to understand how the oral tradition is passed on without going back and explaining how we learn now as a result of colonization. Today schooling in the public and private school systems is not done around daily living experiences. Rather, it is in the isolated setting of a classroom where children are exposed to learning with little or no tactile and sensory connections to what the story has to offer.

So when they leave the classroom, they're also leaving behind whatever oral or verbal presentation that the instructor gave because there is nothing tactile to be able to reference their experience. Oscar Howe did a wonderful job in his art of blending the male pictorial narrative and the female geometrical abstraction. His grandmother showed him that style because it was the way she saw the world.

She will have exposed him to the various kinds of male depictions

of storytelling, especially in the old-fashioned shields and regalia. So, today we have a disconnect when it comes to learning in the conventionally acculturated experience of a classroom.

[PATTY BOURDEAU NELSON]: Mitakuyepi, Winyan Luta Win-Patty Bordeaux Nelson emaciyapi ksto, nahan iyuha cante wasteya nape ciyuzape. I am Sicangu from the Swift Bear and Horse Creek tiospaye, located in Mellette County, South Dakota, on the Rosebud Lakota Nation.

I know who I am through stories given to me by my grandparents. My grandmother is Zizi Win-Carrie Roubideaux and my grandfather is Tatanka Maza-Francis Bordeaux. They were both storytellers; however, my grandmother was the one that I received the most stories from. In those formative years, I was unaware that she wanted me to know my stories of origin. Stories handed down from generation to generation. It is as an elder that I fully realize the importance of her stories. She told me stories about dreams and visions. Ikto stories. Stories about healings, such as the one of Pejuta Mato who came to heal my great-grandfather's baby brother. Stories of humor. Stories of my great-grandmothers' perseverance, sorrow, and survival. It is the collection of all these stories, my lived experiences with my unci, tunkasila, and my tiospaye that has shaped who I am. I am grateful for our oral tradition of storytelling. It was something I grew up with, just part of me. When I became involved with Oceti Sakowin Writers Society, I became deeply aware of the treasure my grandparents imparted to me.

[KIM TALLBEAR]: I was asked recently by a reporter, because I do a lot of media on self-indigenization or pretendianism: "Do you self-identify as Indigenous." And it was the most absurd question anyone had ever asked me. Of course not. What?

"Well, how do you know you're Indigenous?" I'm like, well, first of all, I was Dakota long before I was Indigenous and I know because my mom told me and my grandmas told me and my. . . .

You don't get to just make that choice for yourself, right? So how do I know who I am? It's because my family raised me to be who I am. They told me who I am and it was through that oral history of where we come from and what our history is [that told me who I am]. For somebody to ask me if I self-identify it just makes no sense to me at all.

I was always raised knowing about who our family was. I was raised mostly in Flandreau by my great-grandmother, Agnes Heminger, who was Cree and Métis from Saskatchewan, but she lived most of her life in Flandreau with my great-grandfather Felix Heminger, who was from Sisseton.

There was land and jobs in Flandreau in the 1920s. That's why they went there so there's a lot of people who are related between Flandreau and Sisseton. And so I grew up mostly in Flandreau, raised by my great-grandparents, and then by my grandparents as well, Arlene Lamb and Dean Lamb.

And because the community in Flandreau got Little Crow back after many years of advocating to get his remains back from the Minnesota Historical Society, where they had been on display earlier in the twentieth century and then they were in a box somewhere on a shelf, he was finally buried in Flandreau. I think it was 1971.

My family was really instrumental in doing that.

So I grew up hearing about that history. I knew all about 1862 before I ever read about it in a book. And so I grew up with both oral history and . . .

My family were readers. They watch the news. I come from a very political family. They followed settler party politics as well as tribal politics and ran for office and so I was able to learn both from books and news and printed and visual media but also from the stories in my family.

So it was really important also counteracting the histories we got in school, which were very whitewashed and made Native people out to be evolutionarily backwards, culturally backwards, and all of that. For me, that got counteracted at home because my mom was really assertive, especially about giving me a different standpoint—a Dakota standpoint on history.

So that was really helpful because public school in Flandreau could be pretty demoralizing. And I went home and I got all that counteracted. So I feel really fortunate.

[JESSICA GARCIA FRITZ]: I'm Jessica. I'm a citizen. I'm enrolled in Cheyenne River. Like Lanniko, I spent more time in Standing Rock than I did in Cheyenne River. In fact, in a border town at Mobridge.

My grandfather is a white farmer. My dad's white and so I didn't grow

up hearing a lot of the oral tradition, but it would come up every now and again. It would come up when we would go out to Standing Rock or we'd go on the line or we'd go visit family in Cheyenne River.

And I didn't—I couldn't ever make sense of it. I couldn't give words to it. I could never really understand it and we didn't really talk about it too much. If I would bring up questions, a lot of times it wouldn't get discussed too much.

So I think the way that I've come to understand it—maybe much later in life—is through stories here. As well through the literary tradition.

I think when I was in high school. I was in Bismarck, North Dakota, which is also really a border town with a lot of white people so a lot of that [the oral tradition] was politically and intentionally suppressed. That is what I found. Although it was present, it just wasn't really spoken about as much so a lot of those conversations came to me later in life.

[CHRIS PEXA]: My name is Chris Pexa. I'm Bdewakantunwan Dakota, enrolled at Spirit Lake, but not a citizen because of the residency requirement for citizenship. I grew up between that place and Rapid City, where I was born.

