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Volume 3 Issue 2: Editorial

Introduction to the Indigenous Special Issue of the *Journal of Working-Class Studies*

Jeanetta Calhoun Mish, Oklahoma City University

The genesis of this special issue of Native American working-class writings occurred in 1961 when I was born in Hobart, Oklahoma, the seat of Kiowa County, Oklahoma which was originally and remains Kiowa-Comanche-Apache and Caddo-Wichita lands. My mother was the daughter of an enrolled Absentee/Western Delaware man, my grandpa who raised me, who was also descended of Scots, Scots-Irish and Welsh peoples. My grandmother, mostly Scots-Irish, was a close descendant of the Chism family—of the extended family of Jesse Chism, himself Scots-Irish and Carolina Cherokee, as was my grandmother—although she was not a half-blood like Chism. I am aware that some readers will not find this family history very interesting, but, where I come from, ‘who are your people?’ is an essential question to answer, an early and enduring form of a statement of positionality.

I was a Head Start child of a mother who didn’t finish high school and a father who did, and who, shortly after high school graduation ceremonies attended in a borrowed suit, found himself a bomber in the Korean War. My father’s father’s family was mostly Dutch; his mother, as our family story goes, was the child of a Creek girl sent out to service in a white man’s home—a girl who was raped by the man she worked for. Her daughter, my grandmother, was adopted by neighbors, white neighbors. I am not the descendant of an Indian Princess, Cherokee or otherwise.

After the divorce, my mother took me and my brother back home to Wewoka, Oklahoma. Wewoka (the name might be familiar from the Sterlin Harjo film, *Barking Water*, the translation from Mvskoke of Wewoka), founded by Black Seminole John Horse, is the capital of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma—the boundary of Seminole County is contiguous with the pre-existing boundary of the Seminole Nation. In fifth grade, in our public school, all of us studied, through a Johnson-O’Malley grant, the Mvskoke language, the language-group of the Seminoles and Creeks.

Because I was from a working-class (sometimes poor) family, most of my friends were African-American, Indian, and other marginally-white kids—all of us were all working-class and poor. Those we called ‘upper-class’ in our small, rural hometown were actually middle-class, as I learned once I went to college at the age of thirty-seven. In our town, class-lines were often deeper than color-lines. When I went back to my hometown for the first time in

years, for my thirtieth high school reunion, the class-lines were still there, palpable, almost visible like a fluorescent-yellow highway-stripe dividing the room. Those of us who were from working-class and poor families hung out on one side of the shabby, small-town country club building and, on the other side were the white kids of middle-class families—the Soc’s (pronounced sōsh-es—short for ‘socialites’) as we said then and as Oklahoma writer S.E. Hinton wrote in *The Outsiders*¹.

There were few crossings of the class-line at the reunion—football players of all colors and classes met each other in the middle of the room—literally—then returned to their corners as if the bell had rung in a boxing match. I crossed once to visit with a man who, in 1977, was the only boy who’d go to prom with me, my next-door neighbor. He was working-class, too, at the time but ran with a ‘better’ crowd and eventually became a state representative. He reminded me that he loved poetry in high school and that he was not surprised that’s what I’d done with my life. After our short conversation, I, too, returned to our side of the room. I was finishing my Ph.D. that year at the age of forty-eight, yet, my friends and I, most of us anxious or resentful (or both) about returning to the mean class-divisions of our youth, put a sign on of our side of the room to announce our opinion of the entire affair: ‘The Kiss My Ass Table.’ It was the only integrated table in the room. It’s strange to me that next year, for our fortieth reunion, I’ll be the ‘Distinguished Alumna.’ Class-consciousness still runs through my body like a river through rock.

Regardless of my complicated heritage, I know exactly who I am: a more-or-less ethnically-typical ‘white’ Okie of my generation in southeast Oklahoma—a detribalized, lost-language mixed-blood, working-class person—Scots-Irish, three tribes, no card. I am vehemently *not* a wannabe—I knew and know too many tribally-embedded Indians and understood well-enough, even at a young age, their histories and contemporaneous struggles and the privilege granted by my white-ish, green-eyed body.

I became more aware of what privilege meant by readings in graduate courses, by engaging in long discussions with friends of color, by being made a semi-official captive of Comanche and Pawnee families, and, most of all, by driving my Southern Cheyenne partner (father of my only son) and our many Indian friends around Oklahoma and always being the one who went into the quick stop late at night to buy beer (it was dangerous for them to do so). By bailing my son out of jail more than once for ‘walking while Ind’n.’

All of this is to say that I always, in my limited way, thought of Native people as ‘working-class’ people. Certainly all the Indians I knew growing up were—the height of class/race-crossing that I witnessed until I left the county was that some Natives and African-Americans (two racial categories that overlapped in southeastern Oklahoma) became school teachers or nurses. I am aware, now, that this is not always the case, but, given the statistics on the poverty rate among Native peoples in the United States, it’s not far off the mark, either.

The re-distribution of wealth is an old tradition among many Indigenous peoples—as Michael Harkin notes in his essay in this issue on the Heiltsuk people of British Columbia, it’s called ‘potlatch’ in the Pacific Northwest. My son’s people, the Southern Cheyenne, call it, in English, a ‘giveaway.’ African-Americans in Harlem participated in communal giving through rent parties so that friends and neighbors would be able to avoid both eviction and the

¹ Hinton, S.E. 1967, *The Outsiders*, New York, Viking Press.

embarrassment of charity. I have no doubt that there are many other similar traditions in working-class and Indigenous communities.

Therefore, in order to ‘give back,’ to amplify the voices of the many Native and working-class people who have sustained me and fed me and welcomed me, I have chosen to use my privilege by serving the Returning the Gift Indigenous Literary Festival (both 1992 and 2017), by editing an Indigenous literature special issue of *World Literature Today*, and by editing this special issue of the *Journal of Working-Class Studies*. I also view the writings by the authors in this issue as a form of ‘giving back.’

In this issue, Ruby Murray shares a flash memoir that reveals schisms of class-status among her people, the Osage. Todd Fuller gives a passionate poetic report on the radical act of working to establish tribal colleges, particularly the Pawnee Nation College — his wife and children are Pawnee. Brian Hosmer interrogates the role of Indigenous arts and crafts as working-class phenomena. Kim Shuck, a Cherokee woman and current Poet Laureate of San Francisco, distills her family’s urban, Native, working-class experiences into powerful poetry. Theodore Van Alst (Lakota) also writes from the perspective of an urban Indian in his heart-wrenching short story, ‘By the Slice.’ Terry Easton and Castiel Dixon consider Native working-class constructions in Sherman Alexie’s ‘Reservation Blues.’ James Mackay offers a reading of Santee Frazier’s working-class Cherokee poetry as well as an interview with Frazier.

My only regret for this project is that I wish I could have engaged more Native people in writing about their working-class lives for this issue. I hope this is only a beginning to a continued presence of Native peoples in working-class studies. We, the working-class studies people, recognize you, the Indigenous peoples of the world, and are actively listening for your voices.

Jeanetta Calhoun Mish, Ph.D.

Director, The Red Earth MFA @Oklahoma City University

2017-18 Oklahoma State Poet Laureate

Falling Down, Falling Apart, and Finding Home in *Reservation Blues*

Terry Easton, University of North Georgia

Castiel Dixon, University of North Georgia

Abstract

This essay explores journeys toward and away from ‘home’ in Sherman Alexie’s 1995 novel *Reservation Blues*. The textual analysis is grounded in Janet Zandy’s (1993) literal and figurative conceptions of home. Situating Alexie’s magical realism within the matrix of poverty-class, race, ethnic, and postcolonial lenses, this essay reveals a range of tragic and hopeful responses to Indigenous colonization on the Spokane Reservation.

Keywords

American Indian, Spokane Reservation, fiction, working class, poverty class, historical trauma

Introduction

In Sherman Alexie’s 1995 novel *Reservation Blues*, set in the town of Wellpinit, Washington, in the early 1990s, a group of five American Indians, led by Thomas Builds-the-Fire, embark on a musical journey encouraged by Black Blues Legend Robert Johnson.² Appearing mysteriously at a reservation crossroads with his guitar, Johnson, ‘a small man with very dark skin and huge hands,’ is searching for Big Mom, the spiritual matriarch housed in the hills above Wellpinit (Alexie 1995, p. 3). Johnson, who has a striking resemblance to the Mississippi Blues guitarist of the same name, ‘made a bad deal years ago’ and needs help curing his ‘sickness’ (Alexie 1995, p. 6). Readers soon learn that Johnson is not the only character who needs help: Coyote Springs band members Thomas, Junior Polatkin, Victor Joseph, and Chess and Checkers Warm Water also need to heal. Seeking redemption, Johnson, as character motif, prompts others to confront emotional trauma that shapes their lives. Employing magical realism, dreams, and hauntings that collapse past and present, Alexie positions characters at the crossroads of economic, emotional, and spiritual (dis)comfort.³

² We follow Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al. in their use of the phrases *Indigenous Peoples*, *Indigenous Peoples of the Americas*, and *American Indian and Alaska Native* when describing Indigenous people. See Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al., 2011, ‘Historical trauma among Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: Concepts, research, and clinical considerations’, *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, vol. 43, no. 4, p. 288.

³ Sherman Alexie grew up poor on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Wellpinit, Washington. Born in 1966 of mixed ancestry, his mother (Spokane) was a quiltmaker and trading post clerk; his father (Coeur d’Alene) was randomly employed in blue-collar jobs. He left the reservation to attend high school and college. In 1992, Alexie published *The Business of Fancy Dancing: Stories and Poems*, which launched his writing career that continues today. A prolific writer, Alexie has produced works in various genres, including the novel, poetry,

When studying American Indian and Alaska Native texts, critics have productively utilized race, ethnicity, and post-colonial lenses to analyze these works. We use an additional lens: class.⁴ To understand *Reservation Blues* in working and poverty-class contexts, we examine characters' movement toward or away from 'home.' Tracking movements along 'home' and 'unhomed' axes allows us to excavate choices, decisions, and consequences on the blues-laden Spokane Reservation. Finding home, in characters such as Thomas, Chess, and Checkers, generates, mutability, possibility, and hope; not finding home and instead 'falling down' or 'falling apart,' in characters such as Junior and Victor, leads to despair, stasis, and sometimes death.

Exploring the concept of home in *Reservation Blues* enables us to witness responses to historical trauma and the 'soul wound' that reverberates in the lives of working and poverty-class American Indians. As defined by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al., historical trauma is 'cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the life span, which emanates from massive group trauma' (2011, p. 283). Rooted in centuries of discrimination, racism, oppression, and violence, historical trauma can lead to unresolved grief and loss (Brave Heart et al. 2011, p. 285). This soul wound that develops from historical trauma manifests in Junior and Victor, who display '[r]age, hatred, self-defeating behavior, despair, loneliness, degradation, betrayal, and humiliation' (Lundquist 2004, p. 244).⁵ Despite the devastating force of historical trauma, through reconciliation, healing, and cultural hybridity, Thomas, Chess, and Checkers obstruct the effects of soul wound: their final departure from the Spokane Reservation signals regenerative transformation.

Gerald Vizenor's concept of survivance suggests that American Indians have the potential for agency to avert what he characterizes as 'absence, deracination, and oblivion' should they enact an 'active sense of presence' (Vizenor 2008, p. 1). Disrupting erasure of individual and collective history is also reflected in Nicholas Coles and Janet Zandy's assertion that working-class literature can have use-value as 'protest, mourning, celebration, affirmation, testimony, call to action, and transformation' (Coles and Zandy 2007, p. xxiv). The use-value of *Reservation Blues*, its cultural work, functions on several levels, including mourning, testimony, and transformation. Jan Johnson provides an additional conceptual lens when she asserts that Alexie's stories are 'narratives of trauma seeking witnesses to his characters' – and by extension, Native peoples' – grief and pain' which disrupts widespread historical amnesia (Johnson 2010, p. 227). As such, through Alexie's signature trickster lens comprising humor, popular culture, historical referents, and contemporary reality, *Reservation Blues* is a textual 'cultural commons' that reminds us of our collective past while naming agents of oppression and envisioning alternative futures (Coles and Zandy 2007, p. xxiv).

As a people initially viewed as savage, and with contemporary views mired in damaging (mis)perceptions, American Indians in *Reservation Blues* struggle to feel comfortable in their

short story, film, and memoir. His many awards include the PEN/Faulkner Award, the National Book Award, and the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas.

⁴ For class-focused, insightful analysis of American Indian literature, see Michele Fazio's 'Homeless in Seattle: Class violence in Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*' (Tokarczyk 2011, pp. 141-158) and Tim Libretti's 2001 'The other proletarians: Native American literature and class struggle', *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 164-189.

⁵ See Jan Johnson's 2010 'Healing the soul wound in *Flight* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*' for information about historical trauma and soul wound in Alexie's fiction (Berglund and Roush, pp. 224-240). Also, Sherman Alexie has called the concept of soul wound 'blood memory.' See p. 157 of Åse Nygren's 2005 'A world of story-smoke: a conversation with Sherman Alexie', *MELUS*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 149-169.

(brown) skin.⁶ Physical discomfort is depicted in shoddy Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing, rancid commodity food, and broken-down vehicles (Alexie 1995, p. 7, 14, 19). Rooted squarely in the material conditions of the reservation, Thomas's first original song, composed amid the rhythm of his growling stomach, is aptly titled 'Reservation Blues' (Alexie 1995, p. 47). Due to the dearth of jobs and the general precariousness of employment on reservations, characters experience more absence than presence of work. For some, such as Junior, driver of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) water truck, there is a palpable sense of commitment and energy: 'I've got work to do . . . I need to finish. It's my job' (Alexie 1995, p. 20). For others, life exudes desultory stasis in a colonized space where '[a] job was hard to come by . . . even harder to keep' (Alexie 1995, p. 13).

Though it is tempting to consider the characters in *Reservation Blues* working class, it is more fitting to define their situation as poverty class.⁷ Vivyan Adair describes people in the poverty class as those who are marked by 'severe material deprivation, increased vulnerability to violence, and public scorn' (Tokarczyk 2008, p. 148). These terms characterize physical and psychological conditions on the Spokane Reservation. An example of this is when Thomas reveals how his mother divorced his father 'Indian style' after a party at their house. His father got drunk, kicked everyone out, put the furniture on the front lawn and burned it, and threatened to burn down the house with the family in it (Alexie 1995, p. 118). At the party, 'People got drunk. People fought. People got pregnant in the back rooms. A couple went to jail. One got his stomach pumped. Two died in a car wreck on the way home' (Alexie 1995, p. 119).

A collision of sub-standard material conditions and generations of emotional trauma usurp stability and a sense of belonging in the novel. Characters occupy the economic margins: they are 'unbanked,' they do not own land, and they are so poor that a dollar once changed the outcome of tribal elections (Alexie 1995, p. 46).⁸ A comforting sense of home is beyond reach for many characters. Zandy's conception of home offers a helpful framing device:

Home is literal: a place where you struggle together to survive; or a dream: 'a real home,' something just out of one's grasp; or a nightmare: a place in order to survive as an individual. Home is an idea: an inner geography where the ache to belong finally quits, where there is no sense of 'otherness,' where there is, at last, a community. (1993, p.1)

An exploration of the contours and textures of home as both physical and emotional terrain in *Reservation Blues* enables us to witness characters' journeys toward or away from home – to wholeness, desperation, or destruction.

⁶ We use 'brown' because that is the color Checkers uses to describe American Indians: 'She always thought they looked like brown-skinned zombies' (Alexie 1995, p. 99).

⁷ Despite our assertion to consider the characters poverty class, it is important to remember that, as Michelle Fine and Lois Weis indicate when writing about poor women, '[t]he categories of poor and [the] working-class . . . are fluid, with shifting boundaries: they cannot be isolated from each other' (qtd. in Tokarczyk 2008, p.148).

⁸ The 'unbanked' are those who do not have a checking or savings account. Low income, low net worth, and little to no safety net characterize their financial situation. For additional details, see Rhine and Greene 2013, pp. 28-29. In *Reservation Blues*, Victor's response to a clerk at the Super 8 Motel illustrates band members' unbanked status. The clerk asks, 'how will you be paying for your rooms?' Victor responds, 'Cash. . . What Indian has a goddamn credit card?' (Alexie 1995, p. 134). Additionally, we learn about band members' unbanked situation when the narrator reveals, '[Thomas] had forty-two dollars in his pocket and another fifty hidden at home, much more than Junior and Victor had together' (Alexie 1995, p. 46).

Falling Apart: Junior

The motif of falling apart is introduced with Patsy Cline's song 'I Fall to Pieces.' Thomas's singing of the song to Junior and Victor foreshadows the 'falling apart' that awaits Junior. The lyrics 'Each time I see you again / I fall to pieces' eerily correspond with Junior's life; they reflect the moment Junior takes a final glance at his college girlfriend Lynn as she stands amid 'an explosion of white skin and blonde hair' (Cline 1961, lines 2-3; Alexie 1995, p. 240). He is devastated when she waves goodbye, and he feels himself 'break into small pieces that blew away uselessly in the wind' (Alexie 1995, p. 240). Junior, already haunted by painful memories of his poverty-class childhood, is devastated by Lynn's abortion of their child and her rejection of his American Indian blood.⁹ Of all the characters in the novel, Junior moves furthest and most tragically from home: his 'falling apart' trajectory culminates in suicide.

During Junior's brief stint in college, class and race mark his time there. Isolation and alienation prevail. During Christmas break, for example, he remained on campus because he could not afford to go home (Alexie 1995, p. 234). Disconsolate Junior 'watched cars pass by and wondered if white people were happier than Indians' (Alexie 1995, p. 234). After Junior and Lynn met on campus during this break, they dated for a few months. Junior knew that their interracial relationship garnered stares, that others were looking on at '[t]he Indian boy and the white girl walking hand in hand' (Alexie 1995, p. 240). During their relationship, Lynn's parents refused to talk to Junior during campus visits: they feared having a 'half-breed' grandchild (Alexie 1995, pp. 240-241). Unable to navigate the emotional terrain of assimilation into middle-class university life, including the crossroads of racial and ethnic expectations, Junior, the only American Indian on campus, dropped out (Alexie 1995, p. 234). W.E.B DuBois's concept of double-consciousness explains Junior's pain – he has 'a sense of always looking at [himself] through the eyes of others, of measuring [his] soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity' (DuBois 1994, p. 2).

Even though he was alienated at college, Junior discovers a sense of home when he drives the BIA water truck back on the reservation. This job provides structure to his desultory life. Nicholas Coles and Peter Oresick help us understand the role of work in people's lives: 'Whether we want it there or not, for most of us work takes up its position at the center of our lives. What we do for a living organizes our time, consumes our energy, and to a large extent determines our experience in every other activity of living' (1990, p. xxi). Junior, who was a good driver, deftly navigated the 'reservation obstacle course of potholes and free-range livestock' (Alexie 1995, p. 18). Junior organizes his schedule around his job and ignores Victor's insistence to skip out on work. His rebuttal indicates an identity shaped by work: 'I've got work to do . . . I need to finish. It's my job' (Alexie 1995, p. 20). The devastation of losing this job due to his and Victor's coarse words about Coyote contributes to his falling apart.¹⁰ Junior knows how to 'wake up in the morning, eat breakfast, and go to work,' but he is unable to face new challenges when he joins Coyote Springs (Alexie 1995, p. 18). The band is not

⁹ These memories include the absence of his siblings at their parent's funeral because they had 'long since dispersed to other reservations and cities, [and] couldn't afford to come back' (Alexie 1995, p. 24).

Additionally, Junior's past, presented in a dream through magical realism, depicts he and his siblings in below-freezing temperatures sharing a sleeping bag outside the Powwow Tavern. While their parents were inside the tavern, the children could not turn on the car because there was only enough fuel to get home. Later, the stumbling parents shoved their children's dinner through an open car window: potato chips and Pepsi (Alexie 1995, p. 111).

¹⁰ Junior responds to Thomas wanting to name the band Coyote Springs, 'That's too damn Indian. . . . I'm sick of Coyote' (Alexie 1995, p. 45). Victor exclaims, 'Fuck Coyote' (Alexie 1995, p. 45).

ready musically to garner a steady income playing gigs or selling records, and without steady jobs, their lives are precarious.

Instability and insecurity characterize the band's employment. They rely on word-of-mouth recommendations, newspaper reviews, and chance battle-of-the-bands competitions to secure gigs and bring in sporadic money. Perceptions about their Indigenous identity sometimes work against them. A tavern owner reveals, 'I was kind of nervous about hiring Indians . . . Worried they might not show up or maybe they'd stir up trouble' (Alexie 1995, p. 90). Despite his skepticism, Coyote Springs showed up and played well; they 'served up a healthy dish of country music, spiced it with a little bit of rock, and even through in a few old blues tunes for dessert' (Alexie 1995, p. 90). Their rising trajectory falters later in the novel. Having spent all their earnings from gigs, they frantically contact record companies. A record producer in Spokane responded, 'Indians? . . . You mean like drums and stuff? That howling kind of singing? We can't afford to make a record that ain't going to sell' (Alexie 1995, p. 187). Sub Pop Records in Seattle sent rejection letters. Alexie's biting humor envelops the response: 'Black letters on white paper, just like commodity food cans. U.S.D.A. PORK. SORRY WE ARE UNABLE TO USE THIS. JUST ADD WATER. WE DON'T LISTEN TO UNSOLICITED DEMOS. POWDERED MILK. THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST. HEAT AND SERVE' (1995, p. 187). Junior, who wanted 'to be good at something,' curses their predicament as he eats his 'failed dreams,' commodity peanut butter, one of the few sources of protein on the reservation (Alexie 1995, p. 228, 188).

Prior to Coyote Springs' departure to Cavalry Records' New York studio, the narrator signals a poverty-class marker through an Indigenous cultural practice: stickgame. If a player chooses a bone correctly, the player wins; if a player chooses incorrectly, the player is eliminated forever. There is no safety net for Coyote Springs, they had 'one chance to choose the correct hand' (Alexie 1995, p. 220). The band's failure devastates Junior, who wanted 'a bigger house, clothes, shoes, and something more' (Alexie 1995, p. 18, 228). Beyond material comfort, Junior desires meaning in life, 'something more' than physical objects. Junior's emptiness and contemplation of death is telegraphed on the plane trip home from New York when he 'looked out his window and wondered how he would feel if the plane lost power and began the long dive to the ground' (Alexie 1995, p. 252). In a prescient moment, Junior's guilt about his severed connection to Spokane Indigenous practices is revealed when he imagines the announcement prior to crashing: 'And if you do survive the impact, survive the flames and toxic smoke, then you will hear music. A cedar flute perhaps. Follow that music. Even though you don't deserve it' (Alexie 1995, p. 253). After arriving safely back in Wellpinit, the narrator hints at symptoms of depression when Junior and Victor 'found it was easier to just sleep, rather than wake up and face the day' (Alexie 1995, p. 260).

Junior's life ends abruptly atop the Wellpinit water tower by a self-inflicted bullet wound. His suffering, a soul wound both personal and tribal, is rooted in historical trauma, which is a psychic response to centuries of 'death, dispossession, and denigration' of Indigenous Peoples (Johnson 2010, p. 225). Through magical realism, the deceased Junior initially explains to Victor that he killed himself because 'life is hard'; however, among the myriad of reasons for his death, this is a fragment (Alexie 1995, p. 290). A fuller portrait is revealed moments later when Junior explains, 'when I closed my eyes like Thomas, I didn't see a damn thing. Nothing. Zilch. No stories, no songs. Nothing' (Alexie 1995, p. 290). Junior's life is torn asunder; he falls apart after decades of living through unreconciled strivings (DuBois 1994, p. 2). Unable to navigate hybridity necessary for survivance, Junior falls apart 'and [can] never be put back together again' (Alexie 1995, p. 287).

Falling Down: Victor

Junior's suicide devastates Victor, who is already morose about Coyote Springs' failure at Cavalry Records. Unlike Thomas, Chess, and Checkers – emotionally adept characters who travel toward 'home' as the novel unfolds – Victor is angry, culturally dislocated, and unwilling to forgive. As the novel unfolds, he becomes increasingly 'unhomed.' Homi Bhabha's notion of the 'unhomely' and its attendant 'unhomeliness,' rooted in colonialism and post-colonialism, informs our analysis. The unhomed concept describes 'an estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world,' a displacement that forces 'a division that is as divided as it is disorienting' (2004, p. 13). Lois Tyson describes these situations as characters not feeling at home even in their own home because they are not at home in themselves – they are psychological refugees (2014, p. 403).

Despite his tough exterior and 'warrior disguise,' Victor is 'fragile as eggs' (Alexie 1995, p. 16). Victor's first appearance in the novel reveals his anger: his tattered 13-year-old silk and polyester wardrobe make him 'an angry man' (Alexie 1995, p. 12). In 1979 he bought some clothes after winning a few thousand dollars in Reno, just after graduating from high school, but since then his poverty restricted the purchase of new clothes. The sources of Victor's anger are manifold. Most prominent, however, is his insecure masculinity. Stripped of recognizable traditional gender roles during colonization, he flounders in his attempts to enact warrior practices. Further, suffering duress from the disruption of traditional food and customs, American Indian men like Victor mask their displaced frustration with violence:

These little wars were intimate affairs for those who dreamed in childhood of fishing for salmon but woke up as adults to shop at the Trading Post and stand in line for U.S.D.A. commodity food instead. They savagely, repeatedly, opened up cans of commodities and wept over the rancid meat, forced to eat what stray dogs ignored. Indian men like Victor roared from place to place, set fires, broke windows, and picked on the weaker members of the Tribe. (Alexie 1995, p. 14)

Victor, who repeatedly bullied Thomas and even scarred him by pressing his face into wet cement, 'had enough anger inside to guide every salmon over Grand Coulee Dam' (Alexie 1995, p. 14, 230).¹¹

In addition to being unhomed due to his anger, Victor exhibits another effect of colonization: mimicry. This entails normalizing colonizers' organization of society and an attendant rejection of one's ethno-cultural heritage. Bhabha contends that the 'slippage produced in the ambivalence of mimicry' in a colonized subject that is 'almost the same, but not quite [white],' fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial presence' (2004, p. 123). Mimicry, in this sense, is 'at once resemblance and menace' (Bhabha 2004, p. 123). Victor's harsh critique of Big Mom signals mimicry through departure from an Indigenous spiritual mooring: he once saw Big Mom walk across Benjamin Pond but quickly erased the experience from memory because he was 'damn good at denial' (Alexie 1995, p. 199). When told he will meet Big Mom, Victor exclaims, 'don't tell me she's some medicine woman or something. That's all a bunch of crap' (Alexie 1995, p. 199). In a cruel exchange, Victor harangues Big Mom by repeating Jim Morrison's name, despite her protest (Alexie 1995, p. 207). As the lead singer of the 1960s-

¹¹ For further information about the negative consequences brought on by colonization caused by the damming of waterways, see pages xii, xx, and 2 in *The Spokane Indians: Children of the Sun*, by Robert H. Ruby et al., University of Oklahoma Press, 1970.

70s rock band The Doors, Morrison appropriated the Ghost Dance during concerts; he is understandably reviled by some American Indians. Further, Victor's acceptance of colonizers' binary savage/civilized lens does not serve him well; accordingly, he behaves in ways that are 'logical as a white man' (Alexie 1995, p. 218). This logic separates him from Indigenous practices, for example, when he refuses to accept an eagle feather Thomas offers for protection on the flight to New York. He bellows, '[g]et that Indian bullshit away from me!' (Alexie 1995, p. 218).¹²

Victor's unwillingness to forgive, signaling shame and anger, propels his 'falling down' trajectory. The origins of his fragile psychological condition are revealed during Coyote Springs' rehearsals under Big Mom's tutelage: Victor refuses to follow her advice to forgive the priest who molested him when he was nine (Alexie 1995, p. 148). Big Mom urges, 'you should forgive that priest who hurt you when you were little. That will give you power over him' (Alexie 1995, p. 203). Victor, who 'still felt the priest's hands on his body after all those years,' had 'prayed for his death for years, had even wanted to kill him,' but 'never once considered forgiveness' (Alexie 1995, p. 203). At this crossroads with a path toward healing, Victor chooses a dark road: he does not forgive the priest. As a result, he remains ensnared in shame and mired in anger as the memory of the event diminishes his self-worth. Alexie reveals the power of forgiveness in the fate of Cavalry Records' George Wright, when he allows redemption for the non-fictional Colonel George Wright during his transformation from Indian killer, in U.S. history, to Indian ally, in the novel. Wright departs Cavalry Records disgusted with its appropriation of Indian culture; he also admits to Coyote Springs that when he 'looked at his own white hands . . . [he] saw the blood stains there' (Alexie 1995, p. 244). Wright returns 'home' to his grave in Sacramento, sobbing, 'I was the one who killed them all. I gave the orders [to kill nearly 800 horses during the 1858 horse slaughter]' (Alexie 1995, p. 271). His wife, Margaret, whispers, 'I forgive you. . . . You've come home . . . You're home now' (Alexie 1995, p. 271). Released from the haunting of his nightmarish actions against American Indians, Alexie shows us how forgiveness can enable one to find a sense of home.

The consequences of Victor's refusal to forgive are grave: Victor is responsible for Coyote Springs' failure in the recording studio.¹³ Victor angrily throws a saxophone across the studio, linking him symbolically to unhomed and increasingly unhinged saxophone savant Michael Whitehawk, a student Big Mom instructed to channel the healing power of music, but he instead perpetrated violence (Alexie 1995, p. 229, 208).¹⁴ Victor's failure at the studio initiates

¹² We also see in Victor a strong sense of individualism (Alexie 1995, p. 227, pp. 125-126), a feature of mimicry portrayed by Frantz Fanon: 'The colonialist bourgeoisie hammered into the colonized mind the notion of a society of individuals where each is locked in his subjectivity' (2004 [1963], p. 11)

¹³ The text indicates that Victor is responsible for their difficulties in the studio. We attribute these problems to Victor's deal with the Devil (the Gentleman) personified in his guitar, which formerly belonged to Robert Johnson. We contend that had Victor forgiven the priest – and therefore opened a path for healing – the Devil, embodied in the guitar, could not wield power over him. In the studio Coyote Springs 'needed Victor to rise, needed his lead guitar to define them' (Alexie 1995, p. 224). Initially, the chords came to him, but, as the song moved forward, 'his fingers slipped off the strings and frets. The guitar bucked in his hands, twisted away from his body' (Alexie 1995, p. 225).

¹⁴ It is not clear why Coyote Springs fails in the studio. We contend that Victor's guitar, inherited from Robert Johnson and embodying Devil-esque characteristics, exploits those who are most vulnerable and therefore easier to manipulate. Victor, who is angry, ashamed, and unwilling to forgive, provides an ideal vessel for the Devil. But Coyote Springs' failure is a conundrum. Had they not failed, they would sign a recording contract with Cavalry Records, a crossroads deal fraught with class and ethnic exploitation: an extraction of surplus value through manipulation of culture, as witnessed in appropriators Betty and Veronica's vapid song produced at Cavalry Records: 'And my hair is blonde / But I'm Indian in my bones / And my skin is white / But I'm Indian in my bones' (Alexie 1995, p. 295). Ironically, Victor's failure saves Coyote Springs from exploitation: Phil

the process of his (and Junior's) eventual erasure. In a bar after the failed session, '[a] single tear ran down . . . [Victor's] face, and then he passed out face first onto the table. . . . Junior picked him up and carried him out the door. The bartender, watched them leave, cleaned the glasses they had drunk from, and erased their presence from that part of the world' (Alexie 1995, p. 241).¹⁵

Victor's projected alcohol-related death is telegraphed following the humiliation he suffers when applying for Junior's job driving the BIA water truck.¹⁶ Invoking the rewards of work, the deceased (and enlightened) Junior relays to Victor what might help him: 'I think you should go get yourself a goddamn job' (Alexie 1995, p. 291). Victor worked up the courage to ask Tribal Chairman David WalksAlong for Junior's job. Victor, unusually polite and meek with WalksAlong, remarks: 'They said you're the one who decides who gets to work. I want a job. . . . Please' (Alexie 1995, p. 292). Victor seeks home and tries to put the broken pieces of himself back together. Despite Victor's earnest plea for a job, after reading Victor's resume, WalksAlong crumples it, throws it at him, and tells him to 'Get the fuck out' (Alexie 1995, p. 292). Victor reiterates why he is there: 'I want to drive the water truck . . . like Junior used to' (Alexie 1995, p. 292). WalksAlong turns his back without responding. Victor 'feels something slip inside,' and his assumed death spiral begins (Alexie 1995, p. 292). He steals money on his way out of WalksAlong's office, purchases a six-pack of beer, and whispers 'Fuck it, I can do it, too,' when opening the first can (Alexie 1995, p. 292). The narrator signals Victor's demise when remarking that the explosion of the beer can opening 'sounded exactly like a smaller, slower version of the explosion that Junior's rifle made on the water tower' (Alexie 1995, p. 293).

In the closing chapter, Victor declines Thomas's invitation to move to Spokane; he is apathetic toward music; he wanders around the reservation with three dogs; his personal hygiene has diminished; and there is speculation he will soon begin drinking sterno (Alexie 1995, p. 298, 297).¹⁷ Victor has reached the brown-skinned 'zombie' stage: broke, broken, and spiritually unmoored, he is 'gone,' a 'ghost' physically alive but emotionally dead (Alexie 1995, p. 96, 112, 119).

Sheridan and George Wright wanted to 'give them war paint, feathers, etc., and really play up the Indian angle . . . [because] this band could be very lucrative for Cavalry Records' (Alexie 1995, p. 190). Scott Andrews is also bewildered by Coyote Springs' failure in the studio. After providing possible reasons for the band's failure, he writes: 'My only conclusion is that the novel itself is too conflicted about the implications of the band's potential success; the studio scene is the novel's moment of narrative crisis—the band's success seems unimaginable for Alexie. Although Thomas is trying to be a postindian warrior of survivance, the novel will not allow the transformation' (1997, p. 148).

¹⁵ Ironically, during this evening, Thomas and Chess experience another kind of erasure at [Kit] Carson's All-Night Restaurant. Kit asks, '[y]ou sure there are still Indians around at all?' (Alexie 1995, p. 239). He adds, '[t]hey don't look nothing like those Indians in the movies. They look Puerto Rican to me' (Alexie 2005, p. 239).