My mother, Donna Charboneau (her maiden name), was an employee for Indian Health Services for almost thirty years. And I think that that ties into the matter of storytelling for sure because I was raised, in a way, in IHS as much as I was by my mom, dad, Dennis Pexa, and grandma, whose name was Rachel Young. That was her maiden name. The Youngs are all across our territory, including Standing Rock, and many of you here probably know the Youngs who live there.

I guess the question was about origin stories and I admit I didn't hear a lot of those growing up. But I wonder how we're thinking about origin stories and about the oral tradition because I did hear a ton of stories about different places and place names. Stories that we're really orienting, that really mapped out important places both in Rapid City, and Fort Totten at Spirit Lake.

I think about Unktehi stories. I think about stories of Mni Wakan, the lake there, and Mni Wakan Cante, the heart of the lake. These were all tied into family histories that became really orienting and really important but they weren't—a lot of them were just adapted and made really contemporary for, you know, reasons of pure joy in storytelling.

And by joy I mean in part a joy in adapting and innovating. There

would be in a story instead of, say, a herd of horses, suddenly a bunch of motorcycles. There would be spray paint. So when I think of origin stories, I know that we have origin stories that are intact and largely unchanged over vast distances in time, you know? For instance, we see Charles Eastman's translation of the Dakota origin story just appeared in print as *In the Beginning, the Sun*. But even in that text, Eastman has, as Gabby Tateyuskanskan has pointed out, used terms like "princesses," which we of course did not have, historically speaking. So the issue of innovation and maybe fidelity or accuracy in relation to origin is important.

I also think about other more everyday stories and storytelling. You know, I heard my mom telling stories all the time, and still do. She grew up, she was born at Spirit Lake. She was born at Crow Hill in Fort Totten and she moved away from Spirit Lake (then Devil's Lake) reservation to the Old Cheyenne Agency when she was very young—not too long before the forced relocation and flooding from the Oahe Dam. But she has all these wonderful memories of, you know, picking sand cherries, buffalo berries, chokecherries. You know it's like the place itself is so rich with her stories of plants and animals so I think about our stories as orienting in that way to not just in terms of like big histories, but in really intimate ones.

[SH]: So you all have mentioned that there are differences in storytelling. There are personal family stories and there are broader community stories as well. Were there specific origin stories that helped shape you? That helped shaped your cultural values?

[LLL]: My cultural values were shaped at Fort Berthold, where my family live, on Standing Rock, where my mother was enrolled, and on the Cheyenne River, where my father was enrolled.

I remember as a teenager one of my cousins was coming into womanhood so all of the women got together and there were many discussions about that. I was much younger and unfortunately I wasn't paying attention like I should have been. They were getting ready to take her through the process of accepting the changes in her anatomy, preparing for womanhood.

Anyway, at that particular time, one of my aunts told the story of White Buffalo Calf Woman. It wasn't the first time that I had heard the

story, but it was that time that I first learned about morality and about the protection of women. I also learned that there was a sense of responsibility that men in our family had to protect women and girls of the family. So it was one of those experiences where you're on the outside listening to something that pertains to you, but you're not quite old enough to be ready for understanding it.

Recently, I've been thinking and wondering how many of our young women and for that matter young men have heard that story, about how the young man in the story who coveted White Buffalo Calf Woman for carnal reasons was turned to ashes.

I remember well that story because it was one of the first stories I heard as a child that pertained to me as a woman and had heard it several times since. The first time I heard it I was a very young listener, listening to an experience of what I needed to know to protect myself. I was told about how to pay attention to the fact that sometimes men have ulterior motives for the way in which they interact with one another, especially when wašíču were in the company of Indians.

The women in my family, especially my one aunt, were very adamant that I pay attention and she would always bring related points to mind, such as whether or not I was providing an opening for mischief to come to me because of the way I behaved.

This aunt was like a mother to me, especially when I was going to college. She married for the first time when she was sixty-four and she asked me to make her wedding dress for her. At that time, she told me many things about how women make many sacrifices in order to keep harmony in the family, like when her brother fell into alcoholism and she ended up raising his two boys. She impressed upon me the fact that sometimes things that happen to us in our lives are not our choices.

Just like Kim was pointing out, we don't get to choose to be Indigenous. That is the result of being born into the tribe of our enrollment and hearing origin stories that for me have stood out and have been repeated throughout my life by strong-heart women and men who know these stories are important. An unwritten understanding exists that we should support one another in ways that are going to be beneficial to everyone, keeping our stories alive is part of that.

[JGF]: Lanniko, I'm so glad you brought up that story. And I think I'm going with it too. I think the one story that I remember [is] about the

White Buffalo Calf Woman. That's a pretty big one, but it took me a while to connect that. It took me a while to connect that the pipe was brought to the Itazipco tiospaye and that's us and who I come from—and I've looked at that story as a responsibility and I know we never really talked about it too much in my family, but we are starting to again and I find now that I'm trying to find ways to be able to pass that story on because it's such a part of us and so I think [about] the way that that story has changed.

I'm happy to hear it from others too. I know it's been published as well. But it took me a while to connect it.

For my daughter, and for others I'm still trying to figure it out without being in the place it happened. But yeah, that's definitely a story that I think is about origins too. Not the only story, but certainly one of them.

[SH]: I don't think I'd heard that story until I read it in print. I think it was in Albert White Hat's book, *Zuya*. That's the first time I read it. How do you think the printed version of the story changed from the oral version that you all heard in your families?

[LLL}: Well, I'll just say that each time there was something about that in the family, whether by my mother or among any of the women, there was some aspect of the story that was elaborated on. It wasn't like it was memorized, like some people memorize printed poems. Rather it had to do with the way in which that elaboration connected us to who we were in our setting and in the context of the setting.

[CP]: It seems like a lot of people here that I had not encountered that story until I saw it in print. But now I'm trying to remember the first print version that I read . . .

[JGF]: Yeah, I'm trying to remember that too, but I think one of the things [that is different between the oral and print versions is] the conversation about where the pipe is now.

I think Arvol Looking Horse is caring for it, but there's always a conversation about families and I am trying to remember who is caring for Crow Feather's pipe right now. But I think it's more of talking about who is caring for the pipe and how it's passed down. So I think that's a big difference that I've noticed between the print and oral versions. It's the

tie to family, to community. Who has continued to be caretakers? And that's the version that I don't hear about because it seems like it's just a moment, right?

The print version is like, hey, this happened. Whereas I think a lot of the stories are more of Hey, this person now is caring for the pipe and here are more people. Here's the person who cared for it before. And so I've noticed that it's more of the caretaking of the pipe that has been passed down more so than the origin story of it.

[SH]: So then you're both saying those oral traditions are continuous and ongoing. In the print version, you're not going to be able to do that, right? Because once you publish something, there's just one version.

So what else is lost between the oral tradition and the print tradition?

[LLL}: So in the course of our discussions, she said, "Well, I'm going to do something about it. It's up to the people to take this on, to take it further, because they're alive and with their grandchildren. They should be sharing these things with their families so she went to Makoce Studio in Bismarck and recorded stories on DVDs and now they are also on the web. Viewers can see her and hear the stories.

So that was one of the solutions to your question, Sarah. The other was to have tribal instructors like Gladys Hawk, who was a member of the Oak Lake Writers' Society. She and I would hold sessions at the Sacagawea Learning Center in Mobridge when we both taught there. The owner provided the Northwestern Lutheran Academy as a site for Sitting Bull College to have classes in Mobridge where students living there and nearby would be able to attend and not drive all the way to Fort Yates, North Dakota to the main campus.

Gladys and I would present stories of the river Mni Sose and we could incorporate knowledge before the creation of the Oahe Dam as part of the curriculum that we developed. Later on, we put our heads together and wrote a little humanities grant, to have a teachers institute for the Native paraprofessionals in the classroom. We felt that students would be able to relate content from their standard curriculum and tie that to some of the curriculum that we developed at the institute. Most classroom teachers in the reservation schools are non-Native and the paraprofessionals who assist them are Native.

That was back in, I believe, 2004. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Mary Louise

Defender Wilson, Gladys Hawk and I were surprised to have some classroom teachers attend as well. Liz presented on the sovereignty of water and geopolitics. Mary Louise presented on tribal boundaries; she had written *The Taken Land*, on lands that were flooded for which the tribes had not been compensated. Gladys presented on the changes to the landscape and the people and about the loss of so many Native medicine plants and more. Wilbur Flying By had provided a curriculum to assist on field walks to identify survivor plants that were being used by many of the old-timers. So we were very much engaged in reclaiming the stories that had to do with the landscape and the transformations that had happened where we lived.

How do we translate this information to our own communities where in some places there is a bankruptcy of authentic historical and traditional information? Unfortunately, arrogance and ignorance still deprives our tribal students of much of these facts and their related stories. Students have no tethers to tie them to the knowledge that is also formative to their identities. I personally thought our teachers' institute was a very fruitful experience, but back in the classroom, who is in charge?

It makes it difficult for that information to have relevancy for children unless the paraprofessional or the classroom teacher is Native, is from that community, and is strong-willed enough to press our culture and history forward. It is difficult also because there's sensitivity about the content, about who knows what, and whether it is acceptable to teach given mandated use of state curriculum standards. Who is going to take the responsibility of supporting those willing to stick their neck out there and do and say the things that need to be said and will follow through in a way that the tribal communities benefit, not just for one person, but for all of them. That's one of those sacrifices that we should thing about as women in charge of children, not just their food, but their shelter, their safety and their education.

[KT]: I wonder to what degree the preponderance of you know, internet and digital publication closes that gap a little bit. You know, things change on the internet. You'll arrive at dead links. It's easier to go back.

I do a Substack where I do both print and audio. I write to orate. I don't write to be read first and foremost. I write to be heard first and foremost. So I always use audio tape all of my essays and pieces that I

put on Substack. And I hear from a lot of people that they prefer that because they can also do other things, you know, do the dishes or whatever while they're listening . . . or cook dinner . . . so that to me is really helpful.

And then the other thing is, because it's digital, it can change. I can go back. I'll find typos or things and I can change things. You could go back if you wanted to radically revise something and do that too or make a piece be dynamic wherein you tell a story one way and you could go do another iteration that it links to for another situation.

I don't know, there's probably people who do literature who have studied this. These are just questions that I have, but it seems to me that we're not locked into either/or anymore and that the print can be much more dynamic than it was when it was just in paper form.

[SH]: I think there are a lot of advantages to technology. I remember when I finished my book, Liz was like, you need to record this book as an audio book because that's the only way that a lot of our people are going to listen to it.

She said, "A lot of them probably won't pick it up and read it, but if it's on audio, they'll listen to it." And so sometimes I think there is a lot of advantage to technology, but then it also concerns me. We had this discussion at the retreat and were talking about AI and you know putting or stories out on the internet.

I don't know how AI works but suddenly our stories are on the internet for everyone. I don't know how the technology works and it could start to become dangerous too.