¹⁶ In a 2005 interview, Alexie indicates humiliation is a component in Native literature: 'there is definitely a lot of humiliation in Native literature. We write about being humiliated a lot. And that takes physical forms, emotional forms, and mental forms. I think Native literature is the literature of humiliation and shame' (Nygren 2005, p. 155).

¹⁷ Sterno is a fuel derived from denatured and jellied alcohol. Its primary use is for heating food in catering and camping settings. It is an inexpensive, surrogate alcohol that is poisonous. Earlier in the novel, American Indian 'cousins' are described as having started drinking a different concoction, a 'Rubbie Dubbie'—rubbing alcohol mixed with commodity grape juice (Alexie 1995, p.100).

Finding Home: Thomas, Chess, Checkers

Thomas, who is 'polite and traditional' and 'neither loud nor aggressive, neither calm nor silent,' does not 'pretend to be some twentieth-century warrior, alternating between blind rage and feigned disinterest' (Alexie 1995, p. 4). This misfit storyteller is a painful reminder of a fading oral history tradition: his stories 'hung in your clothes and hair like smoke' (Alexie 1995, p. 5, 15). Thomas observes the despair of the reservation and wants to save his people from the ravages of colonization: he 'wanted a story to heal the wounds' (Alexie 1995, p. 6). Johnson's arrival at a Wellpinit crossroads incites Thomas to shift from stories to songs since Johnson insists that they 'need to play songs for [their] people' (Alexie 1995, p. 23). Amid the general mood of listlessness on the Spokane Reservation, where 'nobody believed in anything . . . All the Indians just dropped their quarters into the jukebox, punched the same old buttons, and called that music,' Johnson offers a path to healing, a musical route to re-form severed ethno-cultural heritage (Alexie 1995, p. 28).¹⁸ Johnson's arrival on the reservation also signals the notion that the blues as musical formation, though often considered to have originated during the post-Civil War reconstruction period, is rooted deeper in U.S. history. The blues feeling extends farther. Thomas proclaims, 'an Indian woman invented the blues a day before Columbus landed' (Alexie 1995, p. 157).

Thomas begins the novel close to home since he retains a sense of traditional Indigenous culture. His journey closer toward home through cultural hybridity and forgiveness departs vividly from Victor's anger, shame, and unremitting rejection of traditional culture. Thomas tries to be as 'traditional as the twentieth century allowed' while Victor is as 'contemporary as cable television' (Alexie 1995, p. 49). Thomas reflects Spokane tribal genealogy: his long, black hair that he pulled into braids, his skin that 'tanned to a deep brown, nearly dark as the black man [Johnson],' and his 'short, muscular legs . . . low center of gravity . . . and long torso and arms for the leverage to throw a spear at salmon' link him to tribal heritage (Alexie 1995, p. 4). Diminutive when compared to other men on the reservation, Thomas projects deficiency in traditional Western masculinity; however, his thoughts, words, and actions display a 21st century warrior in the colonized spaces where tradition and (post)modernity coincide. Regardless of his effort, the band falls apart and he is forced to give up his dream of saving his 'little country' (Alexie 1995, p. 16).

Thomas's material conditions are reflected in his house on the reservation where he grew up. Built by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the agency cut funding halfway through construction resulting in deficiencies where '[t]he water pipes froze every winter, and windows warped in the hot summer heat' (Alexie 1995, p. 7). During his childhood, Thomas slept in the half-finished basement, with 'two blankets for walls and one blanket for his bed' (Alexie 1995, p. 7). His house lacks necessities for sustaining life and contains an empty fridge. Thomas opens and closes his refrigerator in a 'ceremony that he had practiced since his youth' which illustrates his poverty (Alexie 1995, p. 47). Thomas expects 'an immaculate conception of a jar of pickles' to ease his hunger pains, but to no avail (Alexie 1995, p. 47).

Thomas comes to terms with his failed dream to save the reservation and resolves to leave his childhood home and his alcoholic father, Samuel, nicknamed 'Drunk and Disorderly' (Alexie 1995, p. 95). He is not fleeing from his father, who he loves deeply, as evidenced in the 'individual, not tribal' tears he cries during 'a wake for a live man,' but rather the reservation that is obstinate toward his music, the blues that 'created memories for the Spokanes' (Alexie

1995, p. 98, 174). They refused to acknowledge that '[t]hose blues lit up a new road . . . [and instead they] pulled out their old maps' and tried to manage their lives with the same, old methods of coping with pain (Alexie 1995, p. 175). Mired in denial, and refusing to find new solutions, they 'buried all of their pain and anger deep inside' until it festered (Alexie 1995, p. 175). Unlike Samuel who drinks to deflect the effects of historical trauma, Thomas escapes by leaving the reservation with Chess and Checkers. Thomas embarks on a journey to end a cycle of hopelessness, and he forgives his father for his emotional absence. He visits his house a final time before moving on. With tightness in his chest he takes a deep breath, gets in the old, blue van, and leaves on his own terms (Alexie 1995, p. 298). Despite his failure with Coyote Springs, and even though he was 'a reservation storyteller without answers or stories' when the recording session abruptly ended, he succeeds at saving himself, which is a step toward healing (Alexie 1995, p. 231).¹⁹

Thomas's bandmate and girlfriend, Chess, leads him out of the reservation. Their relationship began during Coyote Springs' first gig at the Tipi Pole Tavern on the Flathead Reservation in Montana. Chess was in the audience with her sister Checkers when Thomas invited her to sing a ballad with him on stage. An immediate attraction led to a duet where 'Chess felt like a Flathead Reservation Cher next to the Spokane Indian version of Sonny, but the music happened, clumsy and terrifying' (Alexie 1995, p. 58). Like Thomas, Chess, lives at the crossroads of Indigenous and contemporary culture: she is a storyteller who had 'fancydanced when she was a teenager and shook to Three Dog Night on her childhood radio. She danced well in both the Indian and white ways' (Alexie 1995, p. 55). During their first night together, Chess mesmerizes Thomas with a lyrical story about her family. It concludes, 'I once bit into a huckleberry, and it tasted like my [deceased] brother's tears' (Alexie 1995, p. 67). Seconds later, the narrator alludes to love and poverty when Thomas reflects on Chess's life story: 'Thomas smiled at her. He had just met the only Indian who told stories like his. . . . How do you fall in love with a woman who grew up in such poverty that other poor Indians called her family poor?' (Alexie 1995, p. 67). Thomas had found his ideal partner: Chess had dark, 'Indian grandmother eyes that stayed clear and focused for generations' (Alexie 1995, p. 60). Their romance is christened with a goodnight kiss: 'She leaned over quickly and kissed him on the cheek. A powerful kiss, more magical than any kiss on the mouth. She kissed him like he was a warrior; she kissed him like she was a warrior' (Alexie 1995, p. 68).

Poverty and violence shape Chess and Checkers's lives. The sisters, who were 'just elbows and collarbones,' were hungry while growing up (Alexie 1995, p. 64). After the tragic deaths of their mother (Linda) and brother (Backgammon), their father, Luke Warm Water, brought the young sisters gifts from his trips to town: 'ribbons, scraps of material, buttons, pages torn from magazines, even food, candy bars, and bottles of Pepsi' (Alexie 1995, p. 69). Luke's pent-up rage and emasculation stemming from the (colonized) disasters in his life are released when Chess and Checkers accidentally freeze the Pepsis he bought them in Missoula. They exploded after Chess and Checkers placed them in a snowbank because they did not have a refrigerator. After the sodas explode in the snow, Luke grabbed Checkers, shook her violently, and screamed, 'Goddamn it . . . you've wasted it all!' (Alexie 1995, p. 69). After falling to their knees and weeping, Chess scooped up the brown snow and they enjoyed a snow cone. Chess, comforting Checkers, tells her that their father's actions are not her fault (Alexie 1995, p. 70). Chess's soothing words signal a deep wound in the novel: when they were young, Luke sexually abused Linda and, ostensibly, molested Checkers (Alexie 1995, p. 68, 66). Layered

¹⁹ The levity of Coyote Springs' failure is evidenced when the narrator reveals that Thomas 'touched his body and felt the absence, like some unnamed part of him had been cut away' (Alexie 1995, p. 231).

within the pain and discomfort of poverty and violence is the sense of shame Chess and Checkers felt in their brown-skinned bodies when they were young: white people stared at them at the supermarket, where they purchased shoes made of cheap canvas and plastic (Alexie 1995, p. 137). Additionally, after traveling to town in a wagon driven by their father, Checkers, muddled from the trip, ‘brown-skinned . . . [in a] muddy brown dress . . . [was] so dark that white people thought [she] was a black girl’ (Alexie 1995, p. 140). Checkers and Chess implicitly knew the advantages of whiteness. Checkers, wanting to feel a sense of home, ‘where the ache to belong finally quits,’ pined for acceptance, dignity, and respect, wanted to be like ‘those little white girls . . . [who were] so perfect, so pretty, and so white’ (Zandy 1994, p. 1; Alexie 1995, p. 140).

As adults, Chess and Checkers strive to control their lives. They forfeited their seasonal jobs as BIA firefighters and left the Flathead Reservation to join Coyote Springs. Chess, who, befitting her name, ‘planned all her moves in advance,’ is uncomfortable with a patriarchal measuring tape: ‘All her life, she has been measured by men. Her father, her priest, her lovers, her employers, her God. Men decided where she would go, how she would talk, even what clothes she was supposed to wear’ (Alexie 1995, p. 55, 212). To her dismay, even gentle Thomas overshadowed her: ‘She sang his songs, she played his music . . . [he was] there with his shadow.’ Distraught from being ‘pulled from limb to limb,’ in DuBoisian fashion, Chess does not know if she should ‘run from that shadow or curl up inside it’ (Alexie 1995, p. 212). Ultimately, she remains with Thomas but retains control of her life. Checkers, on the other hand, struggles to recoup control of her body, undoubtedly a consequence of her childhood trauma. She has troubling encounters with men, especially the archetype ‘*Super Indian Man*,’ pseudo-warriors who are ‘[a]ble to leap tall HUD houses in a single bound. Faster than a BIA pickup. Stronger than a block of commodity cheese’ (Alexie 1995, p. 114). Checkers tries to ignore these men who overcompensate for their failed and murdered dreams (in a system rigged against them), but they hold power over her. When visiting her in her dreams, they exult, ‘[l]ook at my big cowboy hat. Look at my big boots. Look at my big, big belt buckle’ (Alexie 1995 p. 114). These broken men, these ghosts, ‘crawled into her bed at night, lifted her nightgown, and forced her legs apart’ (Alexie 1995, p. 114).

Checkers’s troubling relationships with men continue when she has a romantic tryst with Father Arnold. Although seemingly innocuous when compared to the brutality of other priests, and certainly a tender man in many respects, Father Arnold views American Indians as ‘exotic’ (Alexie 1995, p. 36). Near the end of the story, after Checkers has gained confidence and has decided to leave the Spokane Reservation, she refuses to forgive Father Arnold for entangling her in the relationship (Alexie 1995, p. 287). Father Arnold agrees with Checkers’s reason for not offering forgiveness, and he accepts her decision. In her relationship with Sheridan, a darker ending ensues. During a harrowing dream sequence after Coyote Springs’s failure at Cavalry Records, Sheridan enters Checkers’s hotel room, objectifies her, and assaults her:

Sheridan studied Checkers. He had watched her during the last few centuries. She was beautiful. But she was Indian beautiful with tribal features. She didn’t look anything at all like a white woman. She was tall with narrow hips and muscular legs. Large breasts. She had arms strong as any man’s. And black, black hair that hung down past her shoulders. Sheridan wanted to touch it. He had always been that way about Indian women’s hair. (Alexie 1995, p. 237)

The assault occurs when Sheridan ‘reached across the years and took Checkers’s face in his hands. He squeezed until she cried out and saw white flashes of light’ (Alexie 1995, p. 238).

This scene that ends close to rape compresses two features of United States history: men wielding power over women through physical assault, and colonization offering justification for those who dominate the 'exotic' other.

Collective and personal histories intertwine when Sheridan no longer returns to Checkers in her nightmares; however, now her father visits her nightly in her dreams (Alexie 1995, p. 284). Checkers tells Chess: 'He stands in the doorway of the bedroom. Just like he used to. He's been drinking. I can smell him. He doesn't say nothing. He just stands there in the doorway, holding his arms out to me. Then I wake up' (Alexie 1995, p. 285). She tells Chess she knows it is him because 'he's crying the whole time' (Alexie 1995, p. 285). Luke's tears and open arms are gestures asking for forgiveness, which is granted, as witnessed when the sisters sit for a long time in silence, hold hands, and cry (Alexie 1995, p. 285). Having forgiven her father, Checkers is ready to move on literally and figuratively: she will no longer be controlled by the men in her life, the figures who haunt her reality and dreams.

One way that Chess and Checkers control their lives is through travel. No longer in men's shadows and, having overcome the desire to be accepted by men to ameliorate childhood trauma, they confidently leave the Spokane Reservation on their terms. In her study of early to mid-nineteenth century female Blues singers, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (1998), Angela Davis helps us understand Chess and Checkers's departure: 'For women especially, the ability to travel implied a measure of autonomy, an ability to shun passivity and acquiescence in the face of mistreatment and injustice and to exercise some control over the circumstances of their lives, especially their sexual lives' (74). For Blues women, like the Warm Water sisters, mobility, an 'autonomously constructed activity that brings with it a taste of liberation,' brings no guarantee that the traveler will reach a satisfactory conclusion or that the process will be free from pain (Davis 1998, p. 77). Despite the uncertainty of a life beyond reservation borders due to ongoing gendered circumscription and socially constructed diminished labor value for women, Chess and Checkers persist.

Conclusion: Home Beyond Reservation Borders

In *Reservation Blues* characters experience Dubois's notion of double-consciousness emanating, in part, from the panoptic Anglo gaze. For Junior and Victor, the effects are tragic. For Thomas, Chess, and Checkers, who move closer to home, they 'attain self-conscious [human]hood . . . merg[ing] [a] double self into a better and truer self' (DuBois 1994, p. 3). These characters find comfort in a 'third space' illuminated in Bhabha's concept of hybridity where, as Chinua Achebe has asserted, there is a productive crossroads of cultures inhabiting 'inbetweenness' (Farahbakhsh and Ranjbar 2016, p. 106). When considered in the framework of the novel's use-value, we see that *Reservation Blues* offers routes for agency, survival, and hope in the contemporary world. As a result, Alexie offers a novel response to colonization in the United States. In her analysis of Alexie's fiction, Jan Johnson asserts that it was not until the 2007 publication of *Flight* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* that Alexie offers possibilities for reconciliation, healing, and hopefulness in response to the painful legacies of colonization (2010, pp. 224-225, 233-237). We see these themes in *Reservation Blues*.

Throughout *Reservation Blues*, characters negotiate literal and figurative crossroads in their journeys toward contentment, destruction, or death. In culmination of their journeys, Thomas, Chess, and Checkers leave the Spokane reservation with no safety net as they head toward Spokane to build lives around Chess's operator position at Western Telephone

Communications. Despite their hesitation, rooted partially in their precarity, the narrator hints that they made the right decision: ‘They all held their breath as they drove over the reservation border. Nothing happened. No locks clicked shut behind them’ (Alexie 1995, p. 305). The reservation did not imprison them as they had feared. Evidence mounts toward a positive vista when the narrator reveals the ever-growing presence of ‘hot and wet’ shadow horses leading the characters across the reservation border toward Spokane. We interpret ‘hot and wet’ to symbolize vigor. Chess and Checkers reach out to touch them as the horses were ‘leading Indians toward the city’ (Alexie 1995, p. 306). The shadow horses signal urgency in leaving the reservation to find home, ‘an inner geography where the ache to belong finally quits’ (Zandy 1993, p. 1).²⁰

In the final paragraph, amid the characters singing with the horses, the narrator suggests a collective Indian identity when exclaiming, ‘we are alive, we’ll keep living’ (Alexie 1995, p. 306). This phrase implies that Indigenous ethno-cultural identity will continue in the city where songs await Thomas, Chess, and Checkers (Alexie 1995, p. 306). Scott Andrews points out that early in the novel we are told that Thomas’s stories can offer the troubled community on the reservation a ‘new road,’ a ‘new way of seeing problems and defeating them.’ However, despite his efforts to ‘save his little country,’ the novel ‘cuts short the possibilities of this ‘new road’ and the music is silenced’ (Andrews 2007, p. 137). Where Andrews sees despair and merely survival in the closing chapters of the novel, we see hope and transformation.²¹ We see music as healing not only for Thomas, Chess, and Checkers, but also for Robert Johnson who, having discovered a sense of home and belonging under Big Mom’s guidance, is seen in the closing stages of the novel wearing ‘a traditional Indian ribbon shirt, made of highly traditional silk and polyester’ in a musical exchange with the-man-who-was-probably-Lakota (Alexie 1995, p. 303). In this crossroads zone of contact signifying transcultural trafficking across time and space, Johnson plays harmonica and the-man-who-was-probably-Lakota plays the hand drum (Alexie 1995, pp. 304-305).²² Johnson, gesturing toward the merit of alliance, tells Thomas he will stay on the reservation: ‘I think I jus’ might belong here. I think there’s been a place waitin’ at this Tribe’s tribal for me. I think this Tribe’s been waitin’ for me for a long time. I’m goin’ to stay right here. . . . I think these Indians might need me. Maybe need my music’ (Alexie 1995, p. 303). For Johnson, there is, at last ‘a community’ (Zandy 1993, p. 1).

²⁰ Additionally, throughout the novel the horses ‘scream’ when a crossroads decision is impending that could ameliorate or harm Indigenous People or their cultural practices. The foundation for this trope is laid when Big Mom recounts the 1858 Horse Slaughter, where nearly 800 American Indian horses were rounded up and killed in the Spokane area. Led by Colonel George Wright, the slaughter is, of course, only one of many examples of the U.S. government asserting domination and control during colonization (Alexie 1995, pp. 9-11).

²¹ Other critics have described the ending with varied degrees of positivity: Karsten Fitz and Klaus-Dieter Gross call the ending ‘slightly’ and ‘moderately’ optimistic (2007, p. 424, 428); P. Jane Hafen characterizes the ending as a ‘positive resolution’ (1997, p. 74); and Nazia Saleem contends that the ending ‘proffers hope’ (2015, p. 17). Janine Richardson, focusing on Thomas, sharply observes that ‘knowing that the part of his identity which is ‘Indian’ he carries in his heart and soul, Thomas can leave the reservation with Chess, the woman he loves, in a world where that value is in short supply’ (1997, p. 49). She adds that when leaving Thomas does not follow a ‘traditional’ path of ‘depression, poverty, and self-destruction’ (1997, p. 50). In a broader perspective, Joseph Coulombe asserts that Alexie’s fiction ‘falls squarely within an Indian literary tradition advocating growth and change. . . . with a keen historical awareness . . . transform[ing] past traditions—whether dancing, drumming, or story-telling—to fit a new world reality’ (2002, p. 104).

²² Our sense of cultural exchange in the novel is informed by Douglas Ford’s 2002 ‘Sherman Alexie’s Indigenous blues’, *Native American Literature*, vol. 27 no. 3, pp. 197-215, and Karsten Fitz and Klaus-Dieter Gross’s 2007 ‘Native American literature as a transcultural and multimedia experience: Sherman Alexie’s *Reservation Blues*’, *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, vol. 52, no. 3, pp. 417-433.

As Thomas drives and Chess and Checkers hold the horses' manes in the closing line of the novel, readers witness survivance. Vizenor elucidates that survivance is 'more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence,' and 'survivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry' (1998, p. 15). As they travel toward home in a contemporary world that enjoins hybridity, the characters are 'hanging on to ancient principles while eagerly embracing change . . . [and] doing whatever is necessary to keep [Indigenous] cultures alive' (Wall text for 'Our Peoples'). Having buried their grief and fear, they cross into the larger, original Spokane ancestral lands for personal and collective reclamation.²³ The epigraph song of the final chapter, 'Wake,' foreshadows their departure: 'And I think it's time for us to find a way / Yeah I think it's time for us to find a way / To wake alive, to wake alive, to wake alive, to wake alive' (Alexie 1995, p. 276). Leaving a reservation inhabited by American Indians numbed by suicides, car wrecks, violence, alcoholism, and wakes for the living dead, Thomas, Chess, and Checkers discover, within themselves, how to be alive.²⁴

In the novel's final chapter, Alexie enacts Zandy's notion that writing becomes a tool for confronting life's tragedies and hardships; as such, within the body of working-class literature, *Reservation Blues* elevates possibility above despair while eschewing the vanishing Indian trope utilized in Western representations of American Indians (Zandy, 1993 p. 11). Ultimately, in their journey toward a place where they may finally be 'at home,' representations of working and poverty-class lived experience on the Spokane Reservation and beyond reveal a vital, usable past as we contemplate historic and contemporary relations forged by personal, institutional, and collective power (Zandy, 1994, p. 7).

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Author Bios

Terry Easton is Associate Professor of English at the University of North Georgia. He received his PhD at Emory University's Graduate Institute of Liberal Arts with a concentration in American Studies. He is a former president of the Working-Class Studies Association. He has published on an array of topics, including day laborers, coal miners, and deafness. His 2016 book, *Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain: The Imperial Hotel Occupation as Prophetic Politics*, documents struggles for affordable housing development in Atlanta since 1990.

²³ The larger ancestral lands are described on page xix in *The Spokane Indians: Children of the Sun*, by Robert H. Ruby et al., University of Oklahoma Press, 1970. For more information and images, see <http://www.spokanetribe.com/reservation>.

²⁴ A *Wizard of Oz* theme of characters already having within themselves what they desire winds through the novel. An example includes Big Mom carving Robert Johnson a cedar harp (harmonica). Johnson, who sold his soul to the Devil to be the greatest guitar player ever, was a fantastic harp player. Big Mom tells Johnson: 'You don't need that guitar anymore . . . You were supposed to be a harp player. You're a good harp player. All by yourself, you can play a mean harp' (Alexie 1995, pp. 266, 278). See also the backstory on Johnson playing harmonica: 'He felt loved when he was on stage, singing and blowing his harp. But it still wasn't enough. Johnson wanted to play guitar' (Alexie 1995, p. 262).

Castiel Dixon is a first-generation Latinx college student at the University of North Georgia. He is a Goizueta Scholar and the president of the Alpha Upsilon Phi chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, an international English honor society. He is also a Diplomat for Diversity and a writing consultant in the Writing Center and the Multicultural Student Affairs Office.

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Mangled Coding: Class in the Poems of Santee Frazier

James Mackay, European University Cyprus

Abstract

Santee Frazier's 2009 collection, *Dark Thirty* reveals a text that can be largely read in the genre context of Native American poetry, around signifiers of poverty. Though Frazier passionately denies that his poems are constructed on a thematic basis, his curation of them in this collection does nevertheless add up to a coherent argument for interpreting his characters' lives as specifically *working-class* lives, subject to interlocking and international forces of capital, displacement and documentation in a surveillance state.

Keywords

Cherokee poetry, Native American literature, signifiers of poverty in poetry, working-class poetry, food sovereignty, Indigenous studies

That memory of my old man and our time together is something I never got to tell him about, or how I lost that memory because after I went to college I found out there were people called Native Americans, and I didn't realize I was one, or knew any, or would become one, and that he was one too, because where we came from, folks were just Indians back then.

- (van Alst, Jr., 2018, p. 32)

Native American signifiers in Frazier's poetry

Settler colonialism is a process whereby an Indigenous population is not merely conquered and placed within an imperium, but also therein actively replaced as the principal population of their traditional lands. As Patrick Wolfe (2006) has observed in one of the most frequently referenced articles in settler colonial studies, this process has multiple strands which may or may not include acts of deliberately planned state-sponsored genocide. But in present-day America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, mass killings are not the principal manifestation of settler society's desire to legitimate its claim to the land. Rather, what Wolfe calls a 'logic of elimination' (387) persists, manifesting both as a desire to deny the validity of tribal nations as independent entities in a government-to-government relationship with settler society, and also as a desire to claim the cultures, and by implication the legitimacy, of Indigenous societies. When the administration of President Trump makes moves to derecognize tribal sovereignty as a principle of US law (LeTourneau 2018), it is manifesting this eliminationist logic. When his principal challenger, Elizabeth Warren, defends her decision as a law professor to have laid claim to American Indian identity (thus accruing benefits as a faculty of color), then doubles down by using a shoddy DNA test as though Native identity was simply a matter of genetic

ancestry (Hayes and Keeler 2018), that, too, is eliminationist logic in action. The resource appropriative right wing and the culturally appropriative liberal/left wing of American society, however polarized they may appear within their self-defined political context, therefore both operate to continue the settler project of eliminating American Indian legal standing and identity, with the ultimate societal and unconscious goal of total replacement of the Indigenous with settler populations, summed up by Carlisle Indian Industrial School leader (and self-proclaimed 'Friend of the Indian') Richard Henry Pratt in the phrase 'Kill the Indian and save the man.' (Fear-Segal and Rose 2016, p. 18).

Existing as both citizens of such a settler state and also as citizens or descendants of Indigenous nations creates a specific pressure on Native American writers. Writers of the original 'Native American Renaissance' of the late 1960s and 1970s, who had to work largely with settler editors and publishers interested primarily in a settler readership, were rewarded with critical praise, and in some cases sales, if their work took a modernist approach whereby tribal cultures and mythologies were seen as the underpinnings for contemporary stories (Lee and Lockard 2014). Increasing Native representation among gatekeepers, including Indigenous publishers and Native American faculty within the university, has led in more recent decades to writers being praised for including elements from more contemporary tribal, often urban, cultures and histories. N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968), with its structure built on Jemez Pueblo traditions, is an emblematic text of the earlier period, while Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1996), with its structure built on the pantribal Ghost Dance and its images of enforced out-adoption, is an emblem of the latter. A primary mode that unites the two groups, however, is a concern with cultural *performance*. Native words and concepts are explained for the reader, how to live as a Native person in modernity becomes a central concern of many of the characters, and kitschy settler imagery of Native Americans is directly attacked or deconstructed. In her survey of the 'waves' of Native American literature, critic Erika Wurth (2015) identifies these as the Second and Third Waves respectively,²⁵ united by concerns of individual and communal identity and history.

I offer this brief precis of Native American conditions and literary history as a way of explaining an unsettling (pun intended) effect Santee Frazier's debut collection of poetry, *Dark Thirty* (2009), provoked in me when I first read it. Wurth proposes a 'Fourth Wave' of Native poets, largely emergent from the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), who share both an experimental aesthetic and an 'aching desire to be allowed to write without the traditional burdens of Native American literary politics' (para. 8), a group that for Wurth includes Sherwin Bitsui, Jennifer Foerster, Layli Longsoldier and M.L. Smoker, and which I would see as an entirely appropriate label for several recent First Nations experimental poets such as Joshua Whitehead and Jordan Abel. But however much we can see an attention to aesthetics and rejection of identity politics as unifying this group, there is also no mistaking the referents to tribal cultures and Indigenous languages that are taken up by virtually all of these new writers. In the samples of their work offered in the recent collection *New Poets of Native Nations* (Erdrich 2018), for example, Foerster explains to the reader that her grandmother was 'covered in a quilt, the Creek way' (2013, p. 9), begins another poem in Mvskoke Creek ('*hokte hokte honvnwv*' (p.13)) carefully translated in a footnote for the non-Mvskoke speaking reader, and sets other poems in a landscape that is instantly recognisable as Native land: Smoker, similarly, 'heard the ruin in each Assiniboine voice' (2005, p. 34) and explains '*Mikushi, Mitugash*' as Assinibone for 'grandmother, grandfather' (2016).

²⁵ The First Wave is defined by Wurth as being everything written prior to 1969 by American Indians, extending all the way back to 'Eleazar,' a Harvard student, whose Latin composition 'In obitum Viri veré Reverendi D. Thomae Thacheri, Qui Ad Dom. ex hâc Vitâ migravit, 18.8.1678' was published in 1678 (Parker, 2011).

While Frazier certainly belongs among this group – when I interviewed him for this article, he placed himself among them, referring to ‘my contemporaries, such as Sherwin Bitsui, Layli Longsoldier, Orlando White or dg okpik’ – his poems, by contrast, contain no such evident references to language or spiritual touchstones.²⁶ As a reader who is, being British, a cultural outsider, I quite possibly would never (reading these poems blind) have guessed that the author was Native American if it were not for the confirming imprimatur of the University of Arizona ‘Sun Tracks’ series and the single sentence in the author’s biography at the end of the book, ‘Santee Frazier is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.’ The lacuna is made all the more evident because there are references to race and culture in the book, but these references are Asian (‘Eating Against a Wall’ (78)), non-US Indigenous (‘An Aerosoled Representation of the Maya and Moché’ (79)), African American (from the blues-inflected language of the poems to the opening quotation, taken from W.E.B. DuBois). Even the cover artist, Micah Wesley, is acknowledged without his dual Creek/Kiowa citizenship being mentioned. Such consistent omissions cannot be considered as anything other than deliberate choice, particularly in the context of a collection for which the author states he selected only ‘a very small percentage’ (2018 pers. comm., September 28) of available poems to create a book which, though each poem is individual, has an unusual thematic coherence.

It is not unprecedented for Indigenous authors to choose not to use or to deliberately downplay cultural signifiers of their ethnicity. Martin Cruz Smith, for instance, despite having both Pueblo and Yaqui roots, gained fame and financial success from the *Gorky Park* (1981) series of novels set around the adventures of Russian detective Arkady Renko, while the Blackfeet tribal citizen Stephen Graham Jones has written a great deal of horror fiction without overt Native American references. But this refusal of ethnic signification does not necessarily denote acculturation or any form of ‘passing’ for commercial appeal. The Hoopa citizen scholar Cutcha Risling Baldy (2013) has written persuasively about the appeal of zombie narratives such as *The Walking Dead* for Native American audiences, where the experience of survivors in a post-apocalyptic landscape is an analogy for the survivors of policies of extermination and assimilation (2013). The same argument, one imagines, could easily be applied to the *Star Trek* villains The Borg and any number of other cultural icons, in what Scott Andrews (2018) calls ‘a red reading . . . an interpretation of a non-native text from a native perspective’ (i). Jones himself has, not least in his werewolf novel *Mongrels* (2016), pointed up many of the parallels between horror and Native American experiences, and it is not too hard a stretch to imagine that for Smith, whose first novel *The Indians Won* (1970) was about an alternative history in which the US conquest of Native territories was beaten back, there might be historical resonances in the idea of seeking justice in a corrupt and unjust state.

However, while such a metaphorical lens might be useful in understanding the significance of WWE wrestlers and soccer moms in Jones’s *Zombie Bake-Off* (2012), Frazier’s poetry is not, in the main, narrative driven. Moreover, there are some indications that the protagonists of the poems are intended to be read as Cherokee, albeit only by readers very familiar with Cherokee contexts. Speaking about his poetry with Sherwin Bitsui in 2010, Frazier stated that ‘The first four sections of *Dark Thirty* were inspired by language and memory,’ and that they were written in ‘a dialect of English that is specific to Cherokee speakers’ (40). This must refer to a set of character portrayals in *Dark Thirty*, namely ‘Chauncey’ (8-9), ‘Joe Bunch’ (12-13), ‘Nick Cheater’ (14), ‘Nauxcey Moss’ (27), the first of which begins ‘There ain’t no since

²⁶ The interview was conducted on 28th September 2018 via teleconference. An edited transcript is published elsewhere in this issue.

staring intah that eye / dead as can be, stabbed with a fork or sumthin.’ Specific locations scattered through the poems give a definite sense of place (e.g. ‘Adair County’ (29), named for the first Cherokee family to arrive in the area, or ‘Barren Fork’ (8), referring to the fork in the Illinois River that leads into Cherokee County), as do the specific brand names of cheap beers and whiskies the characters consume. Even when the anthology takes a turn for the fantastical in the various adventures of circus performer Mangled Creekbed, the description of ‘the creekbed boy’ (20) who is ‘bean juice-colored’ with an ‘ancestry and tongue’ which filtered through the ‘circus blurb . . . / squawk of his primitive origins’ (17), should when combined with the previously mentioned elements lead a Cherokee reader to see the character as himself Cherokee. Unlike Cruz Smith and Jones, then, this is neither metaphor nor deracination.

Class consciousness and poverty

The question becomes, why avoid the cultural signifiers which find such a natural home in other Native poets’ work? Or rather, and more importantly, what is the effect of this avoidance? I argue that *Dark Thirty*, and its successor, *Aurum* should be read as texts that has been structured, by a poet entirely conscious that his poetry will be received and largely read in the genre context of Native American poetry, around signifiers of poverty. Though Frazier passionately denies that his poems are constructed on a thematic basis (‘I think every single poem I’ve ever written started with one specific sound’, 2018 pers. comm., September 28), his curation of them in this collection does nevertheless add up to a coherent argument for interpreting his characters’ lives as specifically *working class* lives, subject to interlocking and international forces of capital, displacement and documentation in a surveillance state. Given his reluctance to be considered through the lens of ethnicity, it is in this respect significant that when I asked him if he considered himself a working-class poet, his response was an immediate ‘Very much so’ (2018 pers. comm., September 28). Talking with Bitsui (Frazier and Bitsui 2010), he similarly notes that he himself ‘grew up in abject poverty’ (40) and that ‘I think it’s necessary to expose—or poeticize— those realities to a privileged public’ (45).

Poverty is a key fact in most Indigenous communities, but this is something that comes into particularly sharp relief in the United States due to its status as the richest country on Earth. Per capita income level, for example, stood in 2017 at an average of \$32,397 per person in the US population as a whole, but only \$19,824 per American Indian individual, while the percentage of American Indian households receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (aka food stamps) stood at 23.9%, against a national average of 11.7% (United States Census). These averages may well be an understatement of the situation. The US census works by requiring respondents to self-identify ethnically, rather than by asking for proof of citizenship in a tribal nation. Due to the appropriative mechanics identified above, there are many non-Native people in America who self-identify as Native American either through a nebulous passed-down family legend of an Indian ancestor or through adoption into one of many New Age cults. Cherokees in particular may be victims of this, since the ‘Cherokee princess’ is a particularly hardy trope. Gregory D. Smithers (2015) notes that 819,105 Americans claim Cherokee inheritance in the 2011 Census, a number that sits oddly with the fact that the three Cherokee nations, despite famously having among the least exclusionary laws on citizenship, have fewer than 320,000 enrolled citizens between them. While there is no way to check the income level of people who claim a Native American racial affiliation while having no practical or citizenship ties to a Native nation, neither is there any reason to expect that this would be out of line with national averages (indeed, it could be argued that wannabeism is more prevalent among higher income brackets). Therefore, this group’s statistics may be raising census averages for Native income and other measures of poverty.