[KT]: The book is a technology, though, so I don't know that it's any different than what we faced with the advent of the book.

[SH]: That's true. And then yeah, you can scan books too so then it's still out there too.

[KT]: Well, just the book itself is a form of technology. I mean, it's a way to communicate words that, our peoples didn't have before, right? So, it spreads, you know, once it's out there, and then it's out of our hands.

It's in libraries. It can be appropriated. So I don't know that it's . . .

Maybe there are magnitudes of difference, but I don't know that it's fundamentally a different problem.

[CP]: This sort of makes me think of accessibility and access. And who should have access? And who maybe shouldn't?

Although I'm a literary scholar, that's my training, I'm also a poet and a writer. I don't see that, like Kim says, as exclusively an activity for print or for just a printed medium.

It's certainly not with poetry. But more and more, I find myself also writing in an oral way, in an oral way, to be heard aloud.

One new sort of form or, I guess, new format for me is digital mapping. I'm really interested in documenting and in some cases recovering our Očhéthi Šakówiŋ home places through storytelling, in an audiovisually rich format. Not in print. I'm hoping to create an archive of oral storytelling that maps out, or orients us in different ways to, important places in our Očhéthi Šakówiŋ communities. And I'm working alongside Očhéthi Šakówiŋ researchers at the University of Minnesota and with my co-PI, Samantha Majhor, at Marquette University, along with what will hopefully become thirty-two tribal research fellows across sixteen of our reservations and communities.

Part of that project is—how do you document and preserve the oral tradition digitally? And how do you give access to those who need it most—to our relatives? Firewalling or restricting access according to various protocols for those who might not need it or maybe shouldn't have access at all. So I think in terms of storytelling and you know, this conversation that we've been having in terms of access and accessibility, that's something to think about.

There's a relatively web-based archival platform called Mukurtu that was developed in relation to Aboriginal Australian communities who wanted to document their heritage objects, stories, lots of stuff. But not in a way that was sort of like a conventional museum. They wanted to preserve multiple Aboriginal communities' voices in relation to items of cultural significance. And they wanted to restrict access to these items so they worked with people at, I believe it's Washington State University.

So that's something that is a new sort of turn for me. Thinking about print versus oral in terms of literature and storytelling. The brave new world of digital archives. You know, we're all implicated in it. Whether we would like to be or not. But I think there are ways to do it intelligently and ethically. And that has very much to do with accountability to our communities.

[SH]: It just keeps making me think about the question—what is gained or lost when we reimagine our oral traditions in either print or electronic form.

[CP]: Hmm.

[LLL]: I think we were talking about that some time ago at one of our retreats. Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve wrote about geopolitical tribal identity, tribal identity. Her book discusses the landscape, places of historical intertribal events, battles, skirmishes, interactions. The book generated an awful lot of interest among those at the retreat. I believe it was Elden Lawrence who brought up that most of the stories about Oak Lake, that it was a Dakota Massacre ground site. And there was quite a bit of follow through on that in terms of little group discussions that went on late into the evening and into the next day around the breakfast table, where we ate and worked together in the same large room.

During that time, it was brought to our attention that some of those attending the retreat had gone out and walked around. I believe Lydia was one of them. They had gone out, prayed, smudged and sang on the part of the property beyond a fence where the horses were pastured.

Later during the night, they indicated that they had heard horses running through the camp where the retreat building was located. That's when Elden told us that that site had a lot of history of small groups of Dakota trying to survive when the military patrols were out rounding up Indians. Because the lake is in a low area, it formed a kind of bowl surrounded by a heavy wooded area and that it provided cover for them to hide.

Several people managed to survive those military patrols and their stories connect that place to the oral tradition importance of storykeeping and storytelling.

On the afternoon break of that day, we all walked around the lake; everyone walking silently, thinking about what we had just learned. It was quite a moving remembrance as we digested why we were there as tribal writers and why we were privy to this retelling by one of our members.

During a following group session, the question was asked, what can we write about Oak Lake, about the military patrols and what had hap-

pened there? After all, we had come to know the place quite differently with new information about the region after the oral storytelling.

But on the flip side, a question followed regarding the sensibility of writing about a place where all white farmers had settled and that this was their claimed land. So there was that tug of war—emotionally and psychologically—about how to open a discussion about that particular experience without causing a lot of animosity against the Oak Lake Writers Society. We would be coming into that setting and revealing something that some of the people who lived there had no knowledge of.

We tribal writers had been going to Oak Lake for our writing retreats since 1993. So that retreat stirred interest in local research as it had potential to explore further what we had learned.

Then, not too long afterward, I learned that a white woman had gone into the area to write a history of Oak Lake. She sent her manuscript out to be published but it was denied.

I asked why it was denied. The answer was that it didn't tell anything about the history of the Indigenous people related to that setting. What Elden shared was oral history. The retreat closed without more discussion on writing about that location.

[SH]: How does place influence your writing?

[LLL]: Location of place, a sense of place in my writing is very significant. I was terribly affected—emotionally and psychologically—by the loss of the river because as a child, I knew the river before it was dammed. We didn't have the wherewithal to have a car back then so we travelled by buckboard to Kenel on the Standing Rock to spend time with my grandparents. We crossed creeks and the Moreau River.

I remember well there was talk about the seasons and what life was like before there were fences. There was talk about plants that grew in different places, what kind they were and that they talked to us. That's when I learned that timpsila grows on only one side of the prairie hills and there was a certain way to harvest it.

So connecting to place was every bit a family experience and it was "down to earth" in a very literal sense. At the first tribal writers retreat that I attended, the question asked, what is the source of your writing inspiration that you want to share? Who do you know—how do you

know who you are? What is it that informs you about who you are? I had no problem answering that question—it was the river.

In other words, we were asked—who taught you what you know? But I said it wasn't so much a who as it was a what that had to do with the connection I had to the place we lived and those that lived around us.

So that first experience of writing became an essay published in *Shaping Survival*.

I had been to England to see artifacts that were at the Museum of Natural History and so many of the things that I was knowledgeable of were on display there. Some of the things that we had in our family were made of materials along the river. Seeing those tribal objects there had a powerful effect on me, made me aware that I belonged to a particular place.

The river taught me about shelter and protection, about resources like food and those things made it possible for us to live comfortably enough, though we worked hard to acquire what we used. Our house was built by my family and made of the river timber. We chinked it with river clay and prairie grasses. And all that changed when the river was dammed. Our people are depicted as nomads in so much American literature, but I'm questioning whether or not they are taking great liberties with their storytelling about us because it would be to their advantage to do so. Very few of my own family members, especially the older ones, had drifted away from the Mni Sose so that was something that I wanted to share, regarding our place-based stories.

[JGF] I love hearing the stories about the river because the only thing I know about the river is after the floods. When I grew up around the river, it had already been flooded.

Getting back to this question about place and print. The trees book as a technology is one of the first questions I remember having about the river. Why are there all these trees underwater? Because you can see them peeking out from the river and that something had happened. It was unlike any other body of water. There's all these trees underwater and you can see them and if you go out into the water they're still there.

I found that the observation of being in that place led to these stories about the flooding of the river. And then it led to more stories—and even my training as an architect.

There's this whole body of place-making and what places are and it's

such a cognitive version of what places are. Typically, the writing about it was very universal. It was typically written from a very specific white male perspective so I realized through my training and education that that's changing. Scholars and architects still talk about place-making, but it really seemed always seems to leverage or synthesize grafted ideologies about the place. That idea where it's like we just have to know the place, right? Like place-knowing is very different. And to place-make meant that maybe you were getting rid of some of the knowledge and actually doing that.

But I think the transition into print is not too threatening—I'm open to print and AI. I just know that some of the way that these stories came into place was just by being there initially—and seeing something and then asking about it and then I found that that's where a lot of these stories started. From other people, from elders like Lanniko who remember the river before it was flooded. It's so helpful to hear that because I never got to experience the river until after the floods so all I know or hear are the stories.

But it's still very much present. There's something I missed from there. I think the trees also are telling that story as well.

[PBN] Little White River is a place I identify with the most. My childhood memories are of the river. Because it is my place of birth, I love the sound of water. My grandmother delivered me; from that moment, I lived with my grandparents. So many memories of running barefoot all summer long, picking berries, eating berries, gathering peppermint tea near River's banks, and swimming in the Little White River. In the summer months, it was our shortcut to get to town. We waded across the Little White River, making the trek to the settler town of White River a little shorter. In the winter, we walked across the frozen river to town. In the spring, we could not cross the river, the gentle river would swell, swirl dangerously, giant chunks of ice floated with great force to the north and joined the Big White River that eventually emptied into the Missouri River. At night, when the warm weather arrived, we could hear the ice cracking on the river. During the spring flooding, our walk to town was extra long. I loved hearing the voices of River with the changing seasons. Raging in the spring; summer and fall, quiet and gentle, winter, covered in a blanket of thick ice. Beneath the thick ice, River flowed in her quiet way. Sometimes, River was dangerous; there were

places of thin ice covered in snow. One winter, my grandfather broke through the ice in such a spot. He survived; River did not keep him.

When I began school, my grandfather and I waded across River to the settler town. I cried all the way. It was difficult to leave my carefree childhood by the river. River was my place of peace; my playground.

Today, when I return home, the landscape has changed so much. I cannot get close to River because of a barbed wire fence that now keeps settler cattle caged. The landscape looks sad and neglected in the very places that I ran and played. I cannot smell peppermint tea; and I cannot tell if there are still chokecherry and wild grape bushes or plum trees. I do not recognize this childhood place that holds my memories of childhood.

For me, that's my place of identity.

It's the place that I have a lot of fond memories, a lot of stories.

[SH] So, colonialism has had a devastating impact on our communities and it's changed these places, but now our stories are a way to still keep those places alive.

[PBN] The stories that we keep alive are very, very important. I mean that's one way of holding them and giving them to our next generation. So we have to keep sharing the stories and telling the stories. I think it's extremely important.

[LLL]: I think that's terribly important as well. A few years ago, I decided after so much time that I felt homesick. I realized that I missed the trees that were along the river. We had quite a stand of cottonwood, mixed willows, scrub oak, and ash near our river home. Different kinds of trees with their different stories and different purposes and uses, but we learned that they were also a nation unto themselves and that we can feel a part of them when we were there playing among them.

That feeling of homesickness took me to the Arbor Day Society in Nebraska City, Nebraska where I asked about how to reestablish the hazelnut shrubs that had grown along the river. The native hazelnut or filbert was one species, but we also lost the scrub oak that hugged the creeks leading to the river.

It's not until you're in North Dakota passed the Standing Rock Nation from where I live now that you see the few majestic cottonwood stands

and the scrub oak, but those acorns aren't as large as I remember and, of course, there's no hazelnut stands to be found.