This is just one of the ways that the romantic myth of pre-contact tribal cultures – those indicators that Frazier is at such pains to eliminate – ends up materially affecting American Indian realities.

Frazier begins the collection with a section of poems titled ‘Dry Creek,’ most of which contain rural signifiers – the son and mother in ‘Hunter’s Moon’ hiding from an abusive grandfather in ‘the brush . . . / among the sprawling / shadows of branches’ (10), the prostitute plying her trade among farm workers in ‘Mama’s Work’ (7), the child driving a passed-out mother ‘through these hills, / ten miles an hour, gravel roads’ (13). These commonalities invite us to read the dialect poems, which mostly contain words and phrases related to cars (‘Nick Cheater’s good with them dodges’ (‘Chauncey,’ 9); ‘Member that time I got stuck / in that pile of tyres?’ (‘Joe Bunch,’ 12)), as being also set in rural areas, something confirmed in the final dialect poem, when the speaker ‘Nick Cheater’ tells his listener ‘Told yah not tah get your car fixed in town’ (14). While the status of Cherokee Nation tribal lands is ambiguous, since tribal authority is recognized in 14 Oklahoma counties but the area is not normally described as a reservation nonetheless the statistics on reservation poverty are particularly germane to ‘Dry Creek.’ The Friends Committee on National Legislation noted in 2012 that ‘More than 1 in 4 [. . . Native Americans] live in poverty. On reservations, the number rises to more than 1 in 3 (38 percent). Pushed off arable lands and isolated from transportation and communications networks, Native Americans on reservations are struggling to make a living in unyielding physical, social and economic climates’ (qtd. In Cheyfitz 2017, p. 216). This situation has not changed significantly across the country since the early 20th century, despite the monies gained by some tribes from casino gambling and various resource extraction operations.

In their juxtaposition, therefore, the poems of ‘Dry Creek’ and ‘The Carnival’ (sections one and three of the collection), form a coherent reflection on rural poverty in Cherokee nation lands and its effects. Although Frazier is keen to resist simple autobiographical readings of his work, and notes that his poetry remixes and invents as much as it draws directly on personal history, nonetheless he also stated in our interview that ‘it’s probably about 90 to 95 percent autobiographical’ (2018 pers. comm., September 28). It would therefore be fair to assume that these effects are drawn from observation rather than stereotype, and it is notable how strongly gender is made a factor. The male figures of the dialect poems, who are a group as various indicators show us, are angry, violent and aggressive. ‘Chauncey’ is written in two-line stanzas, each a single lengthy sentence broken in the middle, where the predictable end-stop in the second line emphasizes the alcoholic character’s short-circuited, unreflective certainty in the world. As Robert Hass (2017 Kindle location 874) observes of the two-line poem of Catullus, ‘The effect is doubling down. Say it, then say it more intensely. Or make the general statement in A, and then get specific in B,’ and while each of the following dialect poems opens this up a little – ‘Joe Bunch’ into syllogistic three-liners, ‘Nick Cheater’ back into two-line stanzas but with enjambment that makes the character seem more reflective - nonetheless the impression is of minds blunted by alcoholism, disability, or an obsession with engines. These men are placed against poems in which women are bought (‘Mama’s Work’) and beaten, shirts torn, assaulted with fists and pickaxes. As the speaker of ‘Hunter’s Moon’ puts it:

It has been going on
for years, my mother, her mother,
sisters, whoever was left born
into this rage (10)

The destruction of these women is watched by their neglected sons, a consistent voice which in 'Pickax' mourns 'the same woman who held a warm towel / to my earache' (25) as she is possibly being murdered ('biscuit dough stuck to her fingers, the dark coming' (26)). Moreover, we as readers witness the ways that violence is passed down, via the last dialect poem in the voice of a child. 'Nauxcey Moss' is deafened, recalling Joe Bunch's deaf ear, after he shoots his grandmother's chickens at the prompting of an unidentified male figure that is presumably another violent grandfather.

This focus on the generational effect of neglect and poverty also affect the reading of the 'Mangled' pieces that make up sections two and four, 'Baptism of the Knife' and 'Skillet Face.' There are clear resonances between this protagonist and the boy-speaker of the poems. Both have mothers who are sex workers, and both are neglected: Mangled's mother 'locked him out of the house in the summers, so Mangled would not see the musky men' ('The Bottle Collector' 18), leaving him to wander the creeks, while the semi-autobiographical speaker is:

too
small to find my way to the sandbanks
where she sometimes takes a man,

where sometimes I wander
skipping stones, while she earns
in the backseat of a car or under

a gun rack. ('The Carnival' 34)

However, the Mangled poems are set in an earlier time period, one of *Sgt. Rock* comics and 'pinup queens, pop-bottle / legstresses on the soda-pop signs' ('Mangled and Beautiful Girls' 39). Mangled can, then, be seen as a progenitor, as violent as the other men in the boy-speaker's life, a buyer of women. Like many of the grandfather figures, too, he becomes addicted to substances, whether to huffing glue or to drinking 'listo' (Listerine mouthwash, drunk for its cheapness and alcohol content). The cyclical nature of abuse and violence is evident, as is its relationship to economic conditions. Mangled fits the classic Marxist description of the *Lumpenproletariat*, being part of 'a mass strictly differentiated from the industrial proletariat, a recruiting ground for thieves and criminals of all kinds, living on the crumbs of society, people without a definite trade, vagabonds' (qtd in Bovenkerk 1999, p. 523). Perhaps more fitting, though, would be the description in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Marx and Engels 1848) of this class as a 'passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society' (20), assuming we here read the 'old society' as the Cherokee nation, formally dissolved in 1907 and not reconstituted until the mid-1970's (Brown 2011). Mangled himself ends his days in the final poem of the sequence literally rotting ('stroke-face sagging off / his skull' ('Mangled, Memory and the Wheelchair,' 49)), dreaming of glory days in carnivals and circuses that seem to fulfill the class function identified by Bakhtin (1929), of a space in which class relationships are reversed, though temporarily. Those circus performances were attained via a performative ethnicity ('Ringmaster makes freak show of Mangled . . . whose ancestry / and tongue have passed into the void of circus blurb . . . squawk of his primitive origins'), which again dramatizes the choice between performing culture or becoming a forgotten underclass that Frazier seems to see as the only available choices for Cherokees in the mid-century period ('Circus Fire' 17).

Much of the rest of *Dark Thirty*, and several of the poems in Frazier's second book, *Aurum* (2019), consists of urban imagery. Here there are moments of beauty, particularly in the comforting and decidedly feminized space of the laundromat in 'Coin Laundry' (*Dark Thirty* 54) or the delicate haiku-like opening tercets of 'Seasonal Cityscape,' where

kids licking popsicles
a row of dingy feet
shine in the sun (67)

But more often we see the grimmest realities of inner city poverty. Again, from 'Seasonal Cityscape':

wet-croched
sockless finger hooked
around a jug of night train

As Kasey Keeler (2016) has proven in her study of federal housing policy in the mid-twentieth century, the relationship between Indians and inner-city homelessness was anything but accidental. Returning American Indian veterans faced a set of conditions guaranteed to drive them into cities, as Congressional policies designed to lead to termination of treaty obligations made conditions on reservations difficult, while American Indian veterans missed out on GI Bill benefits as it was assumed they were already wards of the state. Redlining policies reserved middle class suburbs for white citizens, which meant that help offered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to relocate tribal citizens inevitably pushed them into blighted and impoverished inner city areas. Placing the urban poems after the Mangled series reinforces such an historical framing.

Frazier's work needs to be set within a wider phenomenon of an increasingly urban American Indian literature that has grown up since the 1980s, as identified by Laura Furlan (2017). Prior to this point writings of the 'Native American Renaissance' era were mostly reservation-set, as in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1978), or James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* (1974), or in non-urban landscapes described through a Native American mythological lens, as in N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) or Gerald Vizenor's *Darkness in St Louis Bearheart* (1978). For Furlan, such urban fiction should be read not just as diasporic but also as creating new possibilities for community. Theodore C. van Alst, Jr., a writer whose work in many ways resembles that of Frazier, provides one example of this process in *Sacred Smokes* (2018), where young poor Natives of different tribes enter into and mirror an urban landscape marked by the tags of different gangs. Furlan gives the examples of Janet Campbell Hale, whose *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* (1985) 'invoke[s] intertribal Indigenous activism' (Furlan 72), and Susan Power and Louise Erdrich, who in different ways configure the cities of their novels as meeting-grounds, reviving older Indigenous associations and traditions in modern forms. In some ways, the shock of Frazier's de-'indianized'²⁷ poetry echoes the reception Hale received from critics such as Louis Owens, Frederick Hale and Ernst Stromberg, all of whom Furlan records as rejecting the novel: however, *Cecelia Capture* is a lawyer and activist, very different to Frazier's lost souls. Furlan might place Frazier next to Sherman Alexie, whose work most consistently draws attention to homelessness as one of the key Indigenous experiences, whether on reservations or in cities. But in Alexie's stories, as with

²⁷ My use of the signifier *indian* in lower case and italicised is intended to follow that of Anishinaabe novelist and critic Gerald Vizenor, who notes that 'The *indian* is a simulation, the absence of natives' (Vizenor, 1998, p. 15)

nearly all the other texts that Furlan surveys, Indigenous markers create commonalities among homeless people, with an emphasis on the formation of new communities. Frazier's decision to remove such markers emphasizes the isolation and violence meted out to women and children in such settings, and again foregrounds the ongoing intergenerational effects of such abuse, lived out in a landscape of 'Night Train bottle in the gutter. Diaper in the gutter. / Flattened mutt in the gutter' ('10th Street Anthem,' 69).

Food as signifier of healing and solidarity

It might seem at this point that Frazier's choices, whether in terms of imagery, story or curation, can only create a poetry of misery, isolation and despair. This would reflect one of his avowed inspirations, Larry Levis, whose first book, *Wrecking Crew* (1972), was denigrated by Scott Wilson because 'little of the book suggests solutions to the troubles; the book is more an existentialist's litany of America's cruelty' (Wilson 1992, p.190). In our interview, Frazier addressed this point twice. He first rejected a hopeful vision of progress, stating that:

We do see more Natives . . . doing activist types of things, but I'm not really interested in that kind of work. I'm really interested in how Native people still live within their communities. And, again, I don't think it's that much different than the way that we lived in the thirties and forties (2018 pers. comm., September 28).

He then goes on later to explain that 'I don't address racism in my poems, because if I do then it's still in control of how I operate' (2018 pers. comm., September 28). His work does, however, intervene in specific context to create a sense of class solidarity while still describing a particularized Cherokee historical circumstance. In this last section of analysis, I intend to show how this works in practice by concentrating on Frazier's use of food imagery, contrasting this with the imagery of the contemporary food sovereignty movement.

Without slipping in too many biographical assumptions, it is clear that the food imagery, or rather imagery of the lack of food, springs from lived reality for Frazier. The speaker in 'One Room Apartment' may not literally be the poet's childhood self, but his quiet search for nourishment while his passed-out mother and her lover snore is unmistakably based on experience. In the repetition of 'I search the cabinet / and ice box,' (*Dark Thirty* 33), the reader is brought into the restless, endless attempt to find something to satisfy hunger in stale biscuits, shriveled fruit, and congealed milk. When food does come up, it is unmistakably an American *cucina povera*. For instance, in 'Half Life':

Pinto beans,
 salt meat melted into the juice—
cornbread,
 mustard
 yellowing the mash.

Can-shaped meat,
 sliced,
 fried in bacon grease. (*Aurum* 38)

All of this is accompanied by alcohol, perhaps inevitably given the focus on violence and prostitution as survival mechanisms, whether in the form of cheap beer, cheap whisky or mouthwash. The last makes particularly clear the functional quality of drink for the characters in these poems, which is never described for taste or pleasure.

These images do not appear in a vacuum. As Frazier will undoubtedly be aware, Indigenous food sovereignty has in recent years become a locus of scholarly enquiry, with multiple titles (e.g. Frisbie 2018; Sherman 2017; Salmon 2012; Mihesuah 2005; Swentzell 2016; Dunkel 2017; Robidoux and Mason 2017) exploring methods of reviving seemingly forgotten or erased foodways. It has become a topic of popular discussion among Indigenous activists: one of the most active Facebook pages on any Native American topic, the group *Food Sovereignty is Tribal Sovereignty* (which asks non-Natives to refrain from requesting membership) claims more than 7,000 members and hosts multiple active discussions daily. And food sovereignty has also become big business. Sean Sherman's cookbook *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen* (Sherman and Dooley 2017), a landmark reimagining of traditional ingredients using modern cooking methods, has been promoted by the *Today Show*, *NPR*, *The New York Times*, and many other media outlets, while his 2016 Kickstarter for a restaurant project, also to be called *The Sioux Chef*, closed having raised \$148,728, nearly 50% higher than its original stated goal. The publicity for the book gives some idea of the kinds of food being celebrated in this movement, stating that

Sherman dispels outdated notions of Native American fare—no fry bread or Indian tacos here—and no European staples such as wheat flour, dairy products, sugar, and domestic pork and beef. The *Sioux Chef's* healthful plates embrace venison and rabbit, river and lake trout, duck and quail, wild turkey, blueberries, sage, sumac, timsula or wild turnip, plums, purslane, and abundant wildflowers. Contemporary and authentic, his dishes feature cedar braised bison, griddled wild rice cakes, amaranth crackers with smoked white bean paste, three sisters salad, deviled duck eggs, smoked turkey soup, dried meats, roasted corn sorbet, and hazelnut-maple bites (University of Minnesota Press 2017).

Such descriptions may be mouthwatering, but they serve other purposes as well. The reclamation of Indigenous foodways represents the resurgence of cultures that from Independence to the termination policies of the 1950s had been presumed to be on the way to an inevitable oblivion. A growing market for Indigenous ingredients holds obvious potential for tribal governments, potentially replicating the commercial benefits that wild rice harvesting have brought Anishinaabe communities with new ingredients, not to mention enabling new reservation businesses, many of which are run on cooperative or profit-share lines. And the drive to eat healthy has particular resonances in Native American communities, which experience some of the worst rates of diabetes and other diet-related diseases in the Western world, with Native adults being 'twice as likely to die from diabetes as non-Hispanic white women in 2013' (Office of Minority Health 2016). Nonetheless, there is some cognitive dissonance in seeing foods branded as virtuous by means of their Indigenous connotations being served in a five-star restaurant, at a commissioned banquet, or from a high-end catering vans. (The *Tatanka* food truck, for example, in which Sherman has had some involvement, charges \$12 for a bowl of cedar-braised bison with wild rice and squash, around double the price of a standard fast food meal, and far more expensive than fried beans and canned commodity meat with a little mustard). Journalist Erica Rivera, in an online 2017 profile of Sherman for Minneapolis local paper *City Pages*, brings up the issue by noting that Sherman's eschewing European-origin meats comes at a financial cost: 'Compare prices at Lunds & Byerly's, where duck breast costs \$1.33 an ounce and chicken breast costs 33 cents an ounce. That might not seem like a big difference until you're feeding a family' (Rivera 2017, para. 58). She also notes, in a pointed aside, that 'a large part of his audience is white' (Rivera 2017, para. 78).

Frazier's deliberate choice to avoid stereotypical Native signifiers means that he avoids both fry bread and the sort of branded-Indigenous healthfoods that are the signifiers of food sovereignty. One subtler use of food imagery, however, comes in the very first poem of *Dark Thirty*, 'Root Juice' (3), the only poem not arranged with others in a section and therefore possibly to be considered as an overarching principle. In this poem, an unnamed 'he' 'walks out of the junkyard,' then drinks from an old plastic jug that contains an unnamed liquid 'pickled in a brine of spit and corn.' Although the root that makes the root juice is not named, it seems likely to be snakeroot – a plant referred to directly in 'Chaac,' a poem from *Aurum* that also portrays a homemade remedy, the 'ropy strands' (14) of which directly echo 'the undulating root' in the 2-liter jug in 'Root Juice.' Snakeroot (*Actaea racemosa*) is a traditional remedy used by Choctaw people for rattlesnake bites (Howe 2014, p.86), hence the name, and by Cherokee traditional doctors 'for general malaise, gynecopathy (diseases peculiar to women), kidney ailments, malaria, rheumatism, and sore throat' (McKenna, Jones *et al* 2001, p. 94), a list of ailments that demonstrates the power ascribed to this plant. The entire book, therefore – indeed, both books – can be seen as a form of medicine, but one mainly available to people already familiar with the medicine. As Frazier says, this is a poetry explicitly designed to be read primarily by a Cherokee, rather than a white audience, and this opening signals that despite the surface of pessimism and despair he intends the books to be a form of healing.²⁸ Personal healing, to be sure, but grounded in community knowledge.

There is another use of food imagery that recurs in both Frazier's collections that seems to gesture beyond merely personal healing, however. In the poem 'Eating against a Wall' his speaker sees a couple eating noodles outdoors from a bowl, 'slurping them up,' an image that directly follows the 'tortillas, / pinto beans and potatoes' offered to the speaker of 'Stranded' by Spanish speaking laborers (*Dark Thirty* 78, 77). The story of a first introduction to eating with chopsticks is fleshed out considerably in the poem 'Sun Perch' (*Aurum* 12-13), where the narrator, again a neglected child, has been left home starving for three days, and is taken in by a Vietnamese family for supper:

the fish, perhaps lightly steamed, then wok-fried, charred
along the belly, fins crisped, mouth open from its last breath, fossilized
in a reduction of fish sauce and honey

The contrast with the moldy food and violence offered by the descriptions of home in Frazier's poetry is telling, and deliberate. The story is part of a meditation on memory inspired by the narrator's baby son, whose gasping mouth at birth metonymically links with the gasping mouth of the fish, both placed against the ironic description of 'what all boys wished for, a way of remembering how air rushes from your body / after being socked in the gut.' In 'Eating against a Wall' the eaters are not explicitly racialized – indeed, in all three poems the racial coding is indirect and done through the naming of languages – but the way that they eat squatting down again seems to place them as Asian. The narrators of the *Dark Thirty* poems note commonalities with these supposed others, and placing the three poems together makes food function as a form of exchange and kindness that recognizes sameness rather than difference.

This fraternity across racial lines needs to be placed back into a class context. Eric Cheyfitz, in his work on class solidarity in the work of Acoma Pueblo poet Simon Ortiz, notes that Indigenous people in South and Central America are often discussed as integral parts of the

²⁸ I will take a moment here to acknowledge that as a white British critic I am likely to have missed many Cherokee-specific signifiers in this text. That does not invalidate my analysis, but I hope to soon be reading articles by Cherokee critics that will unpack Frazier's work in all sorts of ways not available to me.

labor movement, and asks ‘How is it that Indians in the *United States* are rarely viewed as workers?’ (Cheyfitz, 2017, p. 225). He offers several explanations, many the result of deliberate political strategy on the part of the United States such as the choice to divide and rule by negotiating with each tribal nation separately. His analysis closes with a provocative observation that class analysis is seemingly resisted or ignored in Native American Studies due to a ‘conflicted relationship between kinship and class’ (p. 234). The majority of citizens of tribal nations in the United States are poor, with many in the most extreme forms of poverty, but there are also a number of middle or upper class Native people, whose voices at least since the 1911 foundation of the Society of American Indians have been the main ones representing Native peoples. Kinship rules mean that Native American Studies has an inherent bias toward treating these two groups equally, despite their clearly conflicting class status. This might take on a particular resonance in a Frazier’s national context. The Cherokee are one of the tribes that went so far in adapting to EuroAmerican society and economy that some members became wealthy through plantation slavery: members of this elite group of slaveholding Cherokee such as Major Ridge were also the ones to illegally sign the 1835 Treaty of New Echota, which gave up the Cherokee legal claim to the ancestral homelands. To choose to show class solidarity that transcends racial and national lines is to repudiate such a history, while still choosing to remain a profoundly Cherokee poet. ‘Eating Against a Wall’ indeed ends with the relationship between capitalist exploitation and the detailing of specifics of culture, with the narrator:

[T]hinking that eating
had never been so
transient,
that somehow we all end up here,
displaced,
documented (78).

As the poem 'Half Life' also shows via the tired *indian* imagery forced on the speaker in class, such documentation enables division and exploitation in exactly the manner mapped out by Wolfe, as referenced at the beginning of this article. While Frazier's poetry is, as I have shown, profoundly Cherokee, his refusal to play the signifying games of the genre of Native American Literature represents a challenge to read intersectionally, allowing considerations of ethnicity to intersect with those of gender violence and, above all, class. Although Frazier refuses the label of activist or politician, his rejection of class division and patriarchy points towards new possibilities in Cherokee writing that would allow for an interethnic, internationalist politics of resistance.

Author Bio

Dr James Mackay is Assistant Professor of British and American Studies at European University Cyprus. He serves as President of the Cyprus Society for the Study of English (CYSSE) and is one of the founding co-editors of [*Transmotion*](#), an open-access journal dedicated to postmodern Indigenous literary studies. In his research he concentrates primarily on contemporary American Indian and First Nations literatures.

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‘Those People that are Invisible’: An Interview with Santee Frazier

Santee Frazier, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma

James Mackay, European University Cyprus

Abstract

This interview with Oklahoma poet and educator Santee Frazier discusses the context and creative process for his first book of poetry, *Dark Thirty* (2009), and the importance of language and place in Native American poetry.

Keywords

Santee Frazier, Native American literature, Cherokee poetry

JM: *Santee Frazier's first book of poetry, Dark Thirty, was published by the University of Arizona in the Sun Tracks series, while his second, Aurum, is due to be published in the fall of 2019. Santee is a citizen of the Cherokee nation of Oklahoma and currently works as an educator in writing studies, rhetoric and composition at Syracuse University, New York. Santee, thanks for agreeing to speak with me.*²⁹

SF: Thanks for reading my work and inviting me to do this.

JM: *As I mentioned, you've got a new collection coming out shortly. What do you see as the differences between this and your debut book? How have you evolved as a person and as a writer?*

SF: *Aurum* is essentially a distillation of about 10 years' worth of work. As you've seen, it's a really tiny collection. *Dark Thirty* I think is 92 pages altogether and *Aurum* is around 64 right now before it goes into production. I felt that *Dark Thirty* was overwritten or overly bloated, with too many repeating images and phrases, and so I wanted this time to make sure that I got to the essential language of each poem and make sure that I was more careful with a specific types of phrasing, with resisting narrative impulses, that kind of thing. I also wanted to make the poems more minimal in terms of how they're positioned on the page, and to make sure with each form that I was paying attention to white space.

JM: *What does the title signify for you?*

²⁹ This interview was conducted on 28th September 2018, via the Zoom teleconferencing app. I would like to thank Cameron Cregler at the Zoom Support Center who was able to rescue the recording after the original file was corrupted.

SF: It's Latin for gold, obviously, and there are various shades of gold that run throughout the piece. I was searching for a word that kind of looks like an accordion, an object that appears quite a bit through the middle of the collection. If you drop the two 'u's in the word to the next line, it really resembles that and that's what we're trying to do for the cover currently. I think that it hints to a lot of the sound constructions in the book too. And there's this also this idea of science and the elements, which makes reference to Indigenous knowledge systems and all of these other things that are at work in the book. I felt that one word was able to reach all of those concepts in the book – the sound component, the conceptual component and the use of color throughout the entire piece.

JM: *It provides a contrast with Dark Thirty, because gold seems opposite to darkness as well.*

SF: I think some of the poems purposefully contrast with *Dark Thirty*. A lot of the privileged moments in that collection were either 30 minutes before dark or 30 minutes after, while a lot of the images and moments in this one take place in a liminal space or liminal time of day – just after dawn, that kind of thing. Even the last poem 'Half Life' is set in a different a time of day, and so a different image format.

JM: *You mentioned sound just now, and there's such a pleasure in sound in all of your poetry: I had to read 'Lactification' out loud to my wife just now just to hear it. I notice you make a lot of use of plosive and sibilant sounds, creating a very specific soundscape. Before you begin writing a piece, how much weight do you give to the question of sound, how much to emotion, how much to image, and how much to the question of story?*

SF: I think every single poem I've ever written started with one specific sound. From there a poem can become more image driven. For instance, take the last poem in the new collection, 'Half Life.' That poem started out as tiny little haiku-like poems, and I wasn't really concentrating on the image as much as I was trying to make sounds that fit the environment I was thinking about. I'm always interested in the sound of a place. The 'Mangled' poems also didn't start out with Mangled as a character. I like the sound of the word, 'mangled' and I was trying to use it in different phrasings over and over and over again in my journal, finding as many ways that I could play with that sound in different expressions - 'mangled like a tin can,' that kind of thing. That's how a lot of poems start out - just a sound. And then I try to work my way into some kind of meaning or get some kind of sense out of it all. It's kind of how the musician David Byrne worked. He would start with the sound of the instrument, and then he would build lyrics into it afterwards.

'Lactification' is influenced, oddly enough, by Richard Hugo's first collection of poems, *A Run of Jacks*. They're these amazing poems that were very mysterious but sound-driven. Hugo's advice is not to worry about what you're trying to mean, just try to make good sounds because the English language wants to make sense. No matter how hard you try, one of the most difficult things is to write gibberish. Just trust what your ear is trying to tell you to guide you through the poem.

In terms of narrative, I think *Dark Thirty* was definitely intent on telling stories. But, for me, those stories don't work in any kind of cohesive fashion. They work as these beams of light that go down to the specific location and a specific group of people, and then kind of collage it all together at the end. I felt like one of the main things with *Aurum* was removing those narrative sensibilities in the poems. So the first section is narrative driven and then you see those narrative impulses slowly chipped away until you get to 'Half Life,' which is not trying

to tell a story at all, just presenting concepts and a sense of place strictly through sound and image.

JM: *You say you have written hundreds of the 'Mangled' poems, coming from that sound, but that's a very definite character, and a very definite story. Do you have an end goal with that story?*

SF: Out of all those hundreds there's a very small percentage that get published. I don't have an end goal with it. Mangled provides the historical context for all the other poems to happen. He is this character that embodies the struggle of Indigenous people who were left without a sense of identity, or a sense of culture and a sense of belonging to American society and culture, right? And so he has to find all of these jobs and all of these ways of existing, which are often out of the public eye (with the exception of the circus obviously). I don't have a way of resolving the character in terms of a narrative in that sense, because in *Dark Thirty* he already dies. You get the beginning, the middle and end of his life, and these new poems fill in some of those gaps, but at the same time he's very much just a conceit for different levels of existence for Indigenous peoples in this afterworld, or this after-existence since moving onto reservations. The genocides, and all of these other things that we talk about in relation to Native identity, can be represented through his story.

As for the accordion pieces, and his music, well, he doesn't actually play the accordion as much as he is using his ribs as a musical instrument. The character at that particular point has some Biblical references for me, particularly the figure of Satan - his breathing or his anatomy was a musical instrument. I thought about that concept and I thought about how western knowledge systems have identified Native people, defined them in a certain way. That's what 'Lactification,' talks about too, this language that's created for different groups of people in a society, and how that defining language is the language that we constantly have to deal with in our everyday waking life. Mangled represents all of those things. I don't have a way of ending him. Whenever I think of the character, I think of vaudeville or something very absurd, and there are different scenarios and concepts that I can use in future collections.

JM: *Why do you have those poems go back to the forties and fifties?*

SF: I'm interested in that particular era for Native people when they were moving into urban centers. I'm also interested in how Native people were perceived in that particular era of American history. I think about those constraints of what is possible and what is not possible for Mangled as a character at that particular time. Obviously he lives later than that - in *Dark Thirty*, he goes into the sixties and seventies - but I'm really interested in how those are the years where Natives were being defined heavily through Hollywood in its golden age. In literature we're living in the aftermath of how [Eurowestern] literature defined Natives. Mangled exists in this time before we started developing theories of postcolonialism and understanding how Native peoples were perceived.

It might also have to do with some family members growing up in that particular era, and my having conversations with them over the years about what it was like for Native people at those particular times. With 'Half Life,' I wanted it to feel like it was way into the future after all of that, and see the results of all of those things. In some ways the speaker of the poem is still in the same way of existence as Mangled. The other people that populate the poem are still in that place, even though we're further into the future. Even though the United States is considered to be a more progressive country, we don't see that much of a difference from the thirties and

forties in Native existences, especially on reservations or in communities that are predominantly Indigenous. We do see more Natives in public these days, doing activist types of things, but I'm not really interested in that kind of work. I'm really interested in how Native people still live within their communities. And, again, I don't think it's that much different than the way that we lived in the thirties and forties.

JM: *So you don't see for instance, the Trump administration as a major step backwards or Obama as a major step forwards or...*

SF: No, I don't. And I think that's important for me as a Native person, to recognize that the office of the presidency itself inherently seeks out the destruction of Native people, whether it's culturally or through overt destruction. I don't think that Obama was a horrible President. But the job itself is designed to eventually erase Native people from, you know, the story and narrative of America. With the Trump administration, I just don't see him as much different from Andrew Jackson, a President that he admires. There's a continuity, right? So either it's overt genocide, or the shrinking of our lands and culture, or it's this sense of cultural genocide - 'kill the Indian, save the man,' the Indian Relocation Act, those types of things. Those binaries seek out the same end.

I base those opinions on the work of a Haudenosaunee scholar named John Mohawk, in a wonderful essay called 'Racism: An American Ideology' where he talks about the Valladolid debates, a conservative / liberal debate which happened in Spain just before the Spanish conquest of the Americas. The conservatives argued that we weren't humans, so therefore they were allowed to treat us like animals. The other side of that argument was that we were humans, but our culture was primitive and lacked sophistication. So, therefore, they could erase our culture and replace it with something that was more palatable to their western culture. I think that we as Native people have been dealing with that binary throughout history. Obviously there are certain things in Native life that are better, but if you look at it from a wide angle, there's not much difference between the way that Native people live in their communities and the way that they were living in those same communities in the thirties and forties.

Again, I don't think that Obama was an evil President, but it's just inherent in the job, the language that defines Native people. Layli Long Soldier talks about this in her book, *Whereas*. In the language of government, we're always going to be framed a certain way.

JM: *Once you're framed by legal documents, there's no choice but to accept the framing.*

SF: Poetry is one place where you can subvert those ideas, or at least discuss them. I find that I can't have these debates a lot of the times in academic or other intellectual environments because there's so much emphasis on short term solutions and activist movements. There's very little room in that discourse to discuss some of these deeper issues associated with Native identity.

JM: *Speaking of linguistic framing, it's really evident looking through these poems that you've got a love of complex language - for instance, you use many arcane or archaic words. Where did you first get this love for language and when did you start thinking of language as a tool?*

SF: I've always loved language and the way that it sounds. I grew up quite isolated and spent a lot of time alone from a very, very early age, probably first grade. I spent a lot of time thinking about music in a very essential and honest way. Growing up trying to think about how things

rhyme, I was always interested in poetry in my elementary school. I took Shakespeare specific classes when I was a junior, reading even the plays that you wouldn't read necessarily in high school, and I came to love that dialect of English, the way it sounded. I would memorize sonnets. I was living on my own during those years.

I was working a full-time job in kitchens, doing dishwashing and also cooking while finishing high school, and in my senior year I had a really good English teacher. I was in a normal English class. Because my home life was unstable, my grades weren't all that good, but I was still able to read and talk about books in a way that impressed her. And so, she put me in one of her advanced placement classes. There I really fell in love with the book *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, and I really wanted to play with language to that end, the complex way that he talked about the racial experience of African American men in the 1960s and 1950s. I've always been in love with making language do that kind of thing.

So of course, right out of high school I wanted to be a fiction writer. It wasn't until around 1999 that I met my professors at the Institute of American Indian Arts, Arthur Sze and John Davis, and they convinced me that I should be writing poems. Until that time I thought that that poems were just shorter stories and so I would make these poems and I would just try to tell a small minimal story in a page or less. Sze and Davis had a profound impact on the way that I thought about language - and John Davis of course was also a student of Richard Hugo. The emphasis on sound and language and line, that's always been in and been a part of me, and also Arthur Sze, through his love of classical Japanese and Chinese poetry, has been the other side of that. That's still influencing me today and I think that's in *Aurum* also. There is this emphasis on minimal image that you see from Arthur Sze in that poem 'Lactification.' But there's also a John Davis influence, and then also Richard Hugo's influence in that.

Between the years of maybe seventeen to twenty-one I really defined what I want poetry to do, and what I think I'm capable of in that realm. But I think I've always had a love of language and just the way that things sound. I love this idea that when we're speaking in English, we're always speaking in some kind of metered cadence or rhyme: we just don't emphasize it whenever we're speaking to one another. I've always thought about how to make what you say and how you interact with people more musical. It gives me a way of subverting the ear in poetry. I think that's what Richard Hugo was doing too. You expect this musical symmetry. In 'Lactification' I break that music constantly. I love being able to orchestrate sound that way. I'm a huge lover of jazz, especially free jazz, and so I'm always interested in those kinds of sounds and improvisation.

JM: *A lot of your poetry is imagistic. How much do you see your job as being to make images that can be understood and how much do you think the readers job is to read carefully?*

SF: I think the image should always be accessible, giving the reader a clear experience through their senses. I don't believe the image is just a visual reference. An image exists in sound and touch and texture. And so I think that there should be a certain level of clarity with that, but I think that the way that those images can be orchestrated and moved as modular pieces, that is where the reader's job comes in. How are these images situated? How do these images fit into this larger world in which these poems are taking place?

I always am interested in accessibility, simply because I like the idea of Native people being able to read my poems - accessing them and understanding them and being able to relate to them. Years ago, a friend of mine, Orlando White, invited me to read at Diné College, an all

Navajo school. And it was really interesting to hear their reactions to the Mangled poems because one of the students says, 'Well, everybody knows Mangled. There's always someone like that. It could be your uncle or the guy that's walking on the road, but everybody knows who that is.' That's one of my end goals is that what's happening in these images are recognizable to the people that that I'm writing about and for.

That's something that's sorely missing in a lot of Native poetry, that sense of direct representation of the communities that they're from. I don't mean to call anybody out, but I think what we've seen, especially through the Red Power movement and the Native American Renaissance, is promotion of a specific type of iconography and visual language associated with pan-Indianism, and particularly with Plains culture. In my poems, I really want to move away from that visual language and create something more representative of the communities that I grew up in and the community that I operate in now. For example, the wino poems are really written for the type of people that never get poems written about them, who're often forgotten people. I open *Aurum* with that quote from Galeano about the nobodies, and what I'm always trying to write about are those people that are invisible, or aren't often visible, to the public.

The visual language in Native literature, that way of understanding Native identity, for me is a bit difficult to accept. In my poems I try to extend, or at least move away from, those impulses as much as possible. I don't know if you're familiar with David Treuer's *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual*, but that book had a huge impact on me in terms of the way that I see a Native literature and my role. I think about how we use our Native languages: is that a specifically poetic pursuit or is that a political pursuit? I'm always thinking about those issues, but after I've written the poems, obviously. When I'm writing, I try to be true to the language in my mind, but when I think about them as a complete collection, I am thinking about subverting non-Native and Native readers' ideas about Native and Indigenous people. At the same time, I'm really in search of a Native audience, which I think doesn't get thought about that much in poetry.

JM: *I'm British, so obviously very much not Cherokee. Reading through your poems, I can pick up some references - the screech owl mask in 'Half Life,' for instance - that might have some iconographic referent. But often there seems to be something - I'm particularly thinking about the poem 'Chaac' here - where I think you're drawing on things that are very specifically Cherokee that I would likely never fully understand. You've spoken before about being a writer who comes from a Cherokee background, but to what extent do you have a Cherokee reader in mind when you're writing and editing?*

SF: I actually do think about it quite a bit because of my family. They're starting to pass on now, but we're all Cherokee, they're fluent speakers. That cha'ac image is of the Mayan god of lightning and wind. What I'm trying to do in that poem is make this reference to the master narrative layered over us that we migrated over the land bridge. I'm fond of this idea that our people maybe migrated from Mexico and up into the United States. Chaac was used there as a mythical reference, but the things that are happening in that poem are specifically related to images and memories from when I was very young. How do I make sense of those images, without the actual language to describe them anymore?

I think that there would be people where I'm from that would automatically recognize what I'm talking about in *Dark Thirty*. There's a lot of references to places in eastern Oklahoma. But a lot of older people that I've talked to that have read the book, they recognized a lot of those

places. To me that's an audience that are never the privileged audience in a poem. They're never the group of people that's being spoken to in Native literature also, because usually the privileged audience in Native poetry is the non-Native one. And so I try to wrap things in there where someone that's from my culture, or from a place that I'm from, can recognize them. I feel like it's pretty simplistic when I'm doing it with some of those references. But I think part of me wanting to be accessible is to bring those audiences into the poem. It's not the sort of thing that we think about in the publishing industry, but I think the poet's job is to extend the experiences of the communities in which they come from. Their job is to in a very practical way promote literacy and those types of things within their community. I always think of myself as a cultural worker, maybe not in a direct way, but holding myself accountable to produce something that that's representative of the communities that I come from. That audience definitely is in every poem that I write, and I'm trying to speak to them first and foremost.

JM: *Your poems tell stories of people who are extremely economically marginalized, grafters, grifters, drunks, victims of and perpetrators of violence. Sometimes you have people who are talking in heavy dialect or slurred speech. This is a group that doesn't seem to be heard from enough in American verse. You've talked about representing Native American, Cherokee identity, but how much do you see yourself as working class?*

SF: Very much so. I always go back to Philip Levine's *What Work Is* and how he considered himself a blue-collar poet. I very much place myself within that realm, which is also I think speaks to why I don't engage in more experimental and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E= type poetry. If you see any of my contemporaries, such as Sherwin Bitsui, Layli Longsoldier, Orlando White or dg okpik, I'm probably the most accessible and most narrative driven out of them all. And a part of that is because most of my experiences and ideas are rooted in that sort of blue collar milieu.

I do consider myself a working-class poet, but not just for Native people. I always am interested in this idea of the brown person's experience with disassociation and relocation, and with trying to find some kinship through this overt umbrella of oppression that we all experience. When I was younger, living in Oklahoma City, there was a huge Vietnamese refugee population. But most of the Native people in Oklahoma are also in some ways a refugee population, moved from their homes and put into Oklahoma which was just a receptacle for Native people. I felt a kinship with the Vietnamese people in that particular area because they were still very much involved in their culture and their way of life, but it was a transplanted to this Oklahoman landscape. A lot of the reasons they had been moved from Vietnam were a lot of the same reasons we had been moved from our homelands. I'm interested in the cultures and people from south of the border, for those same reasons. I think there's a sense of kinship or shared experience. I try to produce images and experiences that they might relate to also. The poem 'Sun Perch' definitely connects to that thought. I'm always interested in how hard Mexican immigrants work, and the Vietnamese population, how hard they worked, and how intent they were on keeping their cultural identities.

In the US there's always been this perspective that the Native American experience is isolated, in terms of the oppression and genocide we felt. But in reality a lot of what John Mohawk called 'natural world peoples' have been under continuous subjugation for hundreds of years, and I think that's still ongoing today. As Native people, we get caught up in what's happening only to us within these borders. We can kind of lose sight of others. If I'm going to be a poet, I have to acknowledge the experiences of other cultures and people also.

JM: *Would you extend class solidarity to the white working class as well, or is that a different dynamic?*

SF: You can see that in *Dark Thirty* with '10th Street Anthem' a little bit, and also in the different references to the accordion. That specific instrument is something that I associate with more a type of folk music, not to something like classical music. When I was trying to select an instrument for *Mangled*, you know, that was a really hard decision to make. I didn't feel like he could do a classical guitar or a piano or something like that. And I felt that the accordion had such cultural value in some eastern European cultures, and other places, that I felt like it worked well. So, yes, it does extend to white working class also. By no means either do I mean that 'natural world people' only extends to brown people. I think it extends to a lot of different types of people that have been subjugated and still continue to be subjugated in a way.

JM: *There's an 'I' in several of the poems in both collections, which is often the voice of a child growing up witnessing poverty, experiencing violence, living with mothers who seem to barely holding things together. To what extent are you mining autobiographical materials for poetry?*

SF: I would say it's probably about ninety to ninety-five percent autobiographical. But none of the images that are in the poems happened in the way that they are there. That's the art of it, right? You can put different themes and images together to get a completely different construction. But a lot of it is autobiographical, and I think that's what gives the reader such a sense of vivid detail in it, especially in something like 'Half Life.' There are snippets and scenes through different experiences that I've tried to put together into one space.

For instance, the poem in *Dark Thirty*, 'Mama's Work,' that's autobiographical, but it didn't happen. It wasn't so cinematic, right? That poem is very much influenced by Robert Hayden³⁰. The parts about, you know, her work in the quiet corners of barns and the hay, I don't know if any of that is true or not, but the circumstances in the poem are true. Or there's the poem 'Gunshot Conjure,' which is about a grandmother and grandfather - some of that is true, but my grandfather and grandmother split up way before both of them passed away, so they didn't maintain a marriage or working relationship for that long. But it was suitable for the ending, to look at this person that had inflicted violence on people for so long and his being under the care of those people that he had hurt for so many years. I liked that idea because that happens quite often, not just in Native life but in all life. The people that have hurt you throughout your life, or the people that you've hurt your entire life, end up being the last people that you see before you die.

There's other stuff too. Some of the other pieces, especially the more urban pieces, are hugely autobiographical. Most of them take place in Oklahoma City in different parks and they're just from my time walking around in the city. But it's like with the '10th Street Anthem' poem, that's not all located in one particular street, it's just an amalgamation of several images that I remember from the Oklahoma City area. I think that 'Half Life' is autobiographical too, it's just that the speaker and the 'I' is removed from it all.

JM: *Emotionally autobiographical if not literally.*

³⁰ <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/robert-hayden>

SF: Yeah, yeah, yeah, definitely.

JM: *Something that stands out, especially as we talk in this week of the Kavanaugh hearings and this #MeToo moment, is the focus on the lives of women living with sexual violence and exploitation. How much do you, writing as a male, see this element of your poetry as a political statement?*

SF: I don't see it as a political statement in that regard. There's a couple of reasons. One of them is ethical. I've talked about this before to my students in that as a poet, I'm not going to pretend that I'm an activist, because I think it's really on-trend to write about missing Indigenous women and sexual violence and Native communities. But what I find is that if I engage it in that way, I'm taking away from the work of other people that are actually dealing with these problems on a daily basis. That are working in family services. That have family members missing. That have family members that have experienced that type of violence. But at the same time, I feel like sexual violence is inflicted on people that don't have those types of voices in the first place. And because the Native literary community is kind of separate from those communities, I feel like that those issues don't get written about enough or discussed enough on any level.

I want to discuss this in my poems because I'm trying to resolve those things in relation to my past. I'm trying to understand what my own mother went through, and other family members and other women that I've known, and the types of things that I've seen firsthand. How do I resolve those things? When I turn them into a construction in a poem, it's also a way for me to work through some of that pain on a very personal level. So I don't think that I think about it as a political act. I think it can be interpreted that way, but there are people that are doing the real work on the ground every day that should be lifted up for the work that they do. Not me just because I write a poem - I'm not dealing with any of those consequences currently. Part of the reason that I pursue poetry is to constantly remove myself and try to heal myself from the way that I grew up, and the things that I experienced. That's a very personal thing and I don't want to sit there and pretend that I'm trying to do that for everyone. I don't know that that's even possible.

I feel like that we would do better as a Native literary community if we began to lift up the people that are in their communities every day doing the type of work that is not only cultural but is healing for a community that's experienced trauma after trauma, you know, for hundreds of years. There are people doing that and it's really hard work. I think poetry can do that work, but I'm not going to pretend that my poetry is doing that work, I guess.

JM: *I talked a while back to Anishinaabe elder and scholar Linda LeGarde Grover, and asked her about healing. She said she doesn't think that healing is something that's really possible, at least not in the way that we talk about it. How do you see healing in the context of this legacy that you're talking about?*

SF: I would agree with what she says, deeply. I was talking about this earlier with one of my friends who was helping me do some images for the book - this idea that there's no way to get back to the, a pre-European context consciousness, right? There's no possible way of doing that and there's no possible way to access it even through our languages because a lot of our languages were interconnected with our environment, interconnected with our lands, the landscapes in which we lived. Highly encoded. A lot of those landscapes and places have changed. Healing means that you get back to this semblance of something that existed before

any kind of trauma or pain happened. And I don't think it works that way for me, but I do think that working through different images and different ways of writing these things out in poetry allows me to understand them in a deeper way and also understand how oppression works and how these mechanisms of systematic violence work. The more that we understand how those things are working and operating in our daily lives, the more we're capable of dealing with them, but I don't think that we can actually heal those things. We can pretend that we can heal, or we can place ourselves in a stronger position to understand them and deal with them on a very personal but also a communal level.

JM: *On social media a while back, you stated that it's racist for critics to put your writing in the genre of Native American poetry. Would you expand a little on that?*

SF: I think that the Native American lyric genre is a very specific thing. To me a lot of - and again, I mean this for myself - the production of work that is so called quote unquote 'Native American' is the writer engaging in the language of the oppressor. You give them something that's recognizably Native American, something that they see as quote unquote 'Indian.' That's what the term 'Native American Literature' means. Putting my poems into that particular category or putting anyone into that particular category is problematic. Native people can exist in a variety of different contexts. Sherwin Bitsui writes from a very Navajo place, but I don't see him doing the same things that some people do that are consciously involved in the 'Native lit' literary genre. He just gets put in there because of his cultural heritage and his genetics. Equally, for me, I don't feel like I write any of those things, but because I identify as 'Cherokee Nation,' that automatically puts me into that specific realm, but I don't think that I actually write in that particular genre at all. Again, this goes back to David Treuer.

Constantly putting us in this particular isolated bubble is also a form of subjugation. It forces us into a specific way of using language and using poetry. It becomes a constant parade where every poem is talking about how Native we are, What being Native is. I'm trying to subvert all those definitions in my work. To change them to something that's more culturally specific to us or more specific to our real and lived experiences. And so that's kind of what I was meaning by that. I think it's really hard for me to - you know, I'm publishing in the 'Sun Track' series for American Indian poetry, and I realize that I'm operating in those rooms. But critics putting people in categories that are based specifically on their genetics or their heritage, that kind of thing is problematic. It would be better saying 'Navajo poets,' or 'Anishinaabe poets', and not us all being categorized as 'Native American.' That's overlaying this narrative of genocide and lumping us all into one. It's a form of oppression because we don't have freedom in how we choose our work to be seen. It's defined for us in that regard.

Compare us to non-Native writers. They can choose to be =L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E= poets, they can choose to be New York school poets, and it's not defined by their race. It's defined by the work that they do. The very definition of race and how that's inflicted on people is a form of oppression. It's why I don't address racism in my poems, because if I do then it's still in control of how I operate, and the idea is to free yourself from that. I get a lot of trouble for that perspective, but I'm okay with it too.

I'm on the rez every day, I'm around my people every day, my kids are in longhouse and my wife and I were married in the longhouse. I'm comfortable with my Native community. And I feel like the literary world is not my Native community in the same way. There are a lot of writers out there that use that Native literary community as their only Native community because they aren't connected in that same way. That's why my perspective is a little bit

different, and also why I feel like I write more from the community, because I'm still involved in it and that's important. I don't mean to degrade anyone or call out anyone. I make these decisions because of the life that I live. If I'm going to write poems, the only way to free myself from those [racial] perspectives is at least to engage in some level of discourse or dialogue and see what happens. I know that my perspectives aren't necessarily popular, but that's okay.

JM: *I wonder how much it has to do specifically with the Cherokee context. There seem to be quite a few Cherokee writers who are not involved in community.*

SF: It kind of has something to do with it. But at the same time: no. That move away from blood quantum to descendance was done by Ross Swimmer, a Cherokee chief decades ago, and I think it was a good move because it makes sure that we're never erased as a people. If you're a descendant, then you're still Cherokee. I actually like the idea that people want to be Native: it's a lot better than people wanting to murder Natives and take their land. I put it in that context. But at the same time, we have some level of responsibility. This is kind of a prevailing attitude up here. If we're going to call ourselves Native, Cherokee, we have the responsibility to our kids to engage in a more Native-centric identity and existence, to get back to that somehow. Again, this goes back to healing. That's why you see a lot of Native nations now have language programs and stuff like that. It's our responsibility to get back to engage with that kind of thing.

So, there are some people out there that say they are Cherokee. They say that, but what does that really mean? I think it has to mean something in regards to culture, in regards to language and the life you lead. It's not just something that you can proclaim that you are. It's a lot more than that. So in the Native American literature genre, we see a lot of writers that are upset with their nation because they're not considered a part of it, maybe because there's an issue with their enrollment. Those discussions about authenticity are highly problematic, but, again, there are people every day that are wrapped up in trying to keep their culture going and keep their communities going on a daily basis. That's where I like to focus my efforts, in trying to build some kind of sense of community and culture to make sure that my kids have a sense of culture and community that I didn't. To me that's progressive and productive work, and so if there are a lot of people out there that are proclaiming Native, it doesn't bother me. Those are the people that I just don't see on a daily basis. It doesn't offend me either: I always encourage them, but tell them that there's more to being Cherokee than just saying it, and you should try to understand it because that's important.

If we just say that it's something that's on a racial or genetic level, then that's this way that we have been defined. It's a form of oppression. Some people say, 'Well, I'm too light skinned' or 'I can't, they won't accept me.' Well, that's a part of it. Everybody has to earn their place in the community. You know, I'm not in my home community here. I had to earn my way in, because I'm still an outsider. I have to find a way for me to fit in, and a lot of the times that's giving back and trying find a way to be valuable or at least to participate in some way, shape or form. I think a lot of people don't want to do that kind of work. It's hard work. If people are going to call out their people for not being welcoming or something like that, then it's really a difficult situation. Because there's some people they want to change their whole nations' enrollment, just to suit their position, but when they don't want to give anything back. So people wanting to be a Native I think is a good thing, but there's a lot more to it than just being a descendant or getting free healthcare or free college or however people perceive it, there's a lot more to it than that.

JM: *Thank you, it was fantastic talking with you.*

SF: Thank you for your time. I hope you enjoy the new collection.

Author Bios

Santee Frazier is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. His first collection of poems *Dark Thirty* was published by the University of Arizona Press in 2009. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Institute of American Indian Arts and a Masters of Fine Arts from Syracuse University. He teaches writing studies, rhetoric, and composition at Syracuse University.

Dr James Mackay is Assistant Professor of British and American Studies at European University Cyprus. He serves as President of the Cyprus Society for the Study of English (CYSSE) and is one of the founding co-editors of [Transmotion](#), an open-access journal dedicated to postmodern Indigenous literary studies. In his research he concentrates primarily on contemporary American Indian and First Nations literatures.

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The Making of the Heiltsuk Working Class: Methodism, Time Discipline, and Capitalist Subjectivities

Michael E. Harkin, University of Wyoming

Abstract

The Heiltsuk,³¹ a First Nation group in British Columbia, first encountered Europeans around the beginning of the 19th century. By the 1830s, they were thoroughly engaged in the trans-Pacific fur trade and the burgeoning commercial economy of the region. The fur trade generated considerable wealth for Heiltsuk traders, who maintained autonomy as providers of an important commodity. However, by the 1880s, many Heiltsuk were employed as wage-laborers, working at a nearby cannery, or as part of logging or commercial fishing crews. This shift to a wage-labor economy was accompanied by ideological shifts, a product of formal education and, in particular, the teachings of Methodist missionaries. Using E.P. Thompson's study of the English working class in the early Industrial Revolution, and his concept of 'time discipline,' these ideological transformations are viewed as components of capitalist subjectivities.

Keywords

Capitalism, missionization, acculturation, subjectivities

Traditional Culture

The Heiltsuk are a band of First Nation people in British Columbia, previously known as the Bella Bella.³² They have occupied the area around Milbanke Sound in central coastal British Columbia since roughly 14,000 years B.P., according to a recent excavation completed there.³³ The Heiltsuk were neighbors of the more famous Kwakwaka'wakw (previously known as Kwakiutl), who spoke a language of the same family (Wakashan). Like them, the Heiltsuk had a rich ceremonial life, centered on the *potlatch*, a traditional system of competitive gifting and feasting through which chiefs would redistribute large amounts of property and thereby gain prestige (Harkin 2015).

Traditionally it was a ranked society, with chiefly and noble titles inherited through both maternal and paternal lines. One important type of potlatch involved 'fastening on' a title name

³¹ I conducted fieldwork in Bella Bella, British Columbia, between 1985 and 1987.

³² 'Bella Bella' was a corruption of a local place name, mistaken by Whites for an ethnonym. Heiltsuk is the correct ethnonym, although many of the older community members preferred the name Bella Bella, because of its positive connotation (Harkin 1988).

³³ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/archeological-find-affirms-heiltsuk-nation-s-oral-history-1.4046088>. Accessed 12/12/18.

that had been bestowed. Names, and their accompanying symbolic property (masks, the right to certain dances, myths) had to be validated in this way because potlatching was a core obligation of chiefs and nobles. The highest-ranking chiefly titles also contained rights to land and its rich resources, especially salmon streams. Feasting on salmon at potlatches was thus indexical of the wealth of the land and, hence, of the chief himself. As with other Northwest Coast societies, slavery was widespread; slaves were former war captives or their descendants, who provided the bulk of the labor for crucial activities such as cutting wood and drawing water (Donald 1999; Harkin 1997, p.1-22).

Society was organized according to clan, of which there were four: Raven, Eagle, Killer Whale, Wolf, although inheritance was cognatic, rather than unilineal, which is more common in clan societies. In addition to the clan totem, individual lineages had secondary totems, which were displayed on poles, other carvings, and house front paintings. Among noble families, intermarriage with other tribes was common, leading to a regional system of alliances. Warfare was prevalent, with a prime objective being the taking of slaves, and, later, control of the fur trade (Harkin 1997, p.6).

Religion included the honoring of important food species in first fruits ceremonies. Salmon, in particular, were treated with respect, as it was believed that they could choose not to return to spawning grounds, causing famine. It is certainly the case that such rituals had the pragmatic effect of conserving crucial species of salmon and other marine resources, as it was within the chief's power to declare a fixed season on particular species and runs of salmon, as well as other resources (Harkin 2007). In addition to first fruits rituals, there was a series of masked rituals that constituted the Winter Ceremonial. During this time of darkness and bad weather, when normal human activities such as hunting and fishing were severely curtailed, it was believed that spirits antithetical to human life were loosed upon the world. These included spirits of disease and death, with the highest-ranking being the *hamatsa*, or cannibal dance. These possessing spirits were eventually 'tamed,' allowing the initiate to return to society. With the return of spring, the world returned to its normal human-centric state, and the menacing spirits were exiled until next winter (Harkin 1997, p.10-18).

Northwest Coast culture, including the Heiltsuk, is renowned for its fine artwork, much of which was connected to the Winter Ceremonial. However, in addition to esoteric items such as masks, there was considerable artwork that was public, such as totem poles, house fronts, and textiles. The abundance of cedar allowed for monumental art as well as large chiefly houses. Natural dyes were used to paint wooden surfaces; mostly, this consisted of red and black, although the Heiltsuk also possessed a shade of blue prior to contact (Jonaitis 1988; Jonaitis and Glass 2010).

Contact and Early History

First contact with Europeans probably occurred in 1793 with George Vancouver's voyage. Captain Cook's third voyage had reached Nootka Sound to the south in 1778, but made no contact with the northern groups. It is possible that intermittent contact with Chinese sailors predated European contact, but there is no direct evidence for that. The existence of Chinese coins in the region could be a product of extensive trading networks along the northern Pacific Rim. In any case, the arrival of Vancouver was a signal event. According to oral tradition, Vancouver distributed brass thimbles, which were displayed at a Heiltsuk potlatch as a spiritual treasure (Harkin 1997, pp.124-125, 132).

Although early contacts with the English were intermittent and friendly, soon English migration to Victoria and southern Vancouver Island began to displace native people, leading to the establishment of a colonial government and the adoption of a '*mission civilatrice*' towards native people. Smallpox and other deadly diseases spread through native populations, leading to massive loss of population (Boyd 1999). This was exacerbated by an increase in intertribal warfare, probably arising out of competition for fur trade wealth. At the same time, fur trade wealth invigorated the potlatch system, which reached a climax in the late 19th century. The loss of life from disease resulted in a number of vacant titles, which were often filled by '*nouveaux riches*,' whose wealth came from the fur trade. The availability of metal tools and commercial paint led to a florescence of traditional art and architecture, which found new forms and media (argillite, e.g.) that were not feasible before the arrival of outside goods (Fisher 1977, p.21; Harkin 1997, p.47).

The fur trade was an early example of globalization, as it involved trade between the Northwest Coast, China, Europe, and the east coast of North America, with Hawaii serving as an entrepôt. Initially, the trade was ship-based but eventually, as in other parts of Canada, the Hudson's Bay Company established forts along the coast, to intercept furs before they could be traded to American ships (McDonald 1994). One of these was Fort McLoughlin, built on Campbell Island, at the site of the new village of Bella Bella (located about two miles south of the current village). It opened in 1833, and operated for about ten years, when the Hudson's Bay Company replaced forts with steamers plying the Inside Passage. During this time the village grew, as formerly autonomous groups coalesced into a tribal entity. The Heiltsuk were known to be particularly shrewd traders, and often acted as middlemen for other native people, who actually collected the furs. Bills of landing of this era tell the tale of increasing material wealth. At first the goods are utilitarian: guns, steel tools, cooking pots, and utensils. They began to include luxury items, such as silverware, colorful bolts of cloth, and crystal. By midcentury locks were among the items going into Bella Bella (Harkin 1997, p.139).

This story of increasing consumption of manufactured goods reflects a common story among Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Traditional clothing, made mostly of the soft inner bark of the cedar, was replaced by wool and cotton clothing. Traditional ways of cooking and eating were transformed by the acquisition of kitchen implements and place settings. Even houses were transformed, from the traditional longhouses to Victorian style frame houses (Harkin 2005). This led to major changes in social organization, as extended kin groups no longer cohabited, but instead nuclear families with generational extensions constituted the main residential unit. The new household was also a property-owning unit, with the new luxury items being an important part of that property, and thus of the family's prestige. Hence the sudden popularity of locks (Harkin 1997, p.139).

It is evident that the Heiltsuk were quick to adopt the consumer mentality that gripped Native people in North America more generally in the early phases of post-contact life. An entire world of new goods was available, many of which made fundamental chores such as wood chopping and food preparation significantly easier. At the same time, the potlatch culture of the Northwest Coast had prepared Heiltsuk people to adapt easily to consumer culture. Although the point of the potlatch was to give away goods, it nevertheless encouraged a mentality of distinction: items were graded according to their quality and rarity (Bourdieu 1987). This segues easily into the idea of obtaining prestige goods for display in a household context, as, for instance at Christmas celebrations. This is the first of two capitalist subjectivities to take hold in the Heiltsuk world (Harkin 1997, p.132).

Time Discipline and Methodism

If the trader-consumer subjectivity largely segued with traditional Heiltsuk values, the transformation of Heiltsuk people into capitalist laborers was more problematic. In a slave-owning, ranked society, the expectation was that those of chiefly and noble rank would not concern themselves with physical labor, except insofar as it was connected with prestigious activities, such as wood carving and canoe making. Indeed, one interesting early venture was the organization of master canoe makers into a sort of boat-building collective, that produced fishing and other vessels commercially (Donald 1999). However, the settler colonial state did not encourage Native entrepreneurship, but rather assumed a role for them as a proletariat for the developing economy of British Columbia. It was assumed that they would take menial jobs in fish canneries and work for White interests in commercial fishing, logging, and other resource extraction industries (Knight 1996; Menzies and Butler 2001, 2008). Although Native people were ideally situated to control the commercial fishing industry, a variety of political and legal measures were used to limit their ability to do so (Newell 1993).

If one aspect of the post-contact world was the enhancement of aspects of traditional culture, notably artwork and potlatching, this is far from the complete picture of Heiltsuk life in the mid-19th century. I have already mentioned the great loss of life due to European diseases; in some areas of the Northwest Coast mortality approached 80-90% of the total population (Boyd 1999). Death on this scale is scarcely imaginable. What is more, such plagues often preyed primarily on the elderly and children, leading to a huge loss of cultural knowledge and memory, as well as to a sense of disconnection with the future. Moreover, the fundamental cultural system, including taboos and norms, was threatened if not overturned. In some extreme cases, surviving members effectively renounced their traditional culture (Harkin 2004). Sorcery accusations—a mark of social dysfunction—proliferated. To this was added the scourge of alcohol, and the rise of prostitution and other sorts of formerly unthinkable practices, and a picture emerges of Native society as hopelessly debauched and in need of salvation. Although originating in the colonial press (especially the newspaper *The Colonist*) as well as Protestant missionary writings, such an image was adopted by many native people, including prominent Heiltsuk people.

One such person, known in the historical record as ‘Bella Bella Jack,’ later baptized Arthur Ebbstone, found himself in the early 1870s in a Victoria establishment, a tavern converted into a storefront church. According to his own account, he had been drinking profusely prior to his attendance at the church. There he became an enthusiastic convert to protestant Christianity (probably Methodism, but possibly non-denominational). He returned to Bella Bella with a Bible and began to preach a redemptive message. Reflecting the admonition of the fifth commandment to ‘remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy,’ Ebbstone kept track of the days and raised a Union Jack up a pole each Sunday (Harkin 1997, pp.107-108).

Rarely do we see a symbolic action so perfectly epitomizing a transitional historical moment. Employing the traditional cultural device of the pole to a new purpose; raising a symbol of the settler colonial oppressors, but one that accorded perfectly with Heiltsuk concepts of heraldry and display—all bespeak both irony and crisis. (Irony is a condition of culture rapid change, as in *Don Quixote*). It has been said that the orientation of Indigenous peoples is primarily spacial, as opposed to the Western primacy of temporality (Rosaldo 1980; Guo 2003). Here we can see the contrast between the pole, which is a spatial marker, implying territorial ownership, among other things, and the flagpole, which serves as a temporal marker. (Think also of the

use of flags as a marker of whether a head of state is in residence, or the practice of lowering flags to half-staff to mark an event).

It is not a question of course of a simple opposition between space and time, however, as Indigenous cultures (however defined) clearly possess a sense of temporality, just as colonial societies quite clearly possess a concept of space, manifest in their quest for territorial expansion. Rather, it has to do with how time is imagined: as, for instance, larger cycles linked to nature, or as a quantity to be measured, divided, and subdivided (Munn 1992). In his seminal article on time discipline, the Marxist historian E.P. Thompson quotes Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*: remembering 'when one-handed clocks sufficiently subdivided the day' (Thompson 1967, p.56). Thus two distinct styles of temporality, what Pocock (1967) calls 'social time,' linked to season, ritual, economic and social activity, can be contrasted to disciplinary time, something, as T.S. Eliot said, to be 'measured out in coffee spoons' (1915). Disciplinary time is scalable; rather than linked to a definite and limited activity, such as salmon fishing or the harvest, it was a universal quantity to be applied to a range of activities. Needless to say, this latter concept of time has won the day and is a central feature of our neoliberal order (Koeber 2017). However, it is worth pausing to consider how revolutionary this would have appeared to the Heiltsuk.

Not only did Ebbstone's action introduce a new mode of temporality based on the calendar, but it represented a brazen challenge to the traditional social order. Temporality was the traditional purview of the chief. He was responsible for declaring resource seasons via the first fruits ceremony, as well as the timing of potlatches and ceremonies. Not surprisingly, the reaction to his actions, including preaching, which also usurped chiefly privilege, was sharply divided, so much so that the important hereditary chief Moody Humchitt felt it necessary to host two reconciliation potlatches for the community; at the second of these he announced his intention to convert to Christianity (Harkin 1997, p.114). This, combined with the mass conversion of an important sub-group (as Bella Bella was settled by various groups that had migrated from other islands), led to a consensus view in the community that Christianity was to be the future and that a mission would be desirable. There were notable dissenters, but the wheels were in motion (Harkin 1997).

Chiefs and wealthy nobles raised funds and repeatedly approached the Methodists about establishing a mission in the village. Finally, in the summer of 1880 a Native preacher named William H. Pierce arrived, using an old Hudson's Bay Company warehouse as a makeshift church (Edwards 2005; Pierce 1933). His reception was lukewarm, partly because much of the population was at fishing camps, but also probably because he was a Native preacher, when what the community desired, at least in hindsight, was a White missionary who could bring the whole suite of White knowledge and technology, viewed from the Native perspective as a strong form of spiritual power. Within several years, this wish would be fulfilled, with the establishment of a permanent mission manned by a medically-trained missionary, who also oversaw a school. Throughout this process, it is remarkable how much money was raised by the Heiltsuk themselves for building a school, church, and hospital, and for other purposes. It is important to view the process of cultural change that ensues as being a cooperative enterprise, rather than as something imposed wholly from the outside (Harkin 1997, pp.110-114).

Methodism and the Making of Working-Class Subjectivities

Disciplinary time was a central feature of the Methodist technology designed to transform the Heiltsuk person into a functioning member of the new proletariat of Native people in British Columbia (see Burrows 1987). Once a permanent church was established, a bell was purchased. This announced not only church services and events in the liturgical calendar, but also hours of the day, especially the time to rise and begin work, and the time to go home after work. Much like the bell in a small Catholic village or the factory whistle in a working-class town, the Bella Bella bell regimented Heiltsuk bodies temporally.

A variety of other disciplinary techniques were employed to regiment Heiltsuk bodies, to make them pliable for potential capitalist employers. Much of this was centered on questions of sexuality, especially of women. Thus European clothing was mandated; although allowing and even encouraging fashionable styles—as a means of strengthening consumerist subjectivities—clothing was required to be ‘modest,’ and, like all women’s clothing of the day, physically restrictive. Women were monitored in other ways as well, especially in terms of personal hygiene and household management. ‘Cleanliness is next to Godliness’ is a particularly Methodist credo, proclaimed by John Wesley himself. Indeed, as part of a daily routine, or ‘method,’ cleaning, whether of oneself or one’s possessions and surroundings, becomes a keystone (Foucault 1979:30; Harkin 1996). The wife of the missionary (herself often trained in both theology and medicine) was the point person for this initiative; on one occasion she led a meeting of the Ladies’ Auxiliary in a session where brooms were constructed from pine straw (see Hare and Barman 2007). This was of course predicated on the prior adoption of Victorian architectural styles, which included plank, rather than dirt floors. This not only gave women ‘proper’ houses to maintain, but allowed for far greater legibility and control than the old log houses had. Not only were fewer people living in them, but large ground-level windows allowed others—not necessarily only the missionary—to observe activities within the house and its state of cleanliness. This panopticonal milieu represented a completely new social formation for the Heiltsuk, although in some ways it was built on a foundation of social mistrust that was the product of a newly-amalgamated social unit, which expressed itself in sorcery accusations in the traditional system. Under the missionary regime, this was replaced by gossip and direct reporting to the missionary and to key Heiltsuk members of the congregation (Harkin 2005).

Methodism is, of course, the prototypical creed of the working class. As Thompson puts it: ‘Methodism was profoundly marked by its origins; the poor man’s Dissent of Bunyan, of Dan Taylor, and—later—of the Primitive Methodists was a religion *of* the poor; orthodox Wesleyanism remained as it had commenced, a religion *for* the poor’ (Thompson 1966, p.38). It was seen as a means for the poor to enter the lowest tiers of respectability in what would become the lower middle class, much as a sinner may expect to enter the lowest tiers of heaven. *Contra* Calvinism, both states could only be achieved through rigorous self-discipline and submission to hegemonic orders, rather than inherent grace. If we agree with Weber that Calvinism is the ideology of the entrepreneurial class (and, as such, resonates rather profoundly with traditional Heiltsuk beliefs, by which wealth is the overt result of the possession of sacred power), Methodism is the ideology of factory foremen and clerks (La Violette 1961; Weber 1976).

The appearance of Methodism in British Columbia owes much to the immigration of working-class Englishmen there in the mid 19th century (see Grant 1984; Scott 2005). For men such as Charles M. Tate, who emigrated from England seeking wealth in mining and other manual

labor, the situation of the Natives was comparable to that of the unreformed working class he encountered in both England and British Columbia, vulnerable to the evils of drink, gambling, and prostitution (Harkin 1997, p.102). Methodism and the disciplined life it promised was an antidote to this, one which he had seen work effectively on himself. Thus, it was with honest zeal and a desire to save these poor sinners that he approached his preaching. Along with Thomas Crosby, a contemporary missionary who hailed from a working-class background in Ontario, these qualities made him very persuasive to Native audiences (Crosby 1914).