I remember older members of my family using a stone bowl and grinding stone to break open the acorns and then leeching them. Do you know that you can use the acorn in about fifteen different ways. But to eat them, they have to be prepared in such a way or you can get very sick eating them straight out of the shell.

We tried to impress upon those who attended the "Indigenous Knowledge of the River" Institute that a terrible loss occurred when the river was dammed. Many of them had never seen the hazelnut tree at all, nor had they known about them. They're not really trees but tall shrubs and we made lots of things out of their branches.

When we talk about such things as the trees or being a child in a setting like the river, we are actually talking about a giant playground that was also a school. We had so many incredible adventures and playmates that weren't necessarily human. You'd see tracks that you'd follow and you'd find nests of many kinds, rabbit warrens among the cottonwood and willow stands and even squirrels that you got to know because they had different markings and different ways of behaving.

Some people may say nowadays that a squirrel is a squirrel. They all look the same. Not so. Those people haven't had experiences to teach them intimately about such animal and plant distinctions.

I found it very disturbing when Governor Kristi Noem came up with the idea to pay a bounty per tail for what was deemed predator animals that were ruining the pheasant hunting industry in South Dakota. One of the key points we were trying to make at the Institute was everything plays a role to create a balance. With balance we do not have an overabundance of predators nor an overabundance of various types of insects that are noxious. We were trying to inform the group that balance in nature requires space for species diversity.

When humans invade and crowd out wildlife to have what is wanted, something is taken away from something else. Students of all ages need to know what lives there. What depends on something else and what are they contributing to achieve balance?

That was part and parcel of what we were trying to achieve with the Institute. So, what stories give listeners and readers a sense of being part of a larger schema of life. Knowing your human limitations in that setting and understanding balance lives in stories that must be told and retold.

There was one session that I led because this was a team effort of Liz, Gladys, Mary Louise and a non-Native librarian whose name I don't recall at the moment. We planned the Institute's agenda and program, how it was going to flow, where we were going to go out on little field trips to actually illustrate and journal various things we saw along the (dammed) river.

Before we left I asked the group to look for and identify predator and prey of any species.

When we went on those field trips, nearly all of the participants were aware that this kind of learning activity was as valid as a classroom learning experience. The group was so unaware to such a degree that when they actually saw tracks, saw carcasses, and saw bird scat, it was a puzzlement to them and it generated much excitement and fun.

So, when we're looking at the effects of colonization and what it has done to homogenize education, American students, Native as well as non-Native have not been educated wholly. Self-identity is as much about landscape and its nonhuman inhabitants as it is about ethnicity and racial history. Our historical and human connection to landscape is geographical, geopolitical, and our tribal sovereignty should require that we know this. Stories make it possible to self-educate to have that understanding.

[KT] So I've been thinking about this lately. I'm teaching our intro to Native theory course for our grad students this fall. I started having them, when they introduce themselves, I want them to talk about their formative theorists. And those can be, normally we think of a theorist as an academic writer, but for me, my formative theorists are also my mother, my grandparents. The people that sort of laid out the analytical framework through which you see and analyze the world, right? And that's not only people that you've read in books, well where it shouldn't be anyway. It's unfortunate if you didn't have formative theorists as you were. Well, we do, whether we like them or not. We all have people in our childhood who teach us how to view the world and how to make sense of it. That, to me, that's a formative theorist.

But also the landscape, right? And so they were only talking about people and I said, well, you're all Indigenous, which is the word they use up here in Canada a lot. What about the landscapes that your peoples come from?

And so it turns out there's quite a lot there. So when I was asking

them to answer that question, I had to answer it for myself. And, I need to write an essay on this, but I realized even when I'm not writing about the prairie or rivers—and the formative rivers for me, the Big Sioux or the Mississippi . . .

I now live on the North Saskatchewan in Edmonton and I really—there's a couple of other rivers that are completely outside my territories that I, but in places I've lived and spent time that I really, really love. And so even when I'm not writing about rivers of the prairie, I realize that prairie and river sensibilities shape my analysis of the world and the way that I've come to inhabit the world.

So, I was thinking about the what the prairie does to you living in eastern South Dakota. It's a very harsh landscape. It can kill you. So, I've never had a romantic view of nature. I didn't grow up in romantic nature.

I grew up in a really beautiful place. But the summers are harsh. The winters are harsh. You have to be careful. It's not this bucolic kind of nature that settlers like to try to cultivate, right? So, I grew up really understanding the relationship between life and death.

And death is not in and of itself a bad thing. It's in and of itself necessary to life, right? Life and death is part of a cycle. And you see that really clearly when you live in a place where you're not protected. There's no protection from death, especially living on the prairies.

And so I have this very anti-romantic view. I prefer truthful accounting to beauty. Beauty is nice when it happens. But I really prefer a realistic grappling with kind of what's around you because if you don't do that as a prairie person, you don't survive. Like there's not room to be romantic in growing up. And so I've been thinking a lot about that and then the river.

Also because I don't like the ocean. It scares me. It's like a deep dark abyss to me. It's not like the ocean. It scares me. It's like a deep dark abyss. To me the ocean, it's not a place, but it's an absence of place.

Now Indigenous Studies Scholar friends from around the world, from Pacific islands, for example—the ocean is a place to them. It's not what it is to us, like landlocked people. It's really interesting to talk to people like that. You know, I have no relationship with the depth of the ocean and with the geography that is the ocean, but they do. And it's really fascinating to see the differences in how we're formed.