At the level of explicit discourse, the Methodist program was undoubtedly beneficial to many. One of my most elderly informants, who was in his nineties in the 1980s spoke with great pride of his successful career working in commercial shipping. Others spoke proudly of long hours at the cannery at Rivers Inlet, which clearly required the techniques of temporal and bodily discipline taught by Methodism. Indeed, the Rivers Inlet cannery provided a conundrum and litmus test to missionaries: on the one hand, the people were freed from the panoptic surveillance of the village, and so might revert to previous form. At the same time, like children set free, they had the opportunity to demonstrate responsibility and self-discipline. At the more implicit level of Gramscian hegemony, Methodism dovetailed with the program of settler colonialism: Methodists were taught to respect all authority, whether religious, economic, or political. As Thompson says: 'Thus at this level Methodism appears as a politically regressive, or 'stabilising,' influence, and we find some confirmation of Halévy's famous thesis that Methodism prevented revolution in England in the 1790s (Thompson 1966, p.42). Methodism was surely no Liberation Theology.

It is not necessary, of course, to posit that Methodism was consciously used as a tool of oppression by anyone in authority; in fact, like the sources Thompson quotes, the British Columbia elite were mostly highly disdainful of Methodism and its 'rabble' (Thompson 1966, p.43). However, the government implicitly recognized the role of Methodism, and other Christian denominations, in producing docile citizens in that they funded church-run residential schools, Dickensian institutions that distilled the techniques of discipline, while preparing pupils for 'industrial' occupations (Haig-Brown 1988). In fact, Methodism fulfilled several key goals of the settler colonial state: creating docile citizens and workers, eliminating the social ills of the early post-contact period, and effecting ethnocide, the erasure of traditional culture and language.

Conclusion

This paper has shown how two forms of capitalist subjectivity were introduced to the Heiltsuk in the 19th century: one, early and easily, the other, later and harder. The first subjectivity—that of the trader-consumer—was adopted easily and freely by most Native groups in North America. The consequences would be unforeseeable and catastrophic, but they were also gradual and continuous with what had preceded. Commercial relations with Whites intensified, resulting finally in dependency. The second—the working-class subjectivity—required a renunciation of key aspects of Heiltsuk identity, such as equality with Whites, traditional spiritual beliefs and practices, gender categories, and so forth. It was this subjectivity, promoted in distilled form by Methodist missionaries but which attained a broader hegemony in British Columbia of the 19th century, which 'made' the Heiltsuk working class. It is important to point out that this ideological melding of Protestant theology and working-class subjectivity was far from uncommon among Northwest Coast societies, taking even more utopian forms in Metlakatla, Alaska, as Hosmer (1999) convincingly demonstrates.

To raise the specter of ‘false consciousness’ is to miss the point from an ethnohistorical perspective. For the Heiltsuk, bringing in the missionaries was a deliberate act, by which they hoped to take control of their own destiny and to play a role in the new, White-dominated capitalist system they saw developing. Unlike other tribes who were overrun by White settlers, the Heiltsuk remained sufficiently isolated to resist territorial displacement (although not territorial loss). This allowed them a degree of historical agency unavailable to many Indigenous people in North America.

Heiltsuk elders I interviewed in the 1980s stressed this aspect of historical agency as part of the DNA of the culture: to adapt, to seize new opportunities, and to be proactive. None that I spoke to questioned their ancestors’ decision of a century earlier, and, indeed, most viewed Methodism as part of the package of ‘traditional’ Heiltsuk culture. The irony for the Heiltsuk, and indeed for many rural communities, especially Indigenous ones, was that they were a working class lacking work, in a remote area that interested the metropole only as a source of raw materials or as territory through which to run a pipeline (see Menzies 2015).

Author Bio

Michael E. Harkin is professor of anthropology at the University of Wyoming. He is past president of the American Society for Ethnohistory and editor emeritus of *Ethnohistory*. He currently serves as Editor-in-chief of *Reviews in Anthropology*.

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The Work Arts and Crafts Do

Brian Hosmer, H.G. Barnard Chair of Western American History
The University of Tulsa

Abstract

This essay forms part of a suite of papers focused on work and belonging on the Wind River Reservation. This essay attempts to interrogate multiple meanings attached to work, by Native people and non-Indians, and across multiple work environments.

Keywords

Wind River Reservation, Native arts and crafts, arts and crafts as work

I'd wanted to interview Eva McAdams from the time I initiated my project on work and attitudes toward work on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. McAdams was a member of the Eastern Shoshone Tribe who along with Northern Arapahos share this reservation located in west central Wyoming. By the time of my first introduction to Wind River, McAdams was among the community's most famous residents, known nationally and internationally for her stunningly intricate beadwork, typically featuring her interpretation of the iconic Shoshone Rose motif. Her works regularly commanded prices in the thousands of dollars. Named a National Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1996, an award that recognizes a lifetime of achievement, McAdams also was the first American Indian and second artist all time to receive a Wyoming Governor's Award. Displayed in fine arts galleries and on the persons of powwow dancers, McAdams' art bridges the multiple registers of Native Arts and Crafts—fine art, collectable crafts, dance regalia, and commerce.³⁴

I wanted to meet McAdams because I thought she might be able to help me with my ongoing project exploring work, and ideas about working in mid-twentieth century Native communities. Entitled 'working and belonging,' this project attempts to interrogate multiple meanings attached to work, by Native people and non-Indians, and across multiple work environments. My work is inspired by Dan Usner's *Indian Work* (2009), which explores these issues in a compelling fashion, Alexandra Harmon's *Rich Indians* (2010), as well as a whole body of ethnohistories of economic change and Native culture, some of which are compelling studies by Jessica Cattelino (2008), Paige Raibmon (2005), and Colleen O'Neill (2005 & 2004). Scholarly studies of Indian Arts and Crafts are a bit outside my core interests, but I've benefited from groundbreaking work by Kathy M'Closky (2002), Erika Bsumek (2008), Clyde Ellis (2003), Brenda Child (2014), Jenny Tone-Pah-Hote (2013) and so many others.

³⁴ National Endowment for the Arts, Lifetime Honors. '1996 National Heritage Fellow, Eva McAdams.' http://www.nea.gov/honors/heritage/fellows/fellow.php?id=1996_08&type=bio; Rena Delbridge, 'Getting a bead on her heritage Eva McAdams turned a craft she learned into an art,' *Made in Wyoming: Our Legacy of Success* <http://madeinwyoming.net/profiles/mcadams.php>

Working and belonging contributes to these discussions by focusing not only on where and how native people work, but what they say about it. Work, it seems, can be understood as integrative and as alienating, as promoting individual achievement and interests and as oriented toward community. In this fashion, the practice of work, how it is organized, who works (and who doesn't) and how working (one's own and that of others) is described, speaks to the importance of laboring to community. To complicate further, assessments of working carry considerable weight in reservation contexts, where systemic characterizes conditions in some places, but where assumptions of an incongruity between Indians and working carry cultural connotations, as well as fiscal and economic.³⁵

So, I wanted to speak with Eva McAdams and learn something of the significance of 'art work' for Wind River and Indian communities at mid century. I wanted to learn something about associations between art and crafts, as cultural and aesthetic expressions, and as sources of material remuneration. I'm curious about the work that arts and crafts 'do'—to producers and consumers, and for observers and academics. I wanted to think more deeply about relief programs and the development of arts work, and about efforts—led by Indians and non-Indians—to promote and market crafts. Can we see arts and crafts as a job, as a hobby, as an avocation, as relief work? Can we detect any sense of meaning from the context in which art is produced, by whom and for whom? Why does it matter if arts and crafts are produced for marketplaces rather than for friends and family members? How can working for art, or the production of tribal or cultural arts, be an instrument of community belonging? Do Indians who produce arts and crafts, or participate in crafts production, become connected to community in meaningful ways?

Mostly though, I wanted to hear a renowned artist reflect upon her own career. I wasn't disappointed.

'I think I must have started when I was about seven years old. My grandmother, Mary Washakie, taught me how.' One summer, she 'decided that I would learn how to bead work. And she sat me down, I was not allowed to go out and play with the other children. I wanted to. I was very active. But she insisted that I sit down and learn how to do bead work, which I didn't want to do. So I sat down and learned how to do the bead work; and she was a very strict teacher.'

On one occasion, young Eva found a way to speed up her work by tying her knots on the underside of moccasins. Forced to untie an entire string, Eva asked her grandmother for an explanation.

' "Because it snags the white ladies' stockings if they buy the moccasins," she remembered, And, 'I thought, well I could care less about the damn white ladies' stockings.' ³⁶

³⁵ This essay is one of a suite of papers on 'Working and Belonging, on Wind River,' that includes "Dollar a Day and Glad to Have it": Work Relief on the Wind River Indian Reservation as Memory,' pp. 283-307 in *Native Pathways*; 'Working and Between-Ness,' pp. 237-250 in James Joseph Buss and C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa, eds., *Beyond Two Worlds: Critical Conversations on Language and Power in Native North America* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014); 'The Wyoming Indian: Indian New Deal Political Art,' in Padraig Kirwan and David Stirrup, eds., *The Art of Resistance and Resurgence*, edited by, (Forthcoming: Routledge Press). In-progress essays look at 'Indian Work is Cooperative Work,' and farming and ranching associations and programs at mid-century.

³⁶ Eva McAdams, interviewed by Brian Hosmer and Elaine Elliott, 18 August 2005. Transcript and recording in possession of author.

Upon some additional reflection McAdams offered this:

‘I was much too young, I feel now, to start on something like that. . . But it’s something that I was glad—after I grew up and got married that I was glad that I did because that’s the way we put a bean on the table.’

Put a bean on the table. This was an interesting phrase to me, particularly as it—or similar sentiments—dominated our discussions about bead work. Eva McAdams recalled that after she and her husband Alfred ‘Dutch’ McAdams acquired a piece of land, became small scale ranchers (something they did for decades) and started a family, ‘we cleared sage brush and the rocks and had our little kids along. . . and then I’d go in and tend to the family and then I’d sit up and sew until about two and doing necklaces and maybe little moccasins if I had the buckskin. And that was how we put the bean on the table because everything we got went back into the ranch. . . Every time I sold something, I put a dollar or two away in a little fund so when school time came by we have enough money to buy school clothes and school supplies.’ But still, even after winning awards, McAdams recalled

‘I had no thanks in my heart for my grandmother teaching me that. . . I had bitter feelings about the way I was taught. . . So I had no thanks for her.’³⁷

‘I didn’t like it; I didn’t appreciate it. I guess it has really saved me and my family because that’s how we were able to raise our little family was with the damn bead work.’³⁸ ‘I’ve had a hard life and the beadwork really helped.’

There is more to say about McAdams, who died in 2010 at the age of 82. But for now, I’d like to think about working for arts and crafts and the work that arts and crafts do—and what I think this may mean. Arts and crafts work is a complex phenomenon, operating as it did within and across a series of binaries: relief and enterprise, wage labor and cultural production, assimilation alongside self-determination, community and individuality. Arts and crafts represent work in that they are products of human labor that transform materials into objects of aesthetic and cultural value. These transformations are the work of muscle and sinew, eye and ear, hand and finger. But also of thought—arts and crafts are ideas made manifest. Sometimes, arts and crafts are work in the sense that ideas and ability are exchanged for other things of value, thus linking this work with labor performed in other contexts. Arts and crafts workers put that bean on the table. Work also holds cultural significance as in ‘sturdy work ethic’ and perhaps the inculcation of capitalist ethos, or as foundational to certain varieties of modernity. Thus invested with moral and ethical significance, work is understood to be foundational to individual character, essential to the health and functioning of community, society and nation.

Inculcating habits of work is also a form of work. In schools and churches, across and between empires, work ethic is promoted and valued. In this sense, work *can* be seen as socially and culturally integrative—as a means toward belonging and contributing—by promoting a sturdy work ethic among those presumed lacking in the same. In that sense, it is an instrument of colonialism carried out via the work of voluntary societies, groups, organizations and individuals. Finally, and just as inculcating work ethic is a form of work, so too does art perform work of its own. Arts and crafts do things, they act upon people in certain ways, and

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid

can be expected to do so. This means that the promotion and display of arts and crafts can be seen to act upon the craftsperson but also upon the broader society. Maybe this is what motivates me to think of working for art, working on art, working with art, and the work that arts and crafts perform.

I.

As it turns out, some of these basic principles had come into play just when Eva McAdams was learning her craft. Welfare agencies on Wind River employed her great aunt Eva Washakie as teacher, and then director, of various arts and crafts projects. In monthly school reports for September and October 1934, Visiting Teacher at Large Laura Dester reported on the work that relief performed for Arapaho and Shoshone women. It broke ‘down the barrier between the home and school,’³⁹ she wrote, so that ‘the mothers [are now] showing an interest in school affairs.’ It promoted health and hygiene, a Girl Scout troop dubbed ‘Sacajawea,’ courses in typing, shorthand, and advice on breaking the cycle of debt to local traders. ‘The work for women is essential both economically and socially,’ Dester reported, ‘they need the money for the maintenance of their homes and they need an occupation to give them new interests. It is a well known fact that many of our Indian women spend their leisure time at the ‘games.’⁴⁰

Arts and crafts work was central to relief efforts but fully integrated into broader agendas (O’Neill 2012). By the fall of 1934, Eva Washakie was tasked with reviving Shoshone beadwork designs assumed to be ‘almost lost.’ The next year, she became ‘Assistant and Teacher of Arts and Crafts at the government day school,’ and on a project now fortified with Federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds.⁴¹ By 1936, Eva and sister Elizabeth had emerged as the principals in a WPA sponsored tanning project where groups of women ‘skinned the deer and we have the meat in the storage to be used for relief families,’ with ‘hides. . . tanned by the women and buckskin garments. . . made in the WPA work room.’ The tanning project, Dester reported, ‘appeals to many of our older women,’ who ‘are making buckskin garments which will be agency property. The work certainly has had an appeal for the older women and at the same time is interesting young girls in learning how to tan hides and leather work.’⁴²

These projects operated within a much broader context of relief work at Wind River that included conservation camps run by the Indian Emergency Conservation Work (Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division)⁴³, agricultural cooperatives administered jointly through the Soil Conservation Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs, and various other building, educational and conservation projects. In most circumstances, relief encompassed multiple objectives, from mitigating the worst effects of dire poverty, to transforming reservation environments and including more ambitious efforts to leverage relief funds into economic activities of a more permanent nature. They were geared toward transforming bodies and minds, and focused, often, upon perceived capacities of Indian workers. Leo Cottonoir, Eastern

³⁹ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for September 1934,’ NARA, RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, File 00-34-032.

⁴⁰ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for October 1934,’ RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, File 63136-34-032; Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for July 1935,’ NARA RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, File 00-35-032.

⁴¹ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for October 1935,’ NARA RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, File 3226-36-032.

⁴² Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for February 1936,’ NARA, RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, File 1149-37-032.

⁴³ <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2016/summer/ccc-id.html>

Shoshone, embodied the perceived benefits of work relief in an essay entitled ‘What the IECW has done for the Indian,’ which earned an award. Cottonoir, a camp worker and the supervisor, reflected on ‘a new hold and outlook in life.’ The Indian worker, ‘has gained a new confidence. He has shown he can do good work and in turn our government has shown it is striving to help the Indian get ahead, to boost him where he shows he deserves it.’⁴⁴

But if relief was supposed to stimulate the mind by engaging the hands and eyes, WPA wages were low (\$40 per month), and Indian women workers were paid in kind, as often as in cash.⁴⁵ Dester recognized the potential problem where ‘any permanent plan for the future of young people on the reservation will have to include some training and employment for the girls [as] Riverton and Lander are small and have very little to offer for employment for girls’ other than the occasional and less desirable work as domestics.⁴⁶ As if on cue, Eva Washakie resigned her first appointment as arts and crafts teacher after barely a month. Dester took it as a blow. ‘Eva Washakie’s resignation as Arts and Crafts Teacher, has been a serious occurrence this month. It has made us all feel we did not give Eva the cooperation, which she should have had. She came here young and enthusiastic and aspired to do much for her people. She wants to stay home for the remainder of the year as she wants to help her parents build a larger house. Both Eva and her parents have been in to see me and I feel that Eva will continue to work here, but needs time to find herself. The family has had considerable trouble.’⁴⁷

When she returned in 1935, it was to a more ambitious set of programs oriented around a sewing project transforming surplus material into curtains, bed spreads, and sheets, all to be used at the government hospital in Ft. Washakie, and dresses and slips made from Red Cross donations, distributed to women as a form of relief. By this time, projects reached into the schools because wrote Dester, ‘the primary motive is to develop a community project with local leaders.’ Under the direction of ‘a former Carlisle student. . . overseeing the sewing,’ the project now boasted ‘Shoshones and Arapahoes, full bloods and mixed bloods, all taking part in the work.’ Work exerted power. It overcame conflict between segments of the complex Wind River communities, and trained leaders. ‘Eva Washakie is doing very well in her work as Assistant and Teacher of Arts and Crafts at the government day school,’ read this report. ‘She is, however, the only Shoshone girl who holds any position of leadership.’ This concerned Dester who advised that ‘She should have college training,’ and in the margins ‘Why not her? She both needs & deserves it?’ ‘Sure does’ wrote a person identified only as ‘T.’⁴⁸

There is little evidence that Eva Washakie attended college, or received the kind of training that might enable her to assume management of arts and crafts work. The work that relief did was of one type, but not another.

Reports of Women’s WPA projects offer insights into ways the *language of work* shaped conceptualizations of arts and crafts efforts (Usner 2009). When Henrietta K. Burton of the Extension Division visited Wind River in 1940, she observed a comprehensive set of projects

⁴⁴ Leo Cottonoir, ‘What the IECW has done for the Indian,’ *The Tattler*, 15 February 1936. NARA, Rocky Mountain Branch. RG 75, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 79.

⁴⁵ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for November 1935, NARA RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, box 3, File 00-35-032.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for October 1934.’ RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, Folder 63136-34-032.

⁴⁸ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for December 1934. NARA RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, box 3, file 00-35-032.

that included sewing and hide tanning projects, training in domestic work, instruction on home making and food preparation, child care and general education, and a WPA mattress making project. Effects were noticeable—and highly gendered. While Indian men supposedly resented ‘the budgeting of time, money, and strength’ because ‘it interferes with their complacency and their ideas of leisure and enjoyment,’ women ‘seem to welcome the idea of working on plans that are definite.’ Wind River women ‘are interested in being busy with things they can do with their hands.’⁴⁹ Many of these projects, like mattress making, had expressions on reservations other than Wind River (O’Neill 2005, & 2012, Hosmer 2004).

II.

The focus of work projects on Wind River band to shift in the late 1930s, and gradually—very gradually—came to differentiate between relief and rehabilitation on the one hand, and arts and crafts on the other. The creation of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board in 1937 provided additional impetus for this change in direction by nurturing ‘traditional’ arts and crafts, for cultural purposes and sale (McLerran 2012; Schraeder 1983; Tone-Ha-Pote 2013). Finances also mattered. In April of 1941 State WPA administrator L.G. Flannery terminated Wind River’s sewing project. According to Eva M. Haas, Social Security Case Worker for Wind River, fully fifteen women, all heads of families, now ‘are left without means of support.’ Citing age restrictions limiting availability of social security, and limited funds under aid-to-dependent-children, Haas conceded desperation. ‘We are at a loss to know where to turn for help for these people.’⁵⁰

Relief and crafts projects felt the pinch, but adjusted. By August, Anna Antelope and Mae Cleveland left one beading project to join the ‘eighteen women very busy making ticks for their mattresses,’ at the St. Stephens Mission factory.⁵¹ In November came word that Elizabeth Friday and Lena Brown had been transferred to the Costume Project, which made beaded buckskin uniforms for the government school’s Drum and Bugle Corp. Meanwhile, John Goggles, Ed Aragon, and Paul Hanway hung on to their jobs making bedsteads, and Lucille Friday, 18 years old on the 24th of that month, ‘is very eager to be assigned [*to any project*], as she is the sole wage-earner in a household containing two families of 10 persons in all.’⁵²

Crafting seemed to hang on even as budget cuts undercut relief. Jessie Headley assumed a leadership position for the workshop at St. Michaels, and Pearl Posey, ‘very capable and educated beyond most of the women in her district’ moved to Arapahoe ‘where she will insist on high standards of workmanship.’ Mary Cleveland and Anna Agnes Antelope ‘were working at the mission in weaving,’ both having learned ‘to make baskets from the Sisters when they attended school there. It is planned that these women will assist at the Arapahoe center when the loom is received and they have become proficient in loom weaving.’ And that Costume Project ‘has such a large amount of work in store,’ that it would. . . seem desirable to transfer Beatrice Spoonhunter from Art to Costume’ and Mary Underwood ‘from Production to act as

⁴⁹ Supervisor’s Field Report, Wind River Agency, Fort Washakie, Wyoming. February 12 to March 30, 1940. NARA RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9.

⁵⁰ Eva M. Haas, Jesse D. Schultz, Memorandum to Forrest R. Stone, Superintendent. 21 April 1941. NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 247.

⁵¹ Mrs. J.D. Schultz, Welfare Worker, to Marguerite Johnson, Supervisor, Welfare Project Section, 26 August 1941 NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 247.

⁵² Mrs. J.D. Schultz, Welfare Worker, to Marguerite Johnson, Supervisor, Welfare Project Section, 26 August 1941 NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 247.

foreman of the Costume Project. Beatrice is a very fine bead worker, although not particularly talented,' she wrote, 'and will do splendid work on the costumes.'⁵³ Craft work, it seemed, had generated some staying power—and with that the opportunity to translate the labor of hands to the work of supervising others.

But by end of December 1941, even the band uniform project had collapsed, a victim of spending priorities shifted to wartime production. Stone reported 'so much unrest and hysteria' and requested some assistance in 'keeping our people busy' if only via Red Cross work.⁵⁴ In truth, action was already under way at Wind River. Some months earlier, and faced with 'a continuing need for employment for this group of women,' and having recently hired 'a Community Worker who has marked ability as a director of arts and crafts,' Stone proposed transforming the two sewing centers into arts and crafts facilities. 'It is my feeling,' he wrote, 'that in view of this set up, we might and probably should attempt a crafts project for twenty Indian women who will have need for such employment.' And as an added benefit, 'supervisory needs can be met' by Eva Haas and Bernice Brown [Arapaho], 'with. . .two Arapahoe women acting as leaders or instructors at each work center.'⁵⁵

This all coincided with the arrival of Jesse Donaldson Schultz on Wind River. Fresh from organizing a successful crafts cooperative on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, Schultz was the second—and much younger—wife of James Willard Schultz, the noted ethnographer, Indian enthusiast, and source for George Bird Grinnell's famous work on Blackfeet culture. Jessie Donaldson had been a teacher and student prior to meeting Schultz. By the mid-1930s their efforts to nurture a crafts cooperative had born fruit, and attracted the notice of Forrest Stone, then Superintendent at Blackfeet (Banks 1983).

Jessie Schultz worked to replicate her approach at Blackfeet soon after arriving on Wind River in 1940. Responsible for administering welfare programs including the mattress-making project, cooperative work, and arts and crafts, captured her attention and imagination.⁵⁶ In 1941, Schultz drafted an ambitious proposal for arts and crafts cooperatives on Wind River, which she forwarded to Stone. This initiative was designed to take advantage of a crafts project of longer standing, located at St. Michael's Episcopal Mission in Ethete, and managed by Sister Edith Adams. The St. Michael's project had been quite successful, nurturing Arapaho (and some Shoshone) crafts people, principally in beadwork, moccasins, and clothing of traditional design, some of which they sold on consignment from mission buildings or by other informal means. By 1941, Sister Edith had decided to exit the business, and turn production and distribution over to the Agency, probably because of Schultz' considerable experience. Her stock was valued at \$2,500, of which Sister Edith reserved the best items, assessed at \$500, for display, with the remainder to be sold on consignment.⁵⁷

Stone contacted H. G. Lockett, Principle of the Wind River Community Day School at Fort Washakie, proposing that Eva Halls and Sister Adams begin coordinating crafting effort already underway at this school and St. Michaels in Ethete. In this way, he nudged the groups

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Stone to Miss Virgil Payne, 30 December 1941. NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 247.

⁵⁵ Stone to L. G. Flannery, State WPA Administrator, 1 August 1941, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 247.

⁵⁶ Henrietta K. Burton, Supervisor's Report, United States Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Division of Extension and Industry. July 6-12 1941, NARA RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9.

⁵⁷ Henrietta K. Burton, Supervisor's Report, United States Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Division of Extension and Industry. July 6-12 1941, NARA RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9.

together ‘under the observation and guidance of Mrs. Schultz, but not with any financial responsibility. . . for the present.’ In the meantime, Stone dispatched Schultz to assess ‘the market for these articles, and check on the operations in the past. . .to determine. . .whether or not any money is being made; the approximate wage that the Indian women can earn, and what the need might be for continuing such a project.’ He also asked her to assess ‘the welfare of the community and value of such articles as are being turned out.’⁵⁸ Schultz was optimistic, stressing ‘the procedure of the Wind River Craft Shop has been satisfactory in the standards set for the quality of beads and buckskin used, for workmanship, and for designs and colors used.’ While Sister Adams had accumulated, but had not sold, items assessed at more than \$2,000 in retail value, Schultz saw a ready market for most items. ‘Since almost all of this stock of goods consists of small articles, which can sell for about a dollar, it is expected that the whole stock will move quickly,’ generating \$500 in commissions for selling the inventory, a profit that ‘will be sufficient to pay the salary of clerks, to meet overhead expenses, and make a few additional purchases of craft work.’ Schultz recommended allocating an additional \$1,500 to increase inventory, relocating the shop to a more heavily traveled place, selling at retail rather than wholesale, and particularizing store stock. ‘No two craft articles should be exactly alike, and the display of a large number of articles nearly alike tends to cheapen them in the eyes of the tourist.’⁵⁹

Two arts and crafts associations resulted, one for the Shoshones at Ft. Washakie and the other an Arapaho association located at Ethete, with organizational programs that echoed New Deal associations between arts and rehabilitation. But while Wind River craft associations fused those priorities through arts and crafts, they also rationalized production and marketing. This, in turn, reflected the developing purposes of BIA’s Indian Arts and Crafts Board, and changed policy priorities, as the New Deal orientation toward self-government and cultural revival gradually subsided before a new emphasis on economic self-sufficiency and commerce. The proposal for arts and crafts associations illustrates this point. With four basic objectives:

‘To engender in craftsmen a deeper interest in their inherent culture; to stimulate a zeal for acquiring the old craft techniques from the surviving Indians who practice them; to foster a sense of pride in their ability to compete with craftsmen elsewhere in creating beautiful craft articles; to supplement the family income by giving craftsmen the opportunity to market their produce,’⁶⁰

The Shultz program envisioned a bureaucratic structure, complete with Craft Clubs, each headed by officers, located in community centers and calling weekly meetings. A Craft Board composed of representation from each craft club, a tribal council person, the superintendent and a business manager of the shop and supervisor of production (identified as an Indian Service employee). It also featured an educational program designed to train workers and maintain standards of production. This program envisioned a paid secretary-treasurer for each tribe (who ‘must have the ability to deal with people, to reject work without giving offense, to act as educational guide to craftsmen submitting work for sale’), and systematized production, linking instruction with assessment, and on to marketing and compensation. Board members

⁵⁸ Stone to H. C. Lockett, Principal, Wind River Community School, Fort Washakie, WY 31 January 1941 NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372.

⁵⁹ Jessie Donaldson Schultz to H. G. Lockett, 24 May 1941, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372.

⁶⁰ Jessie D. Schultz, ‘Purpose of Crafts Among the Arapahoe and Shoshone Indians,’ 24 April 1941, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372.

were encouraged to review production, and provide women with ‘the opportunity of receiving criticism before the article is passed on’ in order to ‘be spared the embarrassment of having her product rejected by the Cooperative Purchasing Committee.’⁶¹

As significantly, the proposal for craft clubs reflected a move to rationalize production. Accordingly, members should ‘be led to think in terms of a large organization of craft workers’; ‘taught the general principles of buying and selling goods and of the necessary allowance for overhead in running a business’; ‘taught the necessity of looking toward selected leaders for advice and guidance in conducting their craft affairs’; ‘generally be taught to formulate their own ideas regarding their future organization so that their Cooperative, when formed, will come from the minds and the wishes of its individual group members’; and ‘feel that they are conducting their own affairs through their selected leaders, and that whatever success may come to the Cooperative Craft Shop will mean success for its individual members.’⁶²

Finally, Schultz urged craft associations to emphasize traditional (and commercially viable) arts and crafts, from beading to doll making, from gloves, belts and jewelry to ‘coin purses, necklaces, and beaded warriors on beaded horses,’ emphasize different techniques, Shoshone and Arapaho (Eva McAdams would appreciate reference to Arapaho ‘lazy stitch’), and recover ‘old native crafts. . .lost to both Shoshone and Arapahoe Indians,’ including ‘the art of basket making which was formally done by the Shoshone.’⁶³

Schultz estimated a total investment of \$6580 to begin the projects, and in a later communication outlined compensation rates (which varied based upon the product), identified possible participants, including Mary Underwood, Lena Brown, Elizabeth Friday, Jessie Headly and Beatrice Spoonhunter at Ethete, and Katie Headley, Judith Bell, Myra Brown, Mary G. Lodge, Rose Dresser, Bridget Armajo, Margaret Spoonhunter and Viola Oldman at Arapahoe.⁶⁴

III.

In July of 1942, the Arapaho business council approved the creation of a Cooperative Arts and Crafts Association, and authorized application for membership in the Northern Plains Indian Crafts Association (NPICA). The Shoshone business council followed suit shortly. With that, arts and crafts activity on Wind River entered a new phase. An instrument of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, the NPICA functioned to market arts and crafts produced at several plains reservations, Rocky Boy’s and Blackfeet along with Shoshone and Arapaho. Its Browning, Montana store displayed a wide range of products, which it purchased wholesale from crafters. Reservation crafts association received funds from NPICA and paid crafters after meeting administrative expense. Jessie Schultz oversaw activities at Wind River, communicated directly with officials in Browning, reported to the Superintendent, and coordinated the activities of the Indian-run cooperative associations.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Jessie Donaldson Schultz, Eva M. Haas to Stone, Re: Educational Program in Cooperation with the Wind River Indian Craft Shop’ 25 June 1941, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

⁶⁵ Forrest R. Stone to Alfreda Ward, Manager, Northern Plains Indian Arts and Craft Shop, 25 July 1942, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

The arrangement functioned adequately in some respects. By 1944 the Wind River Association had 77 members divided into two groups—St. Stephens and St. Michaels; Shoshones had 37 members. Arapahos specialized in moccasins, necklaces, blankets, medallions, cradles, turtle buttons, feathered lizards, belts, coin purses and beanies; Shoshones made gloves, moccasins, hand bags, dolls, buckskin horses with saddle and rider, beaded neckties, vests and jackets. Balance sheets from the 1940s indicate sales figures reaching \$10,000 annually for both associations, with most coming through the Browning store, with the remainder generated through retail sales in Fort Washakie and Ethete.⁶⁶ Local crafts associations fielded numerous requests, from individual consumers, retailers and collectors and Schultz reported ‘fairly good’ production but found it ‘impossible to keep pace with the demand.’ These communications reveal new articulations between production, marketing and work. Under the direction of Mabel Morrow of the BIA’s educational division, the government initiated a program to place Wind River crafts in gift shops at National Parks. Instructions emphasized separating ‘hand made’ articles from copies and suggested marketing to ‘dude ranchers.’⁶⁷

Beaded moccasins were among the items most in demand. In 1944, for instance, Jessie Schultz advised a Mrs. W.W. Davis of Dallas, Texas to ‘make an outline of your foot and let us know the size of shoe you ordinarily wear [and] we shall be glad to have a pair of moccasins made for you by either the Shoshone or Arapaho craft workers. The Shoshones use floral pattern in their work,’ she continued, ‘while the Arapahoes use conventional designs and parfleche soles.’ While ‘both types are beautifully made,’ Schultz advised Davis that since ‘Arapahoes use more beads, their moccasins run about a dollar higher than the Shoshones’—\$6.50 to \$8.50 a pair depending upon size.’⁶⁸ From Laramie, Anita Schmidt, owner of the Connor Dress Shop, asked whether Shoshone had any crafts for sale. ‘The history of the Shoshone Indians has always been of interest to me, and I would like to visit the Reservation.’ Superintendent Woodrow W. Palmer welcomed the visit, any time, and forwarded a price list.⁶⁹ Occasionally, correspondence offered Wind River crafters an opportunity to manage production on their own. In 1947 Superintendent John C. Cooper endorsed a suggestion to initiate production of jade jewelry and identified Ben Carrier, Lloyd Dewey, Ambrose Wanstall, Buster Crispin and Bill Wheeler as ‘talented persons.’ On the other hand, a request from Mr. Mack Perry of Brooklyn, New York for drums, earned this polite rebuff, ‘Both the Arapahoe and Shoshone Indians make drums but only for their own use in connection with their ceremonials. It may be possible for you to procure drums, however, from the Northern Plains Indian Crafts Association.’ And a request from the San-Tone Moccasin Company of San Antonio for ‘skilled Indians that would

⁶⁶ Northern Plains Indian Crafts Association, Browning. Financial Statement September 1944; J.D. Schultz to J. M. Cooper, Supt., A Brief Statement of the Arapaho and Shoshone Crafts Associations, 1 October 1947; NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904; Excerpt from Report by Warren G. Spaulding, 10 March 1944, RG 435, Records of the IABC, Entry 26, Box 9.