But in thinking about the river, I realized a long time ago that it's the being stuck, although I'm glad now for it, but I felt stuck in rural South Dakota as a child and I couldn't wait to see what was beyond the horizon. But the river was a place. The river was always there, so it was a constant. And I grew up, my grandparents' house was across the river from the powwow grounds. It was about a quarter mile down the dirt road to the powwow Powell grounds in Flandreau where I grew up. And so that river was always there and it was a constant. We swam in it, we probably shouldn't have, but we did. And, my grandparents fished in that river, the powwow grounds were next to the river, but it also came and it went.

So it was also the promise of leaving. It was like a road. And so for me, I wondered what's beyond that bend in the river. What's beyond the horizon? I can't wait until I can go there and go on those roads and get out of here.

The other thing about the river is you can cross the river on a highway, but it might come back and meet you later on. So, it's like a friend or an acquaintance that is there but not always there. And I realized that I do have this kind of migratory sense. I'm really comfortable with having a relationship that I know is out there somewhere, but we're not always together like the river. It crosses your path and then it goes away or you go away and you might come back across it at another time. So, I think the river and its movement also prepared me to have a really different orientation to relationships, to be open to openness.

So anyway, I'm gonna write it for . . . I'm gonna write about that and I think but I have been thinking about that a lot this last week—that the river is not just a place but the river and the prairie have particular characteristics. That I think formed the analysis I make of the whole world.

[PBN] Kim, I just wanna thank you for saying that you have such a beautiful way of articulating that. It brought back a flood of memories.

Sometimes in March, we could have these really beautiful days. I remember my grandmother always giving warnings to my uncles when they were going to town, "Make sure you dress properly. The weather can change so suddenly you can have a blizzard. So, there was always a sense of danger and the need to respect nature. Nature teaches you a lot. It is difficult growing up on the prairie.

[CP]: I was just thinking of all the comments and especially the idea of place, as a way that rivers and prairies shaped Kim's analysis of the world. I love that idea and I think that's absolutely true in my experience.

It is really a kind of analytic—not just a way to experience the world, but to understand it. And I'm speaking now as an out-of-place person who is far from the places I love the most, my home territories where I grew up in the plains but also my more recent home in Minnesota. In Massachusetts, where I am now, it's just rain. It's rain and trees and it's alien to my experience of being in Dakota homelands in Minnesota where I learned so much that resonates with something Lanniko said too: there's something profound in getting to know a place in a literal, down to earth way. For her that was digging tipsina. For me, you know, it's walking across the frozen lake in snowshoes, which I've only done once in my life and I probably will never do again because it's terrifying. I share Kim's anxieties about deep waters. To go harvest *chansasa* [red willow bark] you know, after trudging across the snow. The embodied experience of just being there with those plant relatives and with your human relatives, who are with you gathering but also narrating the process, too. That's a medicine that we bring and we share with each other that has been shared with us by that willow. And it comes through those kinds of relational activities. And, like Lanniko, I miss the giant stands of cottonwood at one of the bdote, at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, which is a birthing place too for Dakota women.

That got me to thinking about place. Sarah, you asked it story was a way to keep places alive, and I think, yes, certainly. But for me, there's also an opportunity that stories give us to think and to be. So that in this way they're an analytic—they furnish a way of viewing the world and a means of reviving our relations.

Places and stories of a place are an opportunity and a crucial means for activism. I think about the last seven years that I have lived in St. Paul. Seeing all the changes that happened. The name restoration that happened with the lake Bde Maka Ska. The profound work that Carly Bad Heart Bull and Kate Beane did there to restore that name, including narrating the long history of Dakota presence around that lake. And all the heart that they put in that task of re-storying the lake. All of the knowledge that they brought. There was such settler pushback and denial. But I think without that knowledge, without those stories of Chief Cloud Man's village that was on the shores of Bde Maka Ska, with-

out the narrating of those deep connections, those intimate connections, that name restoration probably wouldn't have happened. So yeah, I think stories about our places are essential. Now more than ever. Especially for recovering and restoring our relations with our home places.

[SH]: We are now approaching two hours. Maybe we could conclude by reflecting on the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society. How has the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society helped us to preserve and perpetuate our own stories?

I can start. It was great hearing all of you talk today about the importance of place. Like I said, I didn't grow up in South Dakota or Minnesota or near my tribal community in Rosebud so I didn't grow up in a place where those stories could emerge or allow me to start thinking about how to incorporate them into my own writing so I feel really grateful that we have the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society because I feel like there are a number of people within the organization who really stepped up and helped me start to better understand those connections.

And so for me, the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society has really helped make me a better writer, a better scholar and I am just so appreciative of the organization and all the people who are part of the organization. I hope we can continue to work towards our mission, which is to preserve and perpetuate the Oceti Sakowin oral tradition.

[PBN]: Oceti Sakowin Writers has helped me to think of myself as a writer. Sarah, I want to acknowledge that you have given me the encouragement to step out of my comfort zone. Wopila, Sarah. I have come to an awareness that my lack of confidence to express my voice is part of the effects of colonization. The Oceti Sakowin Writers Society has placed me on a journey towards healing. Here I am an elder Lakota winyan and I am just now finding my voice and as I write my story, I am healing and gaining confidence. I have arrived it seems quite late in life to this space to write, but I am recognizing that it is never too late. I am grateful to Oceti Sakowin Writers Society for this opportunity.

[SH]: Thank you, Patty.