⁶⁷ Excerpt from Report by Warren G. Spaulding, 10 March 1944, RG 435, Mabel Morrow to Stone, 14 August 1942, Rose K. Brandt, Superintendent of Indian Education to W. W. Beatty, 25 August 1942, NARA RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9;

⁶⁸ Jessie D. Schultz to Mrs W. W. Davis, Dallas Texas. 29 April 1944, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

⁶⁹ Miss Anita Schmidt, Laramie Wyoming to W. W. Palmer, 18 January 1953; Palmer to Schmidt, 23 January 1953, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

do beading on the leather that I would send to them' generated the terse reply: 'These people do not make a practice of doing their beadwork on materials provided by other shops.'⁷⁰

But tensions simmered just underneath the surface. In 1947, Ethel Tillman and Suzette Wagon, Chairman and Treasurer of the Shoshone Crafts Association complained that Mrs. Mabel Mueller, manager of the NPICA had 'advised us that we must stop production on a large number of items now being made by the Shoshone.' Writing, 'We joined the Northern Plains Association because we were told we would be able to work the year around,' not just through the summer. Reminding Cooper that 'the Shoshone women want to do craft work and will produce. . .excellent merchandise during the winter months if they are allowed to,' she requested clarification on 'our obligations. . . to the N.P. Ass'n. When we find out how we stand, we will know better whether we should consider withdrawing from the Ass'n and trying to do our own marketing.'⁷¹

This was one of a series of inquiries from leadership of crafts association that basically turned on a couple issues. The first concerned production and marketing and followed Mueller's attempt to dictate which items would be marketed, in what quantities, and at which times of the year. The second involved finances. By the late 1940s, the Northern Plains Association was running an annual deficit, and had come to rely upon loans to pay its bills to the two Wind River associations. Schultz acknowledged administrative problems and traveled to Billings on several occasions to restructure the cooperative store. But she also endorsed a top down, bureaucratized system of management that reduced the autonomy of local associations, and deprived crafters of income they needed, and expected. In 1947, for instance, Shultz acknowledged that NPICA owed the two organizations nearly \$6,000, leaving the associations in debt to the tribal councils to the tune of nearly \$20,000. All the while, craft associations had 'entered upon the production of expensive crafts such as the weaving of draperies and bed spreads and fashioning buckskin jackets, entailing the expenditure of large sums for materials and slow returns for finished products. It is this combination of factors that has made the continuation of crafts production at Wind River a serious threat.' Regardless, Mueller argued 'giving the central office the opportunity to slow down on certain items until the old merchandise was disposed of certainly helped in buying this past year. The curtailment was difficult for the workers, but looking at it from a long point of view, it helps keep operating capital safe.' This remained a bone of contention. In 1965, Morrow chastised Ethel Tillman for a shortage of moccasins and forwarded 'three dozen sheets' listing needed articles. 'This is of extreme importance,' she wrote, 'because unless this is done . . . workers continue to make the items we do not necessarily need. . . and prevents the maximum in crafts production.'⁷²

Back in 1946, W. W. Beatty, Director of the OIA's Education Division, supported the arrangement and opposed an expansion of retail sales through reservation stores. Citing existing commitments, specifically 'the Arapahoes have contracted to furnish fabric material

⁷⁰ W. W. Palmer to Mack Perry, Peripole Products, Inc., 16 April 1951; J.M. Cooper to Willard W. Beatty, 11 December 1947; Beatty to Cooper, Mrs Dee Briggs, San-Tone Moccasin Company, San Antonio 23 September 1949; Mrs Dee Briggs to Palmer, 23 August 1949, 20 January 1947, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

⁷¹ Ethel Tillman, Chairman and Suzette Wagon, Treasurer, Shoshone Crafts Association to J.C. Cooper, 30 September 1949, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

⁷² J. D. Schultz to Cooper, 1 January 1947, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904; Mahala E. Mueller to Jessie D. Schultz, 25 February 1950, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

for the decoration of several hotel rooms in Lander,’ and ‘special orders for moccasins, jackets, etc., from shops in Dubois and Jackson,’ Beatty proposed ‘to continue the affiliation with the Northern Plains group.’ In response, district director Paul L. Flickinger wrote, ‘We are all going to have to do considerable missionary work all over again in this connection’⁷³ But by the middle ‘60s, the relationship between the Northern Plains ‘middle man’ and the crafts people had soured further. ‘I am very interested in seeing these women keep up their arts and crafts and getting a market that will make it work their while,’ said an attendee to a 1964 council meeting, ‘Indian Arts and Crafts shouldn’t be let die just because it doesn’t give them enough money to make it worthwhile.’⁷⁴

Epilogue

A 1970s effort to market Shoshone crafts turned attention toward artists as well as their work. Perhaps drawing upon a recent surge in the popularity of Indian cultures, this glossy brochure portrayed crafts people less as workers and more as guardians of disappearing cultures and featured brief autobiographical statements. Opposite a photograph of Millie Guina read ‘I started learning how to sew, do beadwork, embroidery, and tan hides at the age of fourteen. I am glad that I learned how to do this type of work because many of my people do not know how it is done.’ Marian Day, ‘When I was a teenager I participated in the Lander Pioneer Days. I was chosen as the Shoshone Indian Queen for the event. It was at this time I became interested in craftwork. My mother taught me many things about traditional Shoshone craftwork.’

But one blurb stands out. ‘The price of beads and buckskin has doubled in cost over the last five years as everything else has, yet many craft workers continue to sell their finished work at the same low prices we did ten years ago. I have watched so many bead workers go and get jobs, putting their beads away, it makes me wonder if maybe this wasn’t the best thing to do.’⁷⁵

Eva McAdams has the last word, as the first. Her words, unromantic, practical as they are, refocuses our attention on arts as work and the work arts perform. Thinking about arts in this fashion allows us to catch a glimpse of these complex associations between arts and, labor and crafts. It’s a place where non-natives saw arts and crafts as a means toward character reformation, of a sort, and then as a way to market Indianness to audiences outside the reservation. There was a bureaucratic vision, reflective of type of association between art and work. Indians undoubtedly felt the same intersections of work and art, working for art, and the work that art does. But for some, at least, producing beautiful things also.

Author Bio

Brian Hosmer holds the H.G. Barnard Chair in Western American History at the University of Tulsa. His publications pivot around intersections between economic change and Indigenous nationhood in the 20th century. His books (solely authored or edited) include: *American Indians in the Marketplace: Persistence and Innovation among the Menominees and Metlakatlans, 1870- 1920* (1999), *Native Pathways: Economic Development and American*

⁷³ Paul L. Flickinger, District Director, to W. W. Beatty, 15 November 1946; Beatty to Flickinger, 25 November 1946, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904. Mabel Morrow to Ethel Tillman, 4 February 1965, NARA, RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9.

⁷⁴ Joint Business Council Meeting, Ft. Washakie, 18 November 1964, RG 75, CCF, Box 37, File 3249-63-054, pt. 12.

⁷⁵ ‘Shoshone Arts and Crafts’ n.d. (ca. 1975) NARA RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9.

Indian Culture in the Twentieth Century (2004), *Tribal Worlds: Critical Studies in American Indian Nation Building* (2013), *Native Americans and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman* (2010), and *Indians of Illinois* (forthcoming). He has published papers on reservation newsletters published during the 1930s, 'Community-Engaged Scholarship' in Indian country, and a study of Miami Nationhood based on papers held in the Gilcrease Museum archives (which received an award from the Oklahoma Historical Society). His next project will be a history of travel and American identity, tentatively entitled *A Trip to the States: An American Story*.

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From Scratch: Tribal Colleges as Acts of Revolution & the Establishment of Pawnee Nation College as an Act of Community Empowerment

Todd Fuller

First Move:

The act of establishing a tribal college¹ is an act of revolution.

How so? you might ask. To which I'd respond: establishing and operating a tribal college is revolutionary because:

/ It seeks (in part) to undermine 240-plus years of US policy AND to *correct* 500-plus years of European genocidal practices.

/ It seeks (in part) to unsettle/dismantle the settler/nation and its occupation force.

/ It seeks to empower and embolden Native students for the purpose of serving family, community, culture, and Indian Country.

/ It seeks to provide education and training opportunities which will allow students to secure appropriate (desired) employment – and thereby adequate resources for self, family, and beyond.

/ In this way, it seeks the dignity of work and creativity to meet personal, spiritual, financial, and community needs.

At least, that's a few reasons.

Here's one more: '*merciless Indian Savages*,' from the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

The passage reads this way:

‘ . . . The History of the present **King of Great-Britain** is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations, all having in direct Object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World. . . .

[And regarding one such injury . . .]

He has excited domestic Insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured (sic) to bring on the Inhabitants of our Frontiers, the *merciless Indian Savages*, whose known Rule of Warfare, is an undistinguished Destruction, of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions.'

So, rise Savages, rise!

Second Act:

When the Navajo nation established Navajo Junior College (in 1968), it was a good day to learn. (Learn Navajo ways.) The Dine founded the first tribal college in the present-day United States. It was the first tribally-controlled institution of higher learning & the first accredited tribal college. They metaphorically said (in Dine, 'course): 'F/U US gov't.

We'll teach our students our way. They'll be Dine teachers & engineers & doctors & writers.'

Triple Play:

1st: Then (after the Navajo Nation did its higher ed. thing) lots of other tribal nations said: *This effin' shit is NOT working for us either.*

2nd: By that, they (tribal college administrators and tribal business councils) meant:
You (Uncle Sam) have failed our Native / Indigenous / Nations / Students / Futures long enough.

3rd: Because >> Manifest Destiny is an American murder narrative >> murder at the
Hands of immigrants //

And stolen are the land & songs / And broken are the treaties / And
Noble are the savages, such noble & vanishing savages /

They said & recorded & recorded & 'preserved.'

Fourth Wave:

In 2002, I moved from Des Moines, Iowa to Pawnee, Oklahoma after being hired by the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma as an ICDBG Coordinator. ICDBG stands for Indian Community Development Block Grant. It's a HUD-based program (Department of Housing and Urban Development).

I moved because I couldn't find a tenure track position in creative writing – though I had a book published² which received strong reviews: ESPN, NPR (It's Only a Game), *Des Moines Register*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Pawnee Chief*, some literary journals, and numerous radio shows, etc.

Still, I got nothing.

I got one interview at MLA³ that year (2001), which was in New Orleans. It's hard to get productive stuff done in New Orleans as a tourist & all.

I moved because of 3 reasons: 1) love of a Pawnee woman, 2) reciprocity to the Pawnee Nation (more on this in a bit), 3) and bills – paying bills and student loans and no damn teaching offers or interviews, which means I had no teaching prospects (no creative writing future??) and no classes to teach.

The first thing the Nation asked me to do was to serve as the project manager for the construction of the Pawnee Nation Travel Plaza. (It's now called the Stone Wolf Casino.) The project had been stalled for a couple of years, and the Nation's leadership asked me to 'get the ball rolling' again. But:

I had no construction management experience or training.

I had no project management experience (aside from doing my own, self-driven projects as an undergrad and graduate student).

I had no professional experience aside from teaching.

So the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma took a tremendous risk. We both did.

Other projects would evolve, quickly.

The Travel Plaza was completed in 2003. After that, the Nation said 'Hey, that's good. Now help us build a Family Development Center (FDC), which includes a child care center and a fitness center.' The Center was completed in 2004.

They said, 'Here, write these grants too. You're a writer, so you can write, right?'

I said ok & fell more in love with my soon-to-be wife.

Meanwhile, as the FDC was getting completed, I was asked another question by the Nation:

'Would you be willing to work on another project – can you help us establish The Pawnee Nation Academy?'

'What's that?' I asked.

'It's like a career-tech school.'

'Is that like a college?'

'Sorta.'

'Sorta, how?'

'Well, like a trade school.'

'Cool. But why not establish a college?' I asked.

They said 'Hmmm . . . Okay, let's do a college then.'

'Okay, can we call it Pawnee Nation College?'

'Okay,' they said.

'Wow,' I thought. 'Wait 'til everyone (mom/dad/friends) hears about this!'

They said, 'Ok, that's enough daydreaming. Now get to work. Make our college.'

I thought: ‘This is why Mose YellowHorse found me all those years ago: so I could move to Pawnee, be with my future wife, and help the Nation establish a tribal college.’

Oklahoma was slow to join the Tribal College Movement.

(This is narrative concentrate – like orange juice popsicles; like a tribal college establishment / cocoon time-lapse.)

Fifth Dimension:

In 2004 I was appointed ‘Interim’ President of Pawnee Nation College (PNC) by the Pawnee Business Council. One guy on Council insisted the ‘president’ be called a ‘Superintendent’ because ‘that’s what the BIA⁴ called its head at Gravy U,’ which was the very derogatory epithet the Native students gave to the Pawnee Indian Boarding School (b. 1878-d. 1958).

At Indian boarding schools across North America, the point was to assimilate Natives into the ‘mainstream’ via industrial education [manual labor] programming. So Native kids were forcibly taken from their homes [isn’t that kidnapping?] by US gov’t officials and suffered extreme oppression at the hands of Euro-centric non-Natives. Typically, the superintendents at boarding schools greatly / enthusiastically / brutally enforced Dr. Pratt’s⁶ notion: kill the Indian, save the man. Killing the Indian = killing the culture = killing the 1st / Native language = killing the music = killing the religion > ceremonies > belief systems = killing the heart = killing the mind = killing the ability to learn (and the desire to do so).

Sometimes they killed the man (person), which killed both the Indian and the man. . . .

So, if you kill the Indian, you also kill the man, the woman, the boy, the girl, and subsequently hurt families, communities, personal & tribal histories, & all kinds of ways of knowing and being. The boarding schools were operated by the BIA; superintendents were BIA appointments. So . . .

I said, ‘I don’t think we’re trying to replicate the BIA here.’ The specific Business Council member in question voted AGAINST approving my appointment. The vote was 6 to 1.

Sixth Sense:

(Here’s an anecdote about how brutal Indian boarding schools could be [told to me by a Pawnee tribal citizen not long after plans to establish a higher education institution were announced]:

‘Yeah, I remember a story my gramma told me about coming here to Gravy U.

She said, ‘It was the middle of fall. Middle of the school year anyway. And they brought us here by bus. We didn’t talk a lot on the bus even though most of us knew one another. We couldn’t believe we’d just been taken from our homes. Some of the kids were sobbing. You could hear them under their jackets. Not me though. I didn’t cry at all. I just coughed. I’d been sickish all that fall.

‘She said, ‘So we pulled up, right there on the little circle. The bus driver says, ‘All you kids, get your stuff & go stand on the sidewalk.’ So we did. We grabbed our things, stepped off the bus, and right then became students at Gravy.

‘Well, not one second after we got off the bus, a woman was yelling at us to get in single file on the sidewalk – shoulder-to-shoulder way. There was probably 30 of us. And this tall white man was there. The bony woman called him Dr. _____. Next thing I know, he’s sticking a tongue-depressor thingy in my mouth and looking down my throat.’

‘He said, ‘You’ve been sick, ain’t ya?’

‘Uh-huh,’ I said – the tongue depressor still in my mouth.

‘Right then, he takes out a knife, some kinda scalpel or something. He reaches down my throat and cuts out my tonsils. I tasted blood instantly, then felt the pain, and down I went. I passed straight out.

‘He did a tonsillectomy on me right there – no anesthesia, nothing. & Did the same thing to 6 other kids. When we came to, some of the other girls took us up to the dorm room. On our way to the dorm, I looked back & saw seven crimson pools of blood.’

That’s what she told me, so I don’t like this place.’)

Seventh Heaven: 7 Generations / 7 Chances / 7 Liberal Arts / 7 Sages / 7 Stages (of Life):

- 1) Kids at boarding schools were not allowed to speak their first (Native / Indigenous) languages.
- 2) They were beaten if they dared ‘talk Indian.’
- 3) The power of PNC (and other tribally-controlled institutions) is this: the curriculum includes Pawnee Language I, II, and III for a total of 12 college credits.
- 4) PNC had / has had academic agreements with several state schools, including Northern Oklahoma College (NOC), Oklahoma State University (OSU), the University of Oklahoma (OU), and (1 private school) Bacone College.
- 5) ALL of our academic partners accepted the credits for Pawnee language courses – 10% of a bachelor’s degree at OSU, OU, and Bacone. The fact that the registrar at OU, aka, at a university with the nickname ‘Sooners’ accepted PNC’s language classes was significant.
- 6) Our language teachers were Pawnee citizens who had bachelor’s degrees. Lots of Native and a few non-Native students took / take language classes.
- 7) Two PNC graduates also graduated from OU with master’s degrees in linguistics. They are now teaching Pawnee language classes in Pawnee – mostly at PNC, but they’re also conducting adult-ed (community) classes. (They should be pursuing PhDs in Linguistics.) They are Zach Rice and Taylor Moore. (See #20 below.)
- 8) Go Bobcats! / The PNC mascot.

- 9) In Pawnee ways, the bobcat represents the whole of the night sky & all its constellations.

(Note: present tense use / not the past tense / not an artifact / not peoples as an object of study / not vanished, or noble, or romanticized, or 'gone.' / but HERE – NOW! Contemporary folk writing poems, scripts, and plays; having babies – Native babies – who will grow up learning their Pawnee ways.)

- 10) One night in 2005, I got some gas at the Pawnee Nation Travel Plaza (a year after it opened). The cashier was Marcie Stephenson. I said to her, 'C'mon Marce, aren't you tired of this?'

She said, 'God, this shit sucks.'

'Agreed,' I said. 'Why don't you take some classes at PNC?'

'That's not a real college.'

'Wanna bet?'

'Well, can I get some financial aid?'

'Try & see,' I said.

'Bullshit,' she said.

'Give it a try,' I said. Looking around, I continued, 'What's the worst that can happen?'

She looked around too – a chagrined / pinched expression wrinkled her face, 'Right' she said.

Ten (+) years later, Marcie has an associate's degree from PNC (in American Indian Studies – with a leadership emphasis) and a bachelor's degree from Bacone. She works at PNC in the admission's office. She is one of my s/heroes. She is Comanche. She's eyeing a master's in library studies.

- 11) When I was working on the PNO Travel Plaza (back in 2002-2003), I worked with half-a-dozen, or so, guys (Native guys) who once had electrician's certificates, plumber's certifications, were hanging sheet rock, installing HVAC, laying tile, and pouring concrete. All their certifications were expired. 'Well, I just couldn't get back to Tulsa (or wherever it was) to get re-certified,' one of the fellas told me on the job site. I thought: WHAT the fuck is this?!?

Then my thoughts went:

- a) How does this happen?
- b) How can they let their certifications go?
- c) How can we fix this crap?
- d) Let's start a college / vo-tech / ged program!
- e) Who can help us?
- f) How much money do we need?
- g) Will they be able to find jobs?
- h) Am I crazy?
- i) What courses should we offer? (& What should our degree programs focus on?)
- j) How do you start a tribal college?
- k) How do you start a tribal college from scratch?
- l) Will anyone want to attend? (How do we recruit students?)

This was about the same time the Nation asked me to assist with starting the school.

- 12) In a perfect world, there would be 573 (or so) tribal colleges in the U.S. That's because there are 573 federally-recognized Indian tribes, bands, nations, pueblos, rancherias, communities, and Native villages in U.S. (Oh wait,

in a perfect world, both colonists and the U.S. government would NOT have systematically and barbarically / savagely destroyed Native peoples and their nations, cultures, languages, lands, ecosystems, futures, etc.)

Back in reality, it'd be cool / ideal if each Indigenous sovereign w/in the U.S. could establish its own TCU, if it so desired (regardless of lack or abundance of financial resources).

I mean, there are about 4,600 institutions of higher education in the U.S. right now, so what's another 400 to 500? Pony up, feds, states, & local municipalities. To a much-much lesser degree, the tribes might also provide some resources like space and equipment. Oh damn, I can hear it now – *The astronomical cost of such an undertaking!* Yeah, yeah.

Two words (dip shit): treaty rights.

Two more (ass hat): human rights.

And: repurpose resources.

- 13) The narrative arc of the shared history between the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and those from Europe and European ancestry is tumultuous, at best. At worst it is a story of ignorance, stupidity, oppression, doctrinal manipulation, genocide, environmental destruction of numerous ecosystems and animal populations, cultural genocide, ethnic cleansing, calculated murder (via biological warfare and traditional warfare – and so, war crimes), political coercion and dishonesty, kidnapping (of children who were regularly & forcibly separated from their parents), Columbus, Custer, Sheridan, Sherman, Lincoln, Wild Bill, Pawnee Bill, etc. (on the part of whites).

- a. & fuck you if you think Indians were victims.

This is not a victim narrative. It is a survival narrative.

- b. & fuck you (again) if you think 'whites won.' The 'final' narrative is not written yet. We are on a continuum. See these writers / visionaries:

Samson Occum, William Apess, Zitka-la Sa, Sarah Winnemucca, George Copway, John Rollin Ridge, Alex Posey, Pauline Johnson, Charles Eastman, Lynn Riggs, D'Arcy McNickle, Winnie Lewis Gravitt, John Joseph Matthews, Vine Deloria, Jr., James Welch, Paula Gunn Allen, Mary TallMountain, & 100s of other Native writers currently plying their trade, like: N. Scott Momaday, Joy Harjo, Louise Erdrich, Leslie Marmon Silko, Simon Ortiz, Geary Hobson, Jim Barnes, Denise Low, Luci Tapahonso, Wendy Rose, Diane Glancy, Susan Power, Carter Revard, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Ray Young Bear, Janet Campbell Hale, Crystos, Duane Niatum, Barney Bush, Adrian Louis, Kim Blaaser, Linda Hogan, Joe Bruchac, Tiffany Midge, Natalie Diaz, Bojan Louis, Tommy Orange, Laura Tohe, Heid Erdrich, Allison Hedge Coke, LeAnne Howe, Sherwin Bitsui, Roberta Hill, Deb Miranda, Sy Hoahwah, Marcie Rendon, Brandon Hobson, Laura Da', Layli Long Soldier, Tacey M. Atsitty, Arigon Starr, (sorry to leave out so many great writers). There are SO MANY more, really, so many:

<http://www.ipl.org/div/natam/bin/browse.pl/authors>. SEE! Also:

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/booklist/american-indian-authors-science-fiction-and-supernatural>.

- 14) In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Native kids regularly ran away from the boarding schools where they held captive. Here's a poem by Louise Erdrich:
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43079/indian-boarding-school-the-runaways>.
- 15) Mose YellowHorse (Pawnee) took off from Chilocco Indian School⁵ so often the Oklahoma Historical Society now holds over a dozen letters about his escape and subsequent return to the school. He did not like living away from his parents or Pawnee. He won 8 games in the Major Leagues. He was the first Pittsburgh Pirate in team history to win a home opener (in 1921). He liked being home.
- 16) The 'Tribal College Movement' is a thing. See: <http://www.aihec.org/>. There are currently 35 TCUs in North America. Quite a few have come & gone. (You won't find PNC on this list because it's not a member of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (or, AIHEC), pronounced like Aye-heck.)
- 17) It's about jobs –
Good jobs –
And dignity
In Indian Country
And beyond.
Living wages.
Job Placement.
Degree Programs.
Grant applications.
Indian education.
Accreditation partner.
Tribal Council.
Native Languages.
Curriculum development.
Full scholarship.
Language preservation.
Certified instructor.
Community cohesion.
Good words.
Pay Check.
Pay Check.
Pay Check.
Native scholarship.
Council meeting.
My relations.
Grand entry.
Red Power.
Political enemy.
Honor dance.
Language revitalization.
Fry bread.
Full frig.
Give away.
Head dancer.

The 49.
 Indian princess.
 Y'r snag.
 My snag.
 Back roads.
 Good tunes.
 Link Wray.
 Power chord.
 Jimi Hendrix.
 Psychedelic rock.
 30 pack / (for 2).
 Hey now.
 Love you.
 Trust land.
 Casino donation.
 Indian cemetery.
 All, heroic
 couplets.

18) Tribal colleges are community healers.

They put Native faculty members in front of Native students.

They put Native faculty members in front of non-Native students.

Many times, they put hope in front of fractured minds and in front of torn bodies. Too many times this is the case.

(Historical trauma is a fucker with handfuls of crosses, bibles, policies, theories, bureaucracy, and pedophilia clomping along in its horse-drawn carriage, or minivan, or [a mid-life crisis] 'Vette, as it were.)

They provide first, second, third, and fourth chances (when necessary – and more, if needed.)

They nurture learning, not competition.

They are founded / imagined / created to serve Indigenous learners, their families, their communities, their histories & languages, their needs, desires, & dreams.

They create Native (Dine, Pawnee, Omaha, Lakota, Muscogee, Blackfeet, Menominee, etc.) teachers, electricians, healthcare professionals, plumbers, business leaders, heavy equipment operators, computer techies / IT specialists, naturalists, poets & writers, pipefitters, engineers, historians, and social scientists, among many others.

They teach Native science & warn against the techo-worship of western science.

They un-wrinkle (the colonizers') historical timelines & wrap them in Native perspectives.

19) In the Fall of 2004, PNC offered its first courses. 23 students enrolled in four classes. It might've been a few more classes. That same year approx. 30,000 students took courses at TCUs in North America. (See: *The Path of Many Journeys*.)⁶

20) Some tribal college alumni and / or students of note:

Billy Mills (Oglala Lakota) (b. 1938) went to Haskell Indian Nations University. He won an Olympic gold medal in the 10,000 meters (1964).

Alfredo Zazueta (Tohono O'odham) (Tohono O'odham Community College) is a journeyman electrician at Kitt Peak National Observatory.

From Pawnee Nation College, both Taylor Moore (Pawnee) and Zach Rice (Pawnee) went to Northeastern State (OK) (NSU) and the University of Oklahoma (OU), respectively, to earn their bachelor's degrees. Then, they both completed Master's degrees in linguistic anthropology at OU. Now, they've joined forces (back in Pawnee) to teach community- and college-level courses in Pawnee language.

21) The Pawnees' traditional homelands were located in Nebraska. They were shew'd out of their places in the 1870s. The critical event that precipitated removal occurred on August 5th, 1873, when a party of Sioux (Ogalala / Brule) killed some 300 or so Pawnee men, women, and children at what's now known as Massacre Canyon in Nebraska⁷.

Some Pawnee citizens continue to think of 'the Sioux' as present-day enemies (and vice-versa, I hear). Some online sources claim the Pawnees 'requested' to move to Indian Territory. I've never heard this 'version.' In many conversations with Pawnee citizens, they state the 'Pawnee trail of tears' took place in 1874-75 when they were forced to walk from Nebraska to Oklahoma.

At one point in the early 20th century, the Pawnee population dwindled to 600 citizens. In earlier times, more than 20,000 Pawnees graced the central plains – this according to missionary counts. According to Pawnees, their men, women, and children were as numerous as the stars in the sky. Now, about 3,500 souls are counted among the Nation.

22) The Pawnees refer to themselves as Chaticks-si-chaticks, aka, men-of-men. The word / term 'Pawnee' is not a Pawnee word; it's French. It's that way with most tribal nations in the U.S., Canada, Central American, and South America – hell, Indigenous folks all over: Asia, the South Pacific, Australia, & New Zealand. Colonizers – ignorant AF – had no idea what they were doing & took no account of how Indigenous people named themselves or others or places. The English were especially egregious. (See all the disappeared & vanishing Nations on the east coast and in parts of the mid-west.)

(Apparently, religious freedom applies only to European folks seeking asylum.

And current immigration policy is a broken mirror populated with hypocrites who lack any empathy or intelligence or ability to consider perspectives outside of their own ethnic demographic.)

23) The great chief of the Navajos, Hastinn Ch'il Haajiin (Manuelito), said right before his death, 'My grandchild, education is the ladder. Tell our people to take it.' [The Dine Nation and its people have done exactly that.](#)

- 24) The Pawnee Business Council is the Nation's supreme governing body. My wife's grandma, Geraldine Howell, served on the Council when I first moved to Pawnee. She believed in the potential of PNC to transform / empower / & better the lives of Pawnees. My tenure as president at PNC spanned three different administrations. Each of the Council presidents was supportive of the College; other Council members were too; still others had to be convinced. Ultimately, this is how I framed the message:

'The Pawnee Nation has citizens who are languishing for lack of opportunity. Sure, choices for trade schools, colleges, and universities are nearby, but they exist to serve ALL of the citizens of Oklahoma (mostly the dominant culture), not the citizens of the Pawnee Nation.

'The Pawnee Nation and all the other tribal nations in this part of the state need educational opportunities that cater to Pawnees, to the other tribes in the area.'

Usually people nodded quietly.

- 25) A team of tribal executives, professionals, even volunteers helped PNC raise about \$8.5M in 3+ years. I didn't know how to write federal grants before I started working for the tribe in '02.

In the fall of 2007, PNC received a 5-year grant from the Dept of Ed for \$2.5M. The Native American Career & Technical Education Program (NACTEP) provided funding to establish PNC's Oklahoma Native Leadership Initiative (ONLI Option) program.

(The NACTEP program has conducted several 'continuation' competitions, and so in addition to the initial award amount, PNC has received an additional \$1.5M, for a total funding amount of \$4M.)

- 26) As a non-Native, it is humbling to have been a founding president of a tribal college. This has happened at several other TCUs.

The first PNC Board of Trustees (BoT) were a diverse and passionate bunch. They were a mix of Pawnee academics, educators, a couple of business members from Pawnee (town proper), and a PNO council member.

BoT meetings occurred quarterly. Initially, though, they were energizing and spirited affairs. People couldn't believe they were part of founding a tribal college. Eventually, they became torturous affairs, sparing matches full of over-questioning, over-justifying, over-documenting, & micromanagement.

And we were always chasing \$. Always more \$. More meetings with potential funding sources. More foundations. More grants. More. More. More. And politics. And the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. And DC. Always DC:

DC for annual appropriations. Meetings with Senate staffers / sometimes senators. With House staffers. With program officers from various agencies. To the Russell Senate building and the Rayburn building. On and off the Metro. And all the concrete. All the suits – regardless of gender – so many suits. So much self-importance. So much national denial.

And a nation's BIG / CAPITAL city all full of itself without admitting its sins. Perhaps America has forgotten itself? Perhaps America has never known itself? Perhaps America has never come to terms with its schizophrenia? With its original sin?

- 27) The Red Power Movement⁸ was part of the revolution too. It was one of the sparks of the revolution.

John Trudell was a TCU all-star. So was Russell Means & Dennis Banks & Clyde Bellecourt & Eddie Benton Banai, Richard Ray is too. Vine Deloria, Jr. and Wilma Mankiller – they are Hall of Famers. Other TCU / AIS HoFers include: Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, James Riding In, Duane Champagne, Cornel Pewewardy, Michael YellowBird, Clyde Warrior, etc. Trudell became a Hall of Famer too. Greg Cajete earned his place, as did Dan Wildcat and Paula Gunn Allen. And then there's Tom Holm, Geary Hobson, and Jim Northrup – each 4 & 5-time all-stars. Henrietta Mann. Soon enough, there's Natalie Diaz, who leads the league in rebounding; she's piling up HoF credentials by the poem. Others will follow. Many others.

- 28) Though many / most Pawnee tribal citizens agreed in principle with the establishment of PNC, a number of citizens were skeptical – with good reason:

'How are you gonna pay for it?' they asked.
 'Where are you gonna find the money?'
 'How are you gonna find qualified teachers?'
 'What courses of study you gonna offer?'
 'How are you gonna help my kids?'

In a room full of 200 Pawnee tribal citizens (in 2003), I answered all these questions & more: I said, 'We're gonna make their dreams come true.'

Too many people rolled their eyes. They had seen too many white guys promise love when the truth was obvious. I quickly heard rumblings about 'a savior complex,' & such.

/

In 2007, we held our first commencement. Over 80 people / tribal citizens attended. (So f/u.) I cried. It was taped. We had 4 grads. The next year we had 10 grads who received GEDs, training certificates, and associate degrees.

- 29) During the most intense days, I worked 12-18 hours. More than once I pulled all-nighters while trying to get a grant proposal completed – often with other PNO employees or volunteers.

By 2009, I was getting burned out – the grind of: making schedules / writing grants / meeting with fundraisers / putting out student fires (on a daily basis) / negotiating the local, tribal, and national politics / constantly traveling to DC, Chicago (to meet with the Higher Learning Commission), and other conferences / meeting with the Board of Trustees (quarterly)
 /

- 30) Then, on Mother's Day 2010, I called my mom & asked if she was awake. It was 11pm (central) and 12am (eastern). They lived in Indiana. (I had already called her & wished her a Happy Mother's Day earlier in the evening.)

She said 'No.'

I chuckled.

I said, 'I've got something to tell you.'

She said, 'What?! I'm not awake.'

I was 45 years old. I had no kids. My parents thought the grandparent train passed them by – a long time ago.

I said, 'Wake up! You're going to be a grandma. Tell Dad he's going to be a gran'pa. G' night. Ok. Bye.'

'Bye,' she whispered.

I hung up the phone. Two minutes later she called back. 'WHAAAAAAAAAAT?!?!?!'

'Yep,' I said. 'Happy Mother's Day. Much better than 1983, uh?'

She laughed, 'Sure is!'

'Go back to bed. We can talk tomorrow.'

'Ok,' she said.

(. . . On Mother's Day '83, I was arrested for 'Illegal consumption of alcohol.' I got picked up after the car I was riding in got stopped & the driver got arrested for a DWI & illegal consumption. We both got thrown in the drunk tank. My dad always said to me: 'If you get arrested for drinking, or whatever, you just spend the night in jail & think about it.' So that's what I did.

Both my parents worked for R. R. Donnelley & Sons – a book manufacturing company – in Crawfordsville, Indiana. When they started working there in the 1960s, they were on the floor – my dad piled down books [from the book cutter] and my mom fed a gathering machine, which compiled the different parts of the book for final assembly and gluing.

They started out working class. My mom's dad was an undertaker; her mom served as the funeral home's bookkeeper, then as a clerk at a drugstore – after their divorce. On my dad's side, his mom was a stay-at-home mom, then served as a clerk at the US Post Office branch in Jamestown, Indiana; my dad's dad was a tavern owner who liked sampling his product more than he did selling it. At one time, his dad had three taverns in Crawfordsville. He'd go to all three and buy rounds 'for all his friends' – all Bukowski like.

These days, Mother's Day celebrations evolve into days of joy. I hope [for us all] they stay that way – always. . . .)

Our son was born January 12, 2011. He is named after Mose YellowHorse. I was the last male in our branch of the family tree – at least until he came along. I nearly fainted when the ultrasound tech first informed us. All the men in my family said 'Cheers!!!' I said shew & thought *Now it's on you.* (He doesn't know yet.)

Then, 2.5 years later, our baby girl was born. She is named after her maternal grandma – the one on the Pawnee Business Council. Our daughter is a Pawnee woman through & through. I know because she says (even at 5), ‘I told you!’

- 31) Founding presidents are deeply connected to the schools they help establish. I am PNC’s founding president. No one loves PNC like me, or my wife, or Marcie, or the first BoT members (especially the chair, Dr. James Riding In).
- 32) Love is sacred. PNC is loved. It is sacred. Atius (God) was / is there. The work done by dozens @ PNC is sacred.

NOC is not sacred (oh, the scandals they keep & (that) run deep; see 1917-1919 Oklahoma Prep School; [see Muna Lee⁹]). Bacone isn’t sacred either – too many folks who claim God but don’t know (its) Native name.

When we stood on our sovereignty as PNC (and PNO) with the authority to award our own degrees, NOC didn’t dig our shit. They said, ‘You can’t do that.’ We said, ‘You racist assholes.’ (Note: one of NOC’s previous presidents blatantly tried to steal a casino / gaming program we [PNC staff & faculty] developed for a Department of Labor grant. He was caught trying to plagiarize PNC’s program, was called on it, and got all pissed as hell about it. Oh well.)

The next year we said, ‘Hey Bacone, whatchu got for us?’

They said, ‘Oh anything you’d like! What do you need the most?’

We said, ‘Our sovereignty as a tribally-controlled institution.’

So, when I left PNC in 2011, Bacone was our accrediting partner. They weren’t perfect at all – mostly because of the shitty snake-oil-salesman-of-an-administrator they had in a key leadership position. He no longer works at Bacone and left one helluva mess.

- 33) The point is this: PNC was conceived to address several problems, such as lack of

- a. Educational / learning opportunities for Pawnee students in & around Pawnee (as well as Native students from other tribal nations in the area – Osage, Ponca, Otoe, Kaw, Sac & Fox, Iowa, and Tonkawa).
- b. Opportunities to connect well-trained Native students with viable labor / job / employment opportunities – both locally (with the PNO, in Pawnee, and other surrounding communities).
- c. Cultural preservation opportunities (for all area Nations, but especially those focused on Pawnee language revitalization, Pawnee history, traditional Pawnee foods, and American Indian Studies).

To address these problems & to build community consensus for the project, one thing was clear: we needed solution seekers, not problem dwellers.

We made all kinda plans – recruiting plans, fundraising plans, strategic plans, and business plans (we did those first). We authored the first and second PNC Catalogs, a Student Handbook, Faculty Handbook, & Staff Handbook. We took off to high schools, recruiting fairs, set up tables at ALL the powwows. We were a small but highly devoted team. Several of the original employees (most of whom I hired) are still at PNC.

34) PNC's motto is: 'Indigenizing Higher Education for All.'

35) Indigenize: To bring under the control of Native people.

We are Indigenizers. Full of Indigeneity.

Be an Indigenist. Indigenize

Like a champion.

Eight Miles High:

To many people, the U.S. is considered an *Occupying Army* on *stolen land* first inhabited by Indigenous peoples from time immemorial – at least according to 1000s of Native origin (hi)stories. Both the North and South American continents / lands are sacred to their first / original inhabitants.

The land / earth is a living organism: at the surface level with plants & animals, at the subterranean level with earthquakes & volcanos & tectonic plate movements, at the atmospheric level with hurricanes & tornados, at the astronomical level with stars & starlight & stardust & the moon with its tidal dances & sand mingling oceanic curly-ques. Landforms percolate/ rage / teem with life. We are all relations. E to W & N to S. SE to NW. & all points in between. There is no 'getting over it.'

See Ruth Muskrat Bronson.¹⁰

As the 1st caretakers of the two continents, the Indigenous peoples of N & S America created an OLD WORLD 10x more complex than the new world of Europe. See Egypt. See China. See Africa.

Revolution #9:

I want a space in this essay connecting separations of brown children from their families to the white space that's responsible for those separations and for occupying / perpetuating generations of colonial violence.

Taking brown children away from their brown parents is a / white / American tradition dating back centuries.

This is not new > captive narratives / boarding school jail cells / and, of course, Columbus / and colonialists in Virginia.

The separation of families creates cultural discontinuity. It creates disruption of work and community. It fractures imaginations, hearts, and minds.

It is one of the deepest narrative threads in the shared history between the Indigenous peoples of North and South America and Euro-ancestors.

10²:

Indig folx were the 1st working class people here / in America:

The 1st agrarian artisans & artists:

The 1st geographers & geologists:

The 1st *continental* scientists:

The 1st veterinarians & shape shifters & two spirits:

The 1st cartographers / biologists / doctors / priests / musicians / business strategists (traders)
/ writers & painters / engineers (of course) / maritime navigators / enviro-astronomers &
eco-sculptors –

Sculpting the landscape to meet community needs: They were

The 1st corn / tomato / pineapple / blueberry / pumpkin / gum / pepper / & pinto bean *plant makers* (let that sink in, *makers, producers, & distributors*):

The 1st hunters, poets, philosophers, physicists, carpenters, & superstars:

The 1st butchers / meat scrapers / fire scouts / dendrologists¹¹:

The 1st ornithologists & whistlers /

The 1st heart breakers & song writers:

The 1st 49ers¹²: drummers / dancers / & whalers:

The 1st flautists & carpetters / seamstresses:

The 1st lovers to see in blue & 1st oceanographers:

The 1st hikers / ship builders & meteorologists:

The 1st moms, dads, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, & grandparents:

The 1st shapers of daylight:

The 1st speakers of prayers:

The 1st land protectors /

Construction workers

Waterway navigators

Water protectors

Path creators

Deal makers

In smoky

Rooms:

The 1st educators¹³:

The 1st civilization creators:

Constitutional authors

Community developers

& Surveyors

Tricksters:

The 1st (human) observers of: Yosemite / the Grand Canyon / Niagara Falls / Black Bear Creek[#] / Yellowstone / 2nd Mesa / 'Death Valley' / Monument Valley / Redwoods / The Everglades / Black Hills / Crater Lake / The Arches / Carlsbad & Old Faithful / Caddo Lake / Denali / Glacier / The Tetons / Saw the Smokies come to life / The Rockies / The creeks & rivers, lakes & ponds / Vistas & overlooks / Estuaries & deltas /

– 'course they all had different names, Indigenous place-names: these are (bastardized) Indigenous names (kinda, for the most part): Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas,

Connecticut, (maybe) Delaware, (maybe) Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, & Wyoming. White people picked these Native / Indigenous names after finishing the long-term task of conquering & shewing them off lands whites deemed *desirable*, which turned out to be everywhere (even after Oklahoma).

The land is tired of beatings.

The 1st sub 4-minute milers¹⁴ / oceanic rowers / flame throwers / 1,000 yard rushers¹⁵ / & 1st time ballers in Mexico (w/o walls or borders)¹⁶ – the 1st / Aztec / Mayan / superstars / to conceptualize b-ball (not on hardwood but grass and bricks) / the 1st jump shooters with perfect arcs – from deep.

The 1st time rainbow walkers / river riders / lake gliders / stream sliders / lightning lovers / thunder throwers – all wunderkinds walking on water's edge.

The 1st power chord guitarists¹⁷: The 1st AIMsters / Alcatraz liberators / BIA¹⁸ destroyers / and IHS¹⁹ doctors. The 1st Tribal Nation laborers: TERO²⁰ workers / Grant writers / Tribal planners / Tribal Governors / Tribal Directors / Prayer lifters.

And, always: the 1st people.

Finally, epilogue:

In 2011, I resigned my presidency at PNC.

I did so because I was exhausted; I missed my wife; I missed my writing life; I wanted long-term relief from the *founding president* grind / fatigue; I wanted a calendar populated with (at least a few) poetry readings. I wanted to hold my newborn son without having to rush off to an evening fundraising event. Et cetera and so on.

That said, it has been the greatest honor of my professional life (thus far) to serve the Pawnee Nation from 2002-2011. I went to Pawnee for two reasons: 1) to be closer to my SO and 2) to reciprocate / give back to the Pawnee Nation in a way that appropriately demonstrated my gratitude (see Mose YellowHorse). And because of PNC,

Work exists where none did. College classes exist where none did.

Degrees hang where none did. Commencements commence where none did.

Graduates in American Indian Studies exist where none did.

Pawnee higher education takes place in buildings once designed for assimilation and cultural bleaching. Now, the language rings out. Nowah – students and teachers say to one another.

Students complete classes and degree programs aligned with the needs of the Pawnee Nation (and other surrounding tribal nations).

The federal government provides funding for Pawnee language programming in a place where the language was once forbidden.

New institutions of higher learning opportunity are often scoffed at by the cynical or ignorant, sometimes rightfully so, but not in the case of PNC. By now, nearly 1,000 students have attended PNC. Since PNC began offering coursework, 79 students have graduated since 2007 (with accredited associate degrees) and 37 with industry-recognized certificates since 2013. Tribal nations represented include: Pawnee, Osage, Wichita, Iowa, Cherokee, Otoe-Missouria, Creek, Cheyenne & Arapaho, Comanche, Yakima, Kickapoo, Navajo, Peoria, Seminole, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Caddo, Ponca, Quawpaw, Sac & Fox, Kiowa, Citizen Potawatomi, Santo Domingo Pueblo, and Northern Paiute. Of course, PNC has also served many non-Natives.

The future is a muddy equation of chance, resources, & love. Better have plenty of each. Work is a good thing. Labor is a good thing too. By now, thousands of people (mostly Natives) have believed in and benefitted from Pawnee Nation College (and other TCUs across the country [and Canada]). Working together – across networks and temporary geo-political boundaries – has created work opportunities that lift all of Indian Country. May this good work get better across the next seven generations.

Aho! Turahe. (It is good!)

Notes:

- 1: Tribal Colleges, aka, TCUs, are institutions of higher learning established by federally-recognized tribal nations and are, therefore, identified as tribally-controlled. There are 36 tribally-controlled colleges and universities and 2 Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools: Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) in Lawrence, Kansas and Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) in Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- 2: My first book, *60 Feet Six Inches and Other Distances from Home: the (Baseball) Life of Mose YellowHorse*, (Holy Cow! Press) was published in 2002. YellowHorse (1898-1964) was a citizen of the Pawnee Nation and played professional and semi-pro baseball from the late 1910s into the 1930s. In 1921 and '22, he played / pitched in 38 games for the Pittsburgh Pirates.
- 3: MLA = Modern Language Association. One of the organization's annual highlights includes its conference, which takes places in a major metropolitan area. Used to be, as recently as 10-15 years ago, where hundreds (even thousands) of job interviews occurred. It was a kind of academic.
- 4: BIA = Bureau of Indian Affairs. Part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the BIA was established in 1824 by Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun (and without authorization from Congress). The BIA played a major role in separating Indian children from their families by forcibly sending them to off-site schools.
- 5: Chilocco Indian School was an Indian boarding school, which operated from 1884 to 1980 and oppressed Indian youth in the same manner as Richard Pratt's Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, which meant students were forced to observe strict military-style structure and rules, such being prohibited from speaking their first languages and practicing their own spiritual observations. Due to stark / harsh living conditions and consistent treatment of students, Mose YellowHorse ran away many times. YellowHorse was trained to be a

carpenter. It was all trades – no professional training. School administrators insisted that students focus on domestic labor, aka ‘actual work.’ (See K. Tsianina Lomawaima’s *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* by University of Nebraska Press in 1994.)

- 6: ‘Path of Many Journeys’ is a 2007 publication of the Institute for Higher Education Policy. According to their website, ‘This report outlines both the challenges of college participation as well as the benefits of in higher education for American Indians and argues that higher education is one of the main drivers of economic and social development for all American Indian communities. It also discusses the role of Tribal Colleges and Universities on reservations and their contribution to the well-being of tribal communities.’ See: <http://www.ihep.org/research/publications/path-many-journeys-benefits-higher-education-native-people-and-communities>. Alisa F. Cunningham is the author.
- 7: Massacre Canyon, near Trenton, Nebraska, was the site of an ambush / massacre by Sioux (Oglala / Brule) Indians against a Pawnee hunting party on August 5, 1873. The Pawnee hunting party (total number is disputed, between 400 to 700) included men, women, and children – many of whom were brutally murdered; some were raped, mutilated, set on fire, and scalps taken. The total number of those murdered has been disputed – with estimates ranging from 75 to 300. In 1925, a reunion at the site occurred with men from both tribes attending. See: http://www.nebraskahistory.org/index.php?title=Nebraska_Historical_Marker:_Massacre_Canyon
- 8: The Red Power Movement: the American Indian Movement was established in 1968 to raise awareness about US / Native issues and to enact change (for centuries of genocidal practices) at the federal level.

AIS / NAS HOFers / All-Stars:

John Trudell (Santee Sioux / Mexican) (1946-2015) served as the National Director of AIM from 1973-79. He acted, wrote poetry, did music, and said lots of good words in way-too-short-a life.

Russell Means (Oglala Lakota / Yankton Dakota) (1939-2012) served as AIM’s first National Director and became a prominent actor, musician, and, writer.

Dennis Banks (Ojibwe) (1937-2017) co-founded AIM. Banks is Native American leader, teacher, lecturer, activist, and author.

Clyde Bellecourt (White Earth Ojibwe) (1936-) co-founded AIM. He is an activist and civil rights organizer.

Eddie Benton Banai (Ojibwe) co-founded AIM. Activist and educator. He pioneered culture-based curriculum.

Richard Ray Whitman (Yuchee Muscogee Creek) (1949-) is an actor, writer, poet, photographer, painter, and activist.

Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock / Lakota) (1933-2005) wrote *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969). He served as National Director of the National Congress of American Indians

Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee) (1945-2010) served as the first female Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation (1985-95). Many books and films feature her tremendous accomplishments.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux) (1930-) is credited with (at the very least) co-founding the discipline of American Indian Studies. She continues to raise awareness through her writing.

James Riding In (Pawnee) (195?-) received his PhD from UCLA (in history) and served as the first chair of PNC's Board of Trustees. He is an associate professor in American Indian Studies at Arizona State University. He edits *Wicazo Sa Review*, which Elizabeth Cook-Lynn founded.

Duane Champagne (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa) (1951-) is a Professor of Sociology and American Indian Studies at UCLA, and Professor of Law at UCLA School of Law.

Cornel Pewewardy (Comanche / Kiowa) (195?-) is a retired educator, who most recently directed the American Indian Studies Program at Portland State University. His research focuses on how Native youth negotiate different educational paradigms and the psychological / social / cultural impact mainstream institutions have on the youth.

Michael Yellowbird (Three Affiliated Tribes – Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara) (19??-) directs the Indigenous Tribal Studies program at North Dakota State University. His work focuses on neurodecolonization.

Clyde Warrior (Ponca) (1939-1968) co-founded the National Indian Youth Council. He fought social and cultural justice for all Indigenous peoples. He delivered his speech, 'We Are Not Free,' in Memphis, Tennessee, at the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty.

Greg Cajete (Tewa) (1952-) directs the NAS program at the University of New Mexico. His work reconciles Indigenous science within western academic spaces.

Dan Wildcat (Yuchee Creek) (19??-) teaches at Haskell Indian Nations University. He is a generational visionary whose work focuses on employing Indigenous perspectives to address issues of climate change.

Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo) (1939-2008) won numerous awards for her literary work, including an American Book Award, a Lannan Literary Fellowship, a Native Writers' Circle of the Americas Award (Lifetime Achievement), and a Hubbell Medal from the American Literature Society. She raised awareness about issues associated with Native women.

Tom Holm (Creek / Cherokee) (19??-) co-developed the 'Peoplehood Matrix,' which serves as a theoretical construct for teaching American Indian / Indigenous Peoples Studies.

Geary Hobson (Quapaw / Cherokee / Chickasaw) (1941-) is an author, editor, and retired English professor (University of Oklahoma). His pivotal work, *The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature* (UNM Press, 1979) remains a seminal effort in Native letters.

Jim Northrup (Anishinaabe – Fon Du Lac) (1943-2016) was a newspaper columnist, poet, storyteller, performer, and political commentator. His insightful and often humorous commentaries were widely popular and widely published in a number Native-centric newspapers across the country. He was given a Native Writers' Circle of the Americas Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017 (posthumously).

Henrietta Mann (Cheyenne) (1935-) is an extraordinary educator and advocate for Native rights. She was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 2018.

Natalie Diaz (Mohave) (1978-) won a MacArthur 'Genius' Award in 2018. She seeks to preserve her first language and is a champion for Indigenous language revitalization causes world-wide. She played both college and professional basketball.

For more on the Red Power Movement, see: <http://socialistworker.org/2018/08/08/1968-the-rise-of-the-red-power-movement>.

- 9: Muna Lee (1895-1965) wrote about pan-Americanism and feminism. She was also an awarding-winning poet (for both her original works and her translations of Spanish language poets. She attended the University of Oklahoma, though she did not graduate from OU. She took a teaching job at NOC but financial hardships forced the school to close (for two years), which forced Lee to leave the state, move to New York City, and become involved in international (Puerto Rican) affairs.
- 10: Ruth (Muskrat) Bronson (Cherokee) (1897-1982) served as the Executive Secretary for the National Congress of the American Indians (NCAI) from 1945 to 1955. She wrote a scathing poem about the consequences of colonization, 'Sentenced (A Dirge),' when she was a student at the University of Oklahoma in the early 1920s. Here's the complete poem:

Sentenced

(A Dirge)

They have come, they have come,
Out of the unknown they have come;
Out of the great sea they have come;
Dazzling and conquering the white man has come
To make this land his home.

We must die we must die,
The white man has sentenced that we must die
Without great forests we must die,
Broken and conquered the red man must die,
He cannot claim his own.

They have gone, they have gone,
 Our sky-blue waters, they have gone,
 Our wild free prairies, they have gone,
 To be the white man's own.

They have won, they have won,
 Thru fraud and thru warfare they have won,
 Our council and burial grounds have they won,
 Our birthright for pottage the white man has won,
 And the red man must perish alone.

University Anthology, ed. Joseph Paxton (University of Oklahoma, 1921).

- 11: Dendrologist = the study of wooded plants / trees / shrubs.
- 12: 49ers – not the gold diggers in Cali, Alaska, and Colorado, but rather, the Indian-style 49ers, the name given to those folx gettin' it at the back-roads, after powwow – drummin' and singin' it up – usually 'til dawn.
- 13: Native Education = Traditional Indigenous educational practices, which included teaching children about tribal-specific knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, and dispositions (see Alberta Yeboah, 2005).
- 14: Hawk Chief was a Pawnee tribal citizen who is said to have run the first sub-four-minute mile. According to Mary Anne Warde, 'In 1877, he ran one mile on a measured course in 3:45, timed with a stop watch. To double check, he ran it again a while later – with the same result. That year the U.S. Champion needed 4:49 to finish the one-mile race.'
- 15: Jim Thorpe (Sac & Fox) (1887-1953) was the first American football running back / rusher to run 1,000 yards from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to Yale, Oklahoma, to Canton, Ohio, to Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania – sadly.
- 16: Aka, the MesoAmerican ballgame. Aztecs, Olmecs, Mayans, and other folx played variations of a game during which they 'threw' a ball through hoop.
- 17: Link Wray (Shawnee) (1929-2005) created and popularized the power chord in rock-n-roll. His 1954 song 'Rumble' is the only instrumental to be banned from the radio (in New York and Boston – for fear it would incite teenage gang violence).
- 18: The BIA Takeover by AIM occurred in DC at the Interior Building. From November 3 to November 9, 1972, over 500 Native activists / protesters took control of the building (in observance of the Trail of Broken Treaties and) to raise awareness about the 500-year narrative of abuse and oppression
- 19: IHS = Indian Health Services. Woefully underfunded since 1955 – the year of its establishment.

- ²⁰: TERO = Tribal Employment Rights Office (or Ordinance) = Indian preference. TERO was enacted to address deplorable rates of poverty, unemployment, and underemployment that exists in and around Native communities / reservations.

Author Bio

Todd Fuller served as the founding president of Pawnee Nation College from 2004-2011. Fuller's first book, *60'6" and Other Distances from Home: the (Baseball) Life of Mose YellowHorse*, is a mixed-genre bio published in 2002 by Holy Cow! Press. His second book, a full-length poetry collection, was published in 2015 by Mongrel Empire Press. His poems and essays have appeared in *American Literary Review*, *Apalachee Review*, *Broadkill Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *Hawai'i Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Poet Lore*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Quarterly West*, *Red Earth Review*, *South Dakota Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Third Coast*, *Weber Studies*, *Wiczo Sa Review*, and *William and Mary Review*. Most recently, he co-curated an exhibition at the University of Oklahoma's Western History Collection, 'Red Dust Oklahoma: a Poetic History.'

Falling Through Class

Ruby Hansen Murray

Abstract

This flash essay responds lyrically to the contradictions of class identification for a citizen of the Osage Nation in northeastern Oklahoma associated with social changes resulting from the discovery and exploitation of oil and gas resources.

Keywords

Osage Nation, tribal energy resources, fossil fuels, energy tribes, military life, fathers, daughters

Falling Through Class

Wah zha zhi have immense pride in our history and our strength as negotiators, warriors and entrepreneurs. Osage ancestral lands stretched across thirteen states, from southwestern Colorado down to northwestern Louisiana and up the Ohio River Valley, before we were constrained to a reservation in northeastern Oklahoma.⁷⁶ Standing beside a map of the territory that looks like an elephant with its trunk extended toward the Chesapeake Bay, our elder Eddie Red Eagle says, ‘We controlled a lot of territory.’ He gestures to the elephant’s trunk. ‘I think that narrow piece was a lot broader. How did we do that? Wahoin. Everybody working together.’ Wahoin refers to the way we address each other, acknowledging the importance of our kin and relationships.

I think of the ways people talk to and about Natives. Too many people have said to me, ‘You all were hunters and gatherers. You didn’t have a written language, right?’ The implication being that we were primitive, like cave people, not really evolved. They talk about the oral tradition with a bias toward written language, as if sophistication, scientific knowledge and philosophy cannot exist without it. With our background as members of a sovereign nation, as diplomats managing traders across a vast territory, Osages have been a proud people. Some even say, haughty.

In Oklahoma as a child, I rode before my eldest uncle on his horse on the reservation. He was a rancher more connected with horses than people all his life. He was born in 1898, before the oil wealth had flooded the reservation. My father was the youngest, born a decade after the Osage oil resources were divided between 2,229 tribal members as directed by the US Congress when traditional Osages lost their battle to hold all of the reservation in common.

My uncles received oil money, which meant they raced thoroughbred horses and ignored our elders’ warnings about drinking. The small houses in Indian Camp held chandeliers and gilt

⁷⁶ See Osage ancestral lands <https://www.osagenation-nsn.gov/who-we-are/historic-preservation/ancestral-map>
See also, <https://www.osagenation-nsn.gov>, the Nation’s website, and www.osagenews.org.

framed portraits. My aunt was a professional archivist, a historian; my father studied geology before he enlisted for World War II.

‘It’s not easy being Osage,’ Herman Mongrain Lookout, an esteemed Osage elder, says. We live surrounded by mega-rich ranchers who want to control all of Osage County, to obtain the mineral rights under the rolling hills where cattle graze on lush blue stem grass. The town of Pawhuska has waxed and waned from the days when Osages camped by Bird Creek, to the years when the boom and Osage money spawned a five-story flatiron building filled with lawyers and guardians. These days a row of dusty, empty storefronts is giving way to shops for tourists. We Osages have intense family relationships and consider ourselves likely to hold grudges. There seem to be more than the usual number of bitterly remembered lawsuits, the rancor associated with inheritances.

Almost a century after the boom of the 1920s when the *New York Times* and other national newspapers and magazines were filled with images of blanket-wearing Osages in cars driven by chauffeurs, we remain an energy tribe. The Osage have a friendly relationship with TransCanada, a pipeline company, at the same time we supported the Standing Rock Sioux tribe’s effort to prevent the Dakota Access Pipeline from endangering their land and waters.

We live a split screen reality, now as then. Oil reserves bind Osages together, but they also fracture families and create rivalries between shareholders of mineral rights and non-shareholders, between on-reservation and off-reservation Osages. I lived outside the Osage Nation as a child growing up on military reservations in France and Japan. I spent more time outside the United States than in. As the eldest daughter in an Osage/Afro-Caribbean family, I understand community stratified by color and class and rank.

For our family the delineations of class by type of labor disintegrated – fractionated like our headrights, divided between my parents’ family backgrounds, the changing nature of work, the history of Osage oil money. My father was born when oil revenue was soaring. He was a child, when his eldest brother, a generation older, was a work-hardened rancher. In our house, my father spent his time inside, not hunting dove or coyote as his brothers did. Not focusing on making money, but reading, as if his inner life was sufficient. For a while he cooked gourmet food, preparing Sunday evening snacks after a mid-day meal served on a damask table cloth, an artifact of being brought up staunchly Methodist. He spent more time reading than anything else, besides forty hours of work plus commute. He was steady as a metronome. He wasn’t mechanical and didn’t fix things—it’s Osage to buy new when something breaks. His admonition to buy the best is also Osage. After a settlement, or a large quarterly payment, someone will ask, what did you buy that was really nice? Meaning a piece of fine furniture or a car. Being frugal isn’t familiar.

Our world doesn’t correlate easily to theories of class. Osage need a finer mesh to acknowledge the differences between occupation, income and education, between gender and culture across generations. Osage are rooted in ranching, raising animals and leasing grassland. We are blue-collar oil industry workers, as well as oil and gas producers. In the military, my father, an officer, and by extension our family, his dependents, were white collar. After US President Eisenhower trimmed the officer corps following WW II, my father served as an enlisted man in the Quartermaster Corps. We were Osages, who grew up outside of the country in a military family that was neither rich nor middle, but some of each at the same time.

Author Bio

Ruby Hansen Murray is the winner of the 2017 Montana Nonfiction Prize and awarded fellowships at Ragdale and Hedgebrook. Her work appears in *World Literature Today*, *CutBank*, *About Place*, *The Rumpus*, *Yellow Medicine Review* and *Indian Country Today*. She is a writer and photographer, who received an MFA from The Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. A citizen of the Osage Nation from the Hominy District with West Indian roots, she lives along the Columbia River.

By the Slice

Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr.

They seemed to be in love, but maybe it was the pecan pie. Even under the buzz of fluorescent lights, pie makes life so much more bearable, enhances everyone's natural beauty. Or maybe one of them was paying the other to be there. Either way, they were a couple for now.

She didn't talk so much as she moved her mouth around her words like a sleep clinic escapee. That her brown eyes whirled around as if the batteries which might have operated them were starting to crap out only added to the sense that some technician needed to fine tune her face, at least adjust the tracking. Her wide-strapped dress looked home-made, the cream and burgundy floral pattern better at home in a set of drapes than in the wrinkly pile of heavy fabric that crawled across her thin shoulders, crushed her dirty blonde hair, accented her skin that looked more like smoked bluefish than a wrap to contain a human and its attendant soul.

He had no trouble talking, or at least making the effort, definitely had tried too hard once anyway, spoke to the wrong people maybe, by the looks of him. His clothes lumpy and shapeless from the chest down, the grunge of a grey hooded flannel all olive-striped and red-orange piled around his neck, brown hair greasy and splayed on the grubby fabric belying the clean crisp earnest of his speech, his greenblue eyes turning inward and down toward a mouth he seemed to hardly believe could contain so many words and a tongue so restless. And someone had cut that impulsive tongue of his just so, not in a way that affected his speech, but still in a way that you could see the two split ends fighting to work independently behind his yellowy teeth, and his words came out fucked up not because they were impeded in any way, but because you were spending too much effort on looking at his moray eel mouth and not enough on listening to what his scruffed and ashy slack face was struggling to say.

The two of them grummumbled into their fat slices of pie, pecan and pumpkin, the too much sugar of them turning to small points of diamonded glass and glowing crystals under the hot amber lights and they picked and scratched at each other, just like everyone else in this tired but busy diner, one located not on some grimy street, or out there off an endless interstate, but in an urban strip mall, set down in the middle of a city whose main export was probably rain, the chalky stains of ten thousand storms streaking the windows that looked out into misted alleys and the too-close faces of hungry drunks who maybe just wanted a bite or two. The talking wasn't the thing the quiet couple were into, though, and the air around them changed when their hands and fingers touched here and there as they reached for their cold coffee or thin paper napkins, or really, each other, their rustles and murmurs flowing up and into a just visible stream that moved warm air and muffled words and open lust and so-sharp smells above the crowded blood red vinyl booths, and past the plastic plants that worked like fading green dust filters and heavy-leafed cobweb holders.

'What is your fucking problem?' he mumbled at her.

'I am g n g s k. I d 't f e l g d,' she mouthed back.

'You're always fucking sick,' his tongues twisted away.

'F k y u, as l,' her mouth squished, as she reached to pick at the dirty beds of his nails.

He smiled, and massaged her raw, red knuckles with his thumb and first two fingers, his last two raised in a canted peace sign. She coughed, and spit up a little, slurred a shy 'I l v y u,' and covered the bottom of her face with one hand as she then hacked away for a full half minute or so. He never flinched, just kept rubbing her other hand.

'You okay?' he asked, when her rail slat chest finally stopped heaving.

'Y p,' she winked, and chugged her whole cup of cooled coffee.

'Man,' he sighed, and smiling, softly shook his head, blinking at his luck and his love.

She grinned wide, and he could see that favorite flaw of his in her face, her left lateral incisor trying to strong arm its canine neighbor, those dental imperfections gifted by Creator forever his downfall. 'Amazing,' he thought, almost out loud.

*

Some folks communicate in small quiet gestures, others, nah. My Ma and Dad? Well, for Dad that was usually a no. Gesture-wise, there was lots of loud, pinched-lip, set-jaw nose breathing. Usually with my old man, though, there was no talking at all. But sometimes there were words, like these. Him: 'Close your mouth, shit for brains' – to my six-year old brother; 'Close your mouth when you chew, whatthefuckiswrongwithyou' – this, to my oldest but still four-year old sister on the occasional Sunday when he'd bother to eat with us; 'Close your fucking mouth!' – this, just this. Hahaha. He had a real problem with that mouth breathing thing. 'Jeezus Caahrist,' he liked to say.

My Ma, though, lots of gestures, because she smoked 8,000 cigarettes a day and drank 10,000 cups of coffee. She vibrated through my field of vision, and when she raised a hand it was like when the picture starts to go out on an old TV, like a black and white Zenith, and when it cracks and whips, the old man makes you wiggle the antenna until it stops, and then you just stand there holding it.

With your fucking mouth shut.

But neither my Ma or Dad were really communicating. That's not what their words were doing. At least not with each other. Us kids? We knew what was happening. These two idiots were building a prison around us, the walls they put up between themselves fenced *us* in, closed our horizons and gave us nowhere to go. They made it colder in the winter and hotter in the summer, climate-dictated misery we tried to be kids in, while we wound up proxy-waging bullshit battles on their behalf, the fucking cowards, those fucking kids their damn selves.

*

I laid there shuddering in my narrow-ass bed, which would normally mean January, or Chicago's worstfuckingmonththankgoditstheshortest; February. But not tonight. Something in the air was different. The whole house was asleep and it was late in the summer and still pretty warm. My ma in their room down the hallway by the front door and just passed the little room my two sisters shared. Me and my brother had beds jammed in the enclosed back porch of a typical North Side six flat, the kind that was painted grey, smelled like piss, and had a redneck

landlady's son that lived in the basement, who sold tic and weed, and pulled the legs off cats, plus wore aviator sunglasses day and night, and a leather jacket, no shirt. The light from the moon was huge, and the disc in the sky even bigger, like it had been sitting in the alley right behind the garage all day, just waiting for it to turn dark and now here it was, just outside our window. I thought about reaching my hand out and touching it, but that kind of gesture isn't for kids like you and me, is it?

I got out of bed and walked the three or four steps to the kitchen. The back door was to the right, with the chain pulled across all set and the yellowy, curling ripped shade hanging most of the way down. The little light on the stove was on, and I could see the ashtray piled with butts. I listened down the pitch-black hallway for a minute, and when no noises came back I picked out a good-sized half one, and lit it off the stove like my ma always did. I knew this was one of hers because the old man smoked his almost down to the filter, and those only had a drag or two left, the cheapskate son of a bitch. Man was he ever happy when Old Golds got labeled as generics, their unexpected price drop the only dividend he ever really got.

I sat at the kitchen table and smoked that cigarette, no shirt on, but wearing the pants I usually slept in, because you never knew when you might have to take off. My leg started to trot, and I listened to the clock on the wall click along while I picked at the gold flecks in the Formica on the tabletop, the ones that would never come off, never fade. I don't know what I thought about that night, at that moment, but I really wish I did now. What's it like to have seventy or eighty years ahead of you, and what does your mind consider when it thinks it only has twenty or so at the most? What is the weight of the just-woke mind, the heft of a world limited on one plane by circumstance and venal authority, but known on another that it's been tricked, and lied to, that so much more awaits?

I jumped at a noise down at the bottom of the backstairs. It sounded like somebody cracked their shin on one of the wooden steps because the aftermath had more f-words and 'cocksuckers' than a pirate galley and that could only mean one thing.

The old man was home.
Son of a bitch.

I quick stubbed out my smoke and tiptoed back to the porch and hopped in my bed, my toes quickscaling down the sheet I pulled up, tiny lightning storms of static electricity popping where my skin made the circuit with the fabric. I hopped up my feet so the sheet went under and then I pulled it up tight to my chin and shoved my hands behind my butt. I couldn't cover my face with a sheet or a blanket, though, because in my mind that would make me dead, and I wasn't ready to go just yet. I puffed my long hair off my face with a quick blow up from my lips, then closed my right eye, the one on the doorway side, and rolled my left around, trying to guess what was about to happen.

The old man made it up to our place on the second floor after a while, after lots of swearing and tearing, and rustling, and stops for drinks from a tall boy, or a half-pint, whatever he had left from drinking on the El on the way home, the train trying to clack him to sleep, but probably just irritating the shit out of him. I could even hear him say 'godDAMmit' when I know he burned the insides of two fingers trying to pull a cigarette away from his lips where it had stuck so he could tip the ash that got too long but for which he was too drunk to 'pppffh' blow away without taking it out of his mouth. The double blisters you get when that happens are a

real bitch because the bubbles just rub at each other until you pop them. After that, it takes forever for them to heal.

Once he got to the back door, though, shit got real, real quick. He finally got his key in the lock, sure, but the door wouldn't open because the chain.

Shit.

The chain was on the door. Ma must've got pissed waiting for him to come home and put the chain on. And I walked right by it, didn't even think about it.

Fuck.