[KT]: Patty, I'm really looking forward to reading more river stories from you. I think it's really important that we have stories that talk about

how edifying our culture is too. I think about this a lot because I work with—I work against all this kind of identity fraud stuff, and there's a lot of fraudulent stories out there—and they're rife with suffering and it's not that we don't have that, but I also grew up with like such profound lessons and love and care for my elders, and I think though we need to tell those stories because it shows what's also superior about our culture.

The Oceti Sakowin Writers Society for me has really helped keep me—I mean, I go home all the time—but it's been another source of connection for me as my elders have passed away. And some of the elders and my mom's generation who are still around are not like the elders of my grandparents and great-grandparents generation, so they're not a source of connection for me. It's really been nice to go to Oak Lake. Oak Lake, where we met for a while, is very close to where I grew up. I mean, it's, I don't know, maybe, forty-five minutes away from Flandreau. And so it's the landscape I'm familiar with.

And just then getting to listen to and be there with Liz and Lydia and Lanniko and Gaby [Tateyuskanskan]. I guess Gaby and I are around the same age, but other women that are a little bit older than me, that also offered a lot of wisdom and grounding in that place. I really, really appreciated that. It's really been a nice source—another connection—to home that I wouldn't have had. So, I'm grateful for that.

[JGF]: Last year was my first retreat with the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society. And I think Kim you told a story about meeting Elizabeth Cook-Lynn when you first joined and how you were a little, maybe nervous about it, because it was somebody that who you read. I felt that way with you, cause I've read so much of your work that I was like, okay, I feel like I know Kim because I've read so much of Kim's work. I subscribe to your Substack so I'm one of those people that listen to stories while I'm doing the dishes.

I have found that getting to know everyone who I've read or who maybe I've met and then read has been a very unique experience and then it just touches on something that I've known or been able to experience during my lifetime. And to see it reframed.

We told very different stories—like Lanniko's stories about the river—that, that let me think and go there, you just did that today. It is really, really amazing. Some of these conversations have been totally unexpected to me and I like that. I like that. That it's one way of learning but it's also something that really feels like medicine.

It just feels really good to be in the space with all of you.

[CP] Yeah, I'll second that. As a newcomer whose first retreat was last year as well, I will say I'm deeply grateful to be part of this group and to have been invited to join you all. I was sad to miss the retreat in He Sapa last month, but I couldn't be there because of work and family complications.

I missed you all in person and I just wanted to say that as an academic like some of us here are, I'm part of a lot of societies. I think we all probably are involved in professional organizations, whatever our walk of life might be. But for the most part, those societies are, you know, not like Dakota traditional societies. They are professional associations. And though there might be a spirit of camaraderie in them, none are dedicated to a love for the land and for the people. And to kinship. So, it's a singular thing that the Oceti Sakowin Writers Society brings to us and to each other. And it's sustaining in all these ways that people have already talked about. It's encouraging. It's gratitude-making. And it's a source of reconnection to our home, which is the land, but it's also us and each other and all our memories. And I'm really, really grateful to have heard so many of those shared today. Our reflections. It's intergenerational. It's a gift, and it's so necessary.

[LLL]: I was just thinking about all of what you were sharing. How does the Society perpetuate our stories? I think stories are our medicine, to be healthy, whole, centered and balanced, we need our stories as much as we need food, shelter, and safety.

We are humans. . . . Stories give us a kind of strength that we don't really perceive when we're sharing them. Stories satisfy us like a meal that is fulfilling. And that in itself is reason to have hope going forward as a Society.

It means that we're not leaving anybody (our people) behind because we are looking into the past. Instead we are bringing them with us when we share our stories of history, culture, and language. Storytelling, storykeeping and story-sharing grounds us.

It's always very good to have a group come together to talk about stories, especially those that have not been written about the river displacement of tribes that many of us have experienced firsthand. The fact that we've had landscapes change and affect our lives in traumatic ways, we carry a painful past. But stories help us relate to those changes in ways

that give us a chance to get above the hurt and experience of being displaced. Writing in the context of that has brought me more healing.

Some of you have mentioned that you were just coming in relatively new to the Society, and that you are in the Society because there was no place to share the kinds of things that come out at these retreats.

Yes. Few want to listen to the fact that we've experienced such historically great changes, and that these changes have disrupted communities, fractionalized families. There has been so much loss along the way.

The reality is that if one can't find a place, then you make a place by founding or chartering it and that is what the Society has done.

Each time we gather, I feel like I am going home. The retreat has created its own membership family and over the thirty years of our existence, we have come together to strengthen and support writing and relationships. It does make confidence-building and story-creating much easier—as Patty is finding out.

We have sensitive issues that need to be aired and up to this point, at least for me, it's been hard to find our own Native people to speak to about things we need to reflect on, to write about and to have some kind of closure to some of our own thoughts on those issues.

So yes, I hope that the Oak Lake Writers' Society, now Oceti Sakowin Writers Society continues to grow stronger. While I'm at it, I want to commend all of you for the wonderful things that you are doing and writing about. You're lifting us all, inspiring courage and confidence while giving us all a chance to share what's important about being Native in our homelands.

[SH]: Thank you, Lanniko. Thank you all for participating today!

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WINYA LUTA WIN PATTY BORDEAUX NELSON, Sicangu Oyate Rosebud Lakota Nation, retired in 2014 form a thirty-five-year career advocating for individuals with disabilities. She completed a bachelor's degree in social work from George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon. She received her master's degree in education from South Dakota State University. Winya Luta Win is a member of Oceti Sakowin Writers Society (formerly Oak Lake Writers' Society). She is a contributor to *We're*

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