And now, he was pissed.

He started trying to sweet talk his way inside. He recounted his love, his devotion, and then his need, his desire. We heard about his job, and his family man style, his not missing work, his dedication to his career, his drive to make something nice in this world.

Silence from the darkened hallway where their bedroom was.

He called on that one god and his son, Jesus. Mary. Joseph. Josephine and Mary Josephine, our grandmas, especially 'Unnamed Ojibway woman' and then our ancestors, even the grandfathers, his drunken breath and oaths leaning in through the gap in the door. And though it was alcohol strong, it couldn't move or melt the chain that denied him access to our apartment, the sanctuary and the hearth, but more likely the bed that he so desperately needed, the one he should've been in, so he could sleep the sleep of the just, or at least the drunk, because that one part, that was no lie—he was utterly dedicated to work, and never missed a day, except when he was in jail for another story entirely, because, I think, in the end, that work is what paid for what he really wanted to do, for the thing he felt he was born for; that job and that devotion paid for him to drink.

But on this night, he thought of someone besides himself, and that someone was my mother. Like all good addicts, to him, the fact that he had thought of someone other than himself should be somehow noted by the cosmos, that big, beautiful moon, I suppose, should have escorted him up into the night sky to rest among the stars I suppose because the old man had brought home

ARTHUR FUCKING TREACHER'S

you bitch

I got

ARTHUR FUCKING TREACHER'S

I got hushpuppies

and

I got shrimps

and

I got

ARTHUR FUCKING TREACHER'S

so

OPEN THE FUCKING DOOR RIGHT NOW

or
I WILL FUCKING KILL YOU.

And then the glass broke under the force of his fist, the bale of his ire, and the fire of his drink.
First try, first pop, right through the vintage pane.

He fumbled with the chain.

Both of my eyes were open now, and rolling.

I could hear him trying to open the door, closing and opening it, fucking with the chain
and
I couldn't not help my dad
and so I
walked the three or four steps to the kitchen
and saw a lunatic,
a decoupage Indian Orthodox icon of sadness
and despair
and love,
and sour-fogged soul, and much nose breathing, and handfuls of greasy brown paper, malt
vinegar spilling over the broken glass and the shattered wood, mixing its tang with the peppery
copper smell of the red sliding down the heavy milk white painted back door, sprays of drops
and pinpoints everywhere and his black hair hanging down over his five-hundred-year-old eyes
that know how this is all going to turn out, how it would always turn out, no matter the prayers,
no matter the hope and
then the bedroom door in the hallway burst open
just as he broke through and snapped the chain
and my ma took her self alone
and ran out the front door
into the night
lord knows where
her nightgown flashing through the present and into a past where just maybe she could rewrite
all that had happened here
and where maybe next time
we'd get a bigger piece of things, a better slice of all we ever deserved, those little bits that get
taken for granted dusted across the top of a better morning, one not mourning all this shit
tonight.

Author Bio

Dr. Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr. is Associate Professor and Director of Indigenous Nations Studies at Portland State University. He is co-editor and Creative Editor for *Transmotion* (an open-access journal of postmodern indigenous studies). His short story collection about growing up in Chicago, *Sacred Smokes*, was published in August by the University of New Mexico Press, who also published his edited volume *The Faster Redder Road: The Best UnAmerican Stories of Stephen Graham Jones*. His work appears in collections such as *Seeing Red*, *Visualities*, and *The Routledge Companion to Native American Literature*. His fiction, essays, and photography have been published widely.

Three Poems: ‘Driven to Sleep’, ‘No Idle Hand’, ‘In Fourteen Hundred and Ninety-Two A Bookmark Took the Place of a Story Some Years Later I Made a Childhood Promise’

Kim Shuck, California College of the Arts, Diversity Studies Department

Driven to Sleep

Not statehood, not
Dustbowl
Navy brought my dad
Flint Hills Cherokee
To San Francisco
Love held him
Pole climber
Nicked hands
My fear of heights isn’t for me
How do you make a prayer solid?
Slip it into the pocket of someone you love
Safe for the moment
He put himself in danger to put food on the table
Love held him to the job
To the table
Green painted oak
Third hand but
Solid stuff
He’d strap a cardboard box in the car
Me in it
Drive me to sleep
New stories
Old stories made solid
Nicked hands
The smell of cardboard
Rolling west

No Idle Hand

In this place
Life must be ransomed

Grandma was hotel housekeeping
Had her ordering dance
A ceremony of things moving from place to place
Read the newspaper
Did the crossword puzzle
Bought the mystery cans at the supermarket
Picked wild blackberries on the San Francisco hills and
Made jam

In this family we bustle
Human honeybees
Community of sisters
Dancing the direction of the gathering

When the sun went down city lights out the porch window
She would stand me on the kitchen step stool
And we would quiet stare
Contemplate the catalog of things turned to stone

**In Fourteen Hundred and Ninety-Two A Bookmark Took the Place of a Story
Some Years Later I Made a Childhood Promise**

Those teachers stared me right in the face and lied by limitation
Not enough of us in this city to argue
I told the ripples in the bay water that I would tell our stories
In a city accent
In all of the colors that I had come to know
You music men who steal the daughters
You collectors who steal the bones
You who are fancy with magpie scatter
Well I'm a magpie too
Pick words from the cracks in the sidewalks
Spin a thread from them
Tie powerful knots and snare you
With a truth so glorious
So edge lit
In emotions you have no words for
That my promise to the water will be met
And you will not be able to look away

Author Bio

Kim Shuck is Ani Yun Wiya and Goral and was born in San Francisco in the fret and shift of the 1960s. Shuck has various degrees which include an MFA from San Francisco State University. She has raised children, written books, won awards and encouraged other poets all to the best of her ability. In 2017 she was named the 7th poet laureate of San Francisco. More information about her work can be found at kimshuck.com

Roediger, David (2017) *Class, Race, and Marxism*, Verso, London, UK, and New York, NY

Review by Gary Jones

It should come as no surprise that *Class, Race, and Marxism*, by David R. Roediger, the Foundation Distinguished Professor of American Studies and History at Kansas University, was the co-recipient of the *C.L.R. James Award for the Best Book for an Academic or General Audience* in 2018. With his customary knowledge and insight Roediger discusses the intersection of class, race, and solidarity, an issue of great importance to all those concerned about the American working class, including those involved in the field of Working-Class Studies.

Roediger, a past president of both the American Studies Association and the Working-Class Studies Association, is the author of numerous influential books and scholarly articles such as *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (1991) and 'Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality, and the New Immigrant Working Class' co-authored with historian James R. Barrett and first published in *The Journal of American Ethnic History* (1997).

His most recent work, *Class, Race, and Marxism*, is a collection of six articles published between 2006 and 2016 together with a new introduction. Roediger's introduction offers a judicious survey of the recent debate over class and race in the U.S. including the contentious question as to whether the 'production of difference' is part of the 'essence of capital.' Drawing on the theoretical work of scholars such as Lisa Lowe and Michael Lebowitz, Roediger not only answers in the affirmative, but in an argument of central importance to understanding class, race, and solidarity, states that capitalism 'sought, exploited and needed, and created difference.' (26)

The book itself is divided into two parts. Part One, 'Interventions: Making Sense of Race and Class,' contains three articles that discuss the debate over race and class in the contemporary U.S. The first, from 2006, discusses what Roediger termed the 'retreat from race and class.' The second article, from 2011, discusses the often-overlooked Marxist backgrounds of the scholars most prominent in both the origins and later emergence of the critical study of whiteness during the 1990s, including Roediger himself. The third article in Part One, from 2010, discusses the scholarship and activism of the late George Rawick, a 'white intellectual' among 'thinking black intellectuals,' an important mentor of the author's.

Part Two, 'Histories: The Past and Present of Race and Class,' contains the final three articles in the collection that discuss race and class in U.S. history. The first article, from 2011, co-written with Elizabeth Esch, discusses the production and use of racial difference to successfully remove Indians from the land, manage slaves, and justify slavery from colonial settlement to the mid-1800s. The second article, from 2009, discusses how capitalist managers since the late-1800s continued to produce and use racial difference to manage the labor of their (waged) workers. In the third and final article in Part Two, from 2016, Roediger discusses the

‘checkered’ origins and use of the term solidarity. On solidarity itself he emphasizes ‘how precious, but also how understandably fragile, broad solidarities are among groups who are oppressed but oppressed in very different and divisive ways.’ (29)

Overall, Roediger persuasively argues that capital has been far more adept at producing racial difference and using it to divide workers than the Left has been at building solidarity. This is likely because, as others have suggested elsewhere, while the U.S. Left has clearly recognized black people as workers, it has not as clearly recognized the different experiences of black people due to racism, and the need to develop policies to address that experience. As a result, black workers have tended to join organizations other than those of the Left. Nevertheless, Roediger’s analysis strongly suggests that although difficult, solidarity is possible.

In sum, this book deserves a wide audience. Careful reading of *Class, Race, and Marxism* could provide scholars and activists with an opportunity to rethink their approaches to class and race in their respective studies and struggles. If so, this book could ultimately make a valuable contribution to the collective building of working-class solidarity.

Reviewer Bio

Gary Jones is Associate Professor of History at American International College, Springfield, Massachusetts. Most recently he participated in ‘Conflict in the Coalfields: A Roundtable on Strikes and Mine Wars in Early 20th Century Pennsylvania and West Virginia,’ 38th Annual North American Labor History Conference, October 20-22, 2016, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

Gorman, Thomas J. (2017) *Growing up Working Class: Hidden Injuries and the Development of Angry White Men and Women*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland

Review by Alfred Lubrano

I came of age among mobbed-up goodfellas in the Brooklyn that existed before hipster Millennials invaded the county, piling into glossy Manhattan-peeping apartments hard by the damp foulness of the East River.

Rackets boys are often aggrandized in film, but the wise guys I knew sold drugs to junior high school students and ratted out life-long friends the second a prosecutor threatened them with lunch from a prison cafeteria. Still, for lots of guys like me with limited options growing up in working-class Bensonhurst, the Mafia was kind of a safety school: If you couldn't get into Columbia, you could always apprentice for Mikey Four Fingers. A few buddies signed up for the life.

Back in the day, old ladies and clueless blowhards would boast that the neighborhood was the safest place in the borough, thanks to those dark-haired go-getters with silk ties and shoulder holsters. Never mind that the butcher, baker, and pizza guy were being shaken down for protection money on a weekly basis, or that anyone unknown to the locals had their heads caved in for walking down the wrong street on the wrong day.

All this rugged nostalgia rolled back to me faster than the B-express train as I read Queens College sociologist Thomas J. Gorman's *Growing Up Working Class*. He lived in City Line, Brooklyn, as well as nearby Ozone Park, Queens, coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s. Gorman has a line in the book explaining how residents in that particular part of Queens thought it was made safe by Gambino crime boss John Gotti. (Interesting guy. Once, Gotti begged off an interview with me when I was working for the *New York Daily News* by saying, 'If you leave me alone now, I'll do somethin' nice for you one day.' Soon after, he was convicted of numerous crimes, then was banished to Colorado's Supermax prison, where the godfather of New York died owing me a favor.)

I'm a journalist, not a sociologist, so I'm not the best judge of Gorman's scholarship. What I can say, however, is that the book is erected around a compelling thesis: How the 'hidden injuries of class' (thank you, Sennett and Cobb) follow working-class kids into adulthood, making for the angry white men we hear so much about these days in the era of Trump.

I'm not sure Gorman really proves this. He recounts social media postings by former neighbors to take the temperature of later-life rage. And he (oddly, I thought) includes a paper he once wrote about aspects of how growing up working class can make you feel inadequate, envious of middle-class achievers, and sort of mean as you age. Perhaps the book could have benefited from up-to-date interviews of people his age who haunted the streets of the old neighborhood.

I should say that, at times, Gorman's writing confounds, swinging from the emotionally personal to the densely academic. The most poignant sentence of the piece is a simple declaration about Gorman's troubled father: 'He was a good man, underneath all the alcohol.' If you write like that, I'll stay with you all day. Unfortunately, Gorman also delivers sentences such as, '...no matter how much the focus of this auto-ethnography/socio-biography is on social class, the (macro) generational context must be put in the foreground to give social context to the micro, day-to-day interactions.' Also, it doesn't add to the narrative to declare with maddening lack of detail: 'There were, indeed, positive and negative aspects of growing up working class in the neighborhood.'

All that aside, what I admire most in Gorman's book are his astute autobiographical observations. He successfully evokes the claustrophobic, frustrating, exhilarating, painful, sometimes menacing, and just plain loud world of working-class New York. He brings forth the 'village-like atmosphere,' the sense that either a block party or a fistfight (or probably both) could break out during sweltering summer nights populated by slack and sullen corner boys, wild-ass youngsters, carping parents, and braying know-it-alls in Mets or Yankees caps holding forth on the weightier issues of the day.

In a sharp-eyed synthesis, Gorman explains, 'Many of us from the old neighborhood have fond memories of that time and place, but stress and strife were ever present. I watched my mom juggle the money, drag my drunken father out of the car in front of our apartment on a daily basis, and curse life as she knew it. I also witnessed painful moments for other families in the neighborhood....'

Gorman is smart to tell his story by focusing on important urban artifacts, the Brooklyn homeboys' equivalents of Proustian madeleines: egg creams, slices of pizza, pasta and peas. He spends time on stoops, which all of us did. And he perceptively lingers on the verbal oddities of the scene that offer insights into the teeming male multitude – the malapropisms like 'bunking [instead of bumping]' into someone; the rank outs, as 'friends' played the dozens with delectable cruelty, spitting elaborate insults into each other's faces, starting with their mothers. And Gorman does a good job depicting the masculine working-class world of rough hands and rage. Blue-collar New York neighborhoods reproduced any number of whining, bitching, bigoted, poor-me young men with eerie Xeroxity. These discontented proles would become the angry men of today, Gorman theorizes.

Where I depart with the author is when he labels it 'a travesty that working-class kids lack the kind of support readily available to middle-class kids.'

It's tough luck, for sure. I lived with that lack and know it intimately. But a travesty? I write about poverty, and I once interviewed a Philadelphia woman who was raped at 5 and shot in the stomach at 13. That's a travesty. One of the risks of donning a head lamp and digging into the mine of working-class studies is sometimes forgetting there are deeper, darker caverns honeycombing the dirt below us. We didn't have it so great. But people I know whose parents smoked the contents of Dristan tablets and forgot to make dinner in kitchens pockmarked with bullet holes have more profound wounds to display.

Still, that doesn't undermine the value of what Gorman (or any of the rest of us who've written about growing up working class) has to say. Like a lot of blue-collar boys who became educated, Gorman had a hard time connecting with his father. It was made worse by his dad's addiction. But I soared with Gorman when he talked about how his pop insulted Gorman's teaching job

one day, then boasted to a buddy afterward, ‘My son’s a professor.’ That’s a win you store away.

And I finally realized I liked the guy after reading, ‘It is very satisfying, and not a cliché at all, to try to give back to my community, to help my students believe in themselves, as a number of people in my life have done for me.’ Whatever anger one transports like toxic cargo from childhood, if a man can remember his gifts and decide to share them, then, as we used to say back on the block, he’s good people.

Reviewer Bio

Alfred Lubrano is the poverty reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and author of *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams*.

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Review by Gretchen Purser

Automating Inequality focuses on the automated eligibility systems, algorithmic models, and integrated databases that increasingly circumscribe the lives of the poor and working class, constricting their access to opportunities, demobilizing their political organizing, limiting their movement, and violating their human rights. This must-read book provides both a harrowing account of the design, rollout, and consequences of high-tech poverty management and a powerful condemnation of the ways in which we, as a society, view, rationalize, and normalize poverty, social suffering, and economic inequality. *Automating Inequality* exposes the dangers of techno-fetishism and data-driven policy-making, and it indicts all who embrace what Eubanks calls a 'systems engineering approach' to social problems.

According to Eubanks, the high-tech tools that have been adopted by human and social service agencies across the country are reflective of a 'digital poorhouse' that profiles, polices, and punishes the poor and working class. Eubanks anchors her book around this metaphor so as to 'resist the erasure of history and context' (p.183); she positions these new technologies not as the 'disruptors' that they are so often celebrated to be, but simply as the latest—though particularly consequential—strategy within the nation's longstanding punitive and moralistic attempt to regulate the poor.

Her account begins in the early nineteenth century, when the nation regulated poverty by imprisoning the indigent in county poorhouses with the aim of instilling within residents the moral values of thrift and industry. Conditions within the poorhouse were horrific, so as to dissuade the poor from accessing public resources. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the poorhouse was supplanted by a new kind of social reform: the scientific charity movement. This movement, deeply intertwined with eugenics, positioned each poor family as a 'case' and sought, through proper investigative methods (including caseworkers' reports and eugenics records), to sort and divide the 'deserving' from the 'undeserving' poor. These intrusive techniques of scrutiny and surveillance persisted in the wake of the New Deal. The welfare rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s led to numerous legal protections for, and a considerable expansion in the numbers of, families receiving public assistance. The ensuing hysteria about welfare expenditures led elected officials and state bureaucrats to commission new technologies that promised to save money by distributing aid more 'efficiently.' Whereas most scholars and commentators attribute the decimation of welfare to Clinton's 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, Eubanks argues that the winnowing of the rolls—and reversal of the gains of the welfare rights movement—began even earlier (in the 1970s), with the imposition of high-tech tools used to determine eligibility, minimize fraud, and monitor compliance.

The book is centered around three stories, all told predominantly from the point of view of the poor and working-class people targeted by, and entrapped within, the digital poorhouse. The first is a gut-wrenching story about the attempt to automate eligibility processes for the state of Indiana's welfare system. In 2006, the Republican Governor, Mitch Daniels, set out to 'modernize' the state's 'irretrievably broken, wasteful, fraudulent' welfare program, signing a ten-year \$1.16 billion contract with IBM/ACS. The results of this privatization and automation experiment were devastating: millions of applications for life-saving supports like Medicaid and food stamps were denied for the infuriating, catch-all reason of 'failure to cooperate in establishing eligibility.' Although the contract with IBM was eventually cancelled and the experiment denounced as a failure—leading to a protracted lawsuit—IBM achieved exactly what the state had asked for and contractually incentivized: it found and denied 'ineligible' cases, hemorrhaging the welfare rolls. The automation system—including the hybrid system that followed—operated as a tool of 'digital diversion' (p.83), dissuading residents from applying and denying them access to the benefits for which they are eligible. By 2014 in the state of Indiana, only 8% of poor families with children were receiving cash benefits from TANF.

Eubanks next tells the story of the coordinated entry system in Los Angeles, a digital registry for the homeless. The coordinated entry system 'collects, stores, and shares some astonishingly intimate information about unhoused people. It catalogs, classifies, and ranks their traumas, coping mechanisms, feelings, and fears' (p.85). Influenced by the service philosophies of prioritization and housing first, the coordinated entry program, launched in 2013, utilizes an assessment tool called the VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool). To access any homeless service, clients must take the survey, administered by outreach workers or service providers, and be entered into the registry. Their information is entered into the federally-mandated HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) and a ranking algorithm tallies up a score from 1 to 17 to assess their level of risk and need for housing. Despite all the fanfare surrounding the system, no amount of data will solve the housing crisis; most of LA's unhoused will never be connected with housing. And yet their data is collected and stored with little protection from the hands of the police, rendering them more visible and trackable. Coordinated entry, Eubanks writes, 'is a surveillance system for sorting and criminalizing the poor' (p.121). So, too, is it a 'machine for producing rationalization, for helping us convince ourselves that only the most deserving people are getting help' (p.123).

The third story is set in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania which adopted a risk model (the Allegheny Family Screening Tool) to algorithmically predict which children are at greatest risk for abuse or neglect. The algorithm was promoted as a way to eliminate human bias and achieve evidence-based objectivity. But, as Eubanks painstakingly points out, the algorithm is but a reflection of human bias. Let me highlight two of its most egregious features. First, it treats call referral as a proxy for abuse and neglect. This is particularly problematic because racial disparity in child welfare services is fueled by referral bias, as opposed to screening bias. Second, the majority of its predictive variables are simply measures of poverty (i.e. use of means-tested programs like SNAP, TANF, etc.). By relying on data that is exclusively collected on families that are poor (that rely on public services, as opposed to private ones), the model engages in 'poverty profiling;' it exempts middle and upper-class parents and 'confuses parenting while poor with poor parenting' (p.158).

In this highly accessible book that should be read by scholars from across the social sciences and humanities, Eubanks calls for dismantling the digital poorhouse that will someday entrap us all. But she also calls for reshaping the cultural narrative about, and political responses to, poverty in the U.S. The first step in doing so is to build empathy and solidarity amongst the poor and working-class who are so often pitted against one another.

Reviewer Bio

Gretchen Purser is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. She also serves as chair of the board of the Workers' Center of Central New York. Her scholarship focuses on work, labor, and neoliberal poverty management in the U.S. She has published in *Qualitative Sociology*, *Ethnography*, *WorkingUSA*, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, and numerous other journals.

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Reviews by Paul E. Reed

Since the publication of J.D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elogy*, and the subsequent election of President Donald Trump, there has been a revival of interest in Appalachia. During the election and in the post-election grasping at 'how and why' Trump was elected, the US has been inundated by stories from 'Trump Country,' and Appalachia has appeared as the locus of attention. Sadly, the words of John C. Campbell from 1921 still ring true: 'let us come now to the Highlands, a land about which perhaps more things are known that are not true as any other part of the country.' Many of these attempts at explanation have, like *Elogy*, fallen prey to stereotypical notions about Appalachia, or as Henry Shapiro might say, the 'invented Appalachia.' Fortunately, two recent publications have emerged that attempt to counter such narratives: Elizabeth Catte's *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia* and Steven Stoll's *Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia*.

Elizabeth Catte's *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia* focuses on countering some of the present circulating narratives, which are rooted in Appalachia's past, both real and imagined. Her book is divided into three parts, each treating a different circulating narrative. In Part One, she examines the recent past and how the coverage of many events, such as the 2016 Presidential election, claim to reflect Appalachian voices. However, upon closer inspection, these accounts rarely include the voices of Appalachian people, and when they do, they oftentimes appear in order to support the previously-held conclusions and/or agenda of the writer. Even in 2016, when we might anticipate that journalists and writers would know better, the power of the circulating tropes is still mighty, even among some of the world's foremost journalistic entities.

Part Two takes on *Hillbilly Elogy*, and critiques both the book and the author. Catte convincingly demonstrates that Vance's personal story is just that, personal. Where he errs is projecting his personal life experience onto that of the entire region. In doing so, his personal tragedies and hardships are transformed from a single family's serious issues to reflections of the region's culture. This projection echoes the 'poverty culture' thesis of books like Jack Weller's *Yesterday's People*, productions like Robert Schenkkan's *The Kentucky Cycle* (which engendered a book response *Back Talk From Appalachia* (Billings, Norman, and Ledford 1999)), and other works that take the view that a culture causes poverty. Catte also points out that Vance's particular viewpoint about Appalachia is partly informed by thinly-veiled racism,

as his depictions of the region rely on Scots-Irish ethnicity and racial homogeneity. Additionally, Vance uses work by conservative scholar Charles Murray and other academics who traffic in dubious ethnic stereotyping, to support some of his conclusions.

The final section of the book is a celebration of the long history of Appalachia's resistance against oppression, fights for justice, and activism for many progressive causes. Oddly, many recent portraits of Appalachia recognize the past protests and past resistance, such as Blair Mountain⁷⁷. However, so many of the more recent fights against exploitation, injustice, and oppression are missing and or ignored. Obviously, this section counters the narrative that the entire region is homogenous 'Trump Country,' as it shows many examples of community action that emphasize fighting back against industrialization and exploitation. Catte highlights grassroots activism, such as the Appalachian Group to Save the Land and People, and more formal groups, such as the Highlander Folk School - whose former students include activist luminaries Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Pete Seeger, and Ralph Abernathy.

In sum, the book offers a contemporary refutation of many of the stereotypes circulating about Appalachia. Its strengths include Catte's writing, which is clear and erudite without becoming stodgy. Her research is strong, and her ability to weave the more radical with the more well-known activism is admirable. In Parts Two and Three, she is at her finest. Directly confronting the issues in *Elegy* evokes the anger many Appalachian activists and intellectuals feel toward that particular work, while also underscoring how much Vance trafficked in tropes. In Part Three, my personal favorite section, her orthographic descriptions of photos, and situating the images in the stream of ongoing activism, is magisterial.

One minor critique of the book is that Catte sometimes romanticizes modern Appalachia. While there has been much resistance from the region and that activism is still going strong, there is also a fair bit of modern acquiescence to particular political viewpoints - for example, West Virginia did go to Donald Trump by roughly 42 percentage points. A bit more engagement with these uncomfortable realities might have tempered some of the romanticization.

Whereas Catte's book was aimed at contemporary issues and readers, another book helps to illuminate Appalachia's deeper political and economic past. Steven Stoll's *Ramp Hollow* seeks to describe how and why Appalachia became impoverished, countering the idea that it was an inherently poor region or that its culture somehow doomed it to be poor. While his book is not a direct rebuttal to Vance, through countering the 'culture of poverty' explanation that Vance uses, Stoll effectively traces how rapacious capitalism and exploitative industry combined to systematically impoverish the region, and crucially, maintain the poverty.

The main idea of *Ramp Hollow* is that in the post-Revolutionary War Appalachia, the mountain people were subsistence agrarians operating outside of the burgeoning capitalistic economy in the new nation. Through utilizing their own property and the 'commons', Appalachian people were not subject to entering the capitalistic markets and wage labor. However, as the nation developed and the common lands (which were usually held by absentee landowners) were steadily enclosed, the agrarian peasant subsistence economy was destroyed. This enclosure and subsequent dispossession, what Stoll calls 'slow violence', forced the Appalachian people to enter the market economy and engage in wage labor.

⁷⁷ <https://www.history.com/news/americas-largest-labor-uprising-the-battle-of-blair-mountain>

Later, in the aftermath of the Civil War, the absentee elites and, crucially, regional elites, moved to control and exploit the natural resources of the region - timber and coal. This part of the story is widely known and, sadly, familiar. At first, timber was stripped from land of absentee landowners. This destruction of the common removed one of the main sources for the makeshift agrarian economy. Later, resources were literally sold from under the feet of the landowner, and rights to extract were gained through coercion and manipulation. When the companies arrived to possess the mineral in the ground, the surface owner had little recourse. Thus, the process of dispossession continued apace, which resulted in many more Appalachian people being forced to enter the forests and the mines as laborers. Timber towns and coal towns forced the recently dispossessed to work for wages, oftentimes scrip that was only usable in company stores. Stoll vividly describes how the companies would often encourage gardening (reminiscent of the older agrarian economy) so as to be able to pay the workers even less, since their income was now being supplemented. As Stoll moves into the 20th century, the dispossession is basically complete. Modern regional realities - corruption, pollution, exploitation - are consequences of the process of enclosure and dispossession that began in the past. He concludes with thoughts on how to fight back.

The strengths of the book are Stoll's use and command of primary sources and the ways he connects Appalachia to the rest of the world. He uses vivid passages from letters from smallholders (owners of small plots of land), dry prose from contracts stripping land, and harsh condemnation of agrarians from elites. Additionally, he connects Appalachia to 16th century England and to 21st century Mali. Stoll meticulously traces how lords used enclosure in 16th century England to first own land and then to turn land into profit. The loss of the commons forced the English peasant class to become peons. Stoll also emphasizes that this is not just an historical process, but rather an ongoing one. More recently, sugarcane companies in Mali worked to dispossess land along the Niger River, aided by the United States Agency for International Development, international banks, foreign investors, and the government of Mali itself. At *Ramp Hollow's* writing, the project has failed to come to fruition; however, the parallels are clear in all three cases.

My criticism of the book may be one more of taste than substance. Chapter 5 focuses on literature and art that depict aspects of the dispossession. Stoll traces how peasants and the makeshift agrarian economy appeared in various artistic works, from Henry David Thoreau to Ralph Waldo Emerson to George Inness to John Fox Jr. Stoll analyzes their prose or art to suss out details about dispossession and agrarian life, and the ensuing tension. However, I found this interlude somewhat unnecessary, as the realities depicted in the rest of the book did not need the artistic flourish. Or, alternatively, I think Stoll could have expanded this interlude into a separate work itself.

To sum, both *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia* and *Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia* provide much-needed nuance to discussions and understandings of the region. Catte emphasizes the present complexity, while Stoll elucidates how we got here. Taken together, both books counter most of the prevailing notions of Appalachia. Practitioners of working-class studies can benefit from Catte's analysis and rebuttal of contemporary media coverage. Her erudite responses help to shed light on how deeply held pervasive stereotypes about both the people and culture of impoverished regions can be, even in our modern age. Stoll's work can help academics and activists see the historical precursors and precedents for modern issues of class. His ability to showcase how the ruling class has used legal and political clout to dispossess and exploit the working class has implications for all. Students of the Appalachian region, or anyone really, should have both in their libraries.

Reviewer Bio

Paul E. Reed is an assistant professor of phonetics and phonology in the Department of Communicative Disorders at the University of Alabama. His research focuses on the intersection of language and place-based attachment in the American South and especially Appalachia. His linguistic research has appeared in the *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, *American Speech*, the *Southern Journal of Linguistics*.

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**Lennon, John and Magnus Nilsson, eds.
(2017) *Working-Class Literature(s):
Historical and International Perspectives*,
Stockholm University Press, Stockholm**

Review by Lorena Gauthereau

Working-Class Literature(s) brings together six essays that engage different national working-class literatures: Russia and the Soviet Union, the United States, Finland, Sweden, Mexico, and Great Britain. While this collection does not provide an exhaustive perspective of global working-class literatures (nor does it intend to), it does provide an overarching examination of a variety of national literatures labeled as ‘working-class.’ In doing so, it highlights not only the often-conflictive definitions of the genre, but also the historical context, evolution, national specificity, and international influences of and on working-class literature(s).

In the introduction, editors Lennon and Nilsson argue for the timeliness of this collection. Their research yielded few studies of working-class literature from a comparative national perspective. This collection, then, certainly provides a broad representation of working-class literature across national borders. Citing John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon (2005), the editors suggest that current trends in literary criticism, ‘such as sexuality, disability, and species has pushed class even further down on the agenda’ (13 qtd. x). Likewise, they argue that contemporary studies of working-class literature have not shown a ‘significant development of analytical tools’ and instead, rely on outdated theory that has not evolved over the past decades in the same way as other theoretical frameworks (xi). While I would grant that perhaps sexuality and gender have been at the forefront of current trends in literary criticism, class is often part of the critical conversation for women of color feminists (at the very least in the United States and Latin America) albeit tied to other markers of identity, such as race/ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. And although studies of working-class literatures consistently rely on the frameworks laid by canonical theorists such as Karl Marx and Georg Lukács, we cannot take for granted the evolution of intersectional class analysis developed by material feminists, who consider class in relation to capital, patriarchy, gender roles, sexuality, and race/ethnicity. Yet, despite my disagreement with these brief introductory remarks, this collection provides a strong survey of different national working-class literatures.

Read together, the essays provide a comparative selection of working-class literature and, in line with the editors’ goal, highlight the ways that this genre is ‘rooted both in international and national contexts’ (xiv). The contemporary critique offered by the authors in *Working-Class Literature(s)* takes into consideration significant trends in race and ethnicity studies as well as transnational studies. The six essays in this collection dialogue with the tensions surrounding the definition of ‘working-class’ literature, revealing a long list of debates that have changed over time. These debates questioned whether working-class literature should be defined as literature written by workers, for workers, about workers, or about labor movement politics, and whether it should respond to social injustice, depict an optimistic classless society, deal with class inequality, or espouse leftist radical politics. This attention demonstrates how

defining the genre is contentious across a range of national literatures and languages. Furthermore, each chapter provides ample examples of authors and texts that fit into each definition, which makes it easy for educators to pair with reading assignments and for students or researchers to examine the topics further in their own projects. As a whole, the collection meets the editors' goal to provide a comparative overview of six distinct national working-class literatures, which in turn provides insight into the ways the genre is shaped both by national and international historical variables.

Katerina Clark's 'Working Class Literature and/or Proletarian Literature: Polemics of the Russian and Soviet Literary Left' takes as a launching point, the two-fold Bolshevik meaning of 'proletarian': 1) of/by the working class or 2) of or by the Russian-cum-Soviet Communist Party (1). While much of the literature was written by workers themselves, the definition of who was considered to be proletarian shifted over time. Clark traces the trajectory of proletarian literature beginning with the literature of the pre-Revolutionary years (1890s-1917)—during which self-taught workers published their writing in union and Socialist Party newspapers (3)—and ending with the literature published after the fall of the Soviet Union when the genre focused more on workers' political enlightenment.

Benjamin Balthasar's essay, 'The Race of Class: The Role of Racial Identity Production in the Long History of U.S. Working-Class Writing,' highlights the racialization of class that has occurred in the U.S. as a consequence of colonialism and slave economy. He anchors his theory in Georg Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*, and astutely reads the genre through the history of a capitalist system deeply rooted in racialized slave labor. He argues that the genre of working-class literature in the U.S. has primarily been more of an 'exploration of the ethnic and/or racial self through the classed structure of power than they are truly novels of organized, working-class revolt' (52). This ethnic/racial identity 'exploration' is evident in the white/ethnic literary examples he mentions, but also, and perhaps more markedly, as he suggests, in writing by authors of color (54). In addition, Balthasar makes a compelling argument for reading slave narratives as working-class literature. Such a postcolonial assertion accounts for the historical totality of colonialism as well as the significance of racial slave labor in the Americas.

Elsi Hyttin and Kati Lawnis' 'Writing of a Different Class? The First 120 Years of Working-Class Fiction in Finland' pinpoint the Civil War of 1918 as a major touchstone for defining the genre. After the Civil War, working-class authors were split along political divisions on the left, and not all authors wanted to be associated with politics (77). The rise of Finnish working-class literature, the authors note, occurred at the same time as a 'global upsurge of working-class literary culture,' and at the same time as the emergence of the labor movement and labor press in Finland itself (67). Like the working-class literature of pre-revolutionary Russia described in the first essay, the first literary works of the genre appeared in newspapers (69-70). Hyttin and Lawnis briefly mention the gendered dimension of Finnish working-class literature, noting that although working-class women writers appear to make up a much lower percentage than men, the authors suggest that women writers shared their works in handwritten newspapers read by young working-class people and that they hid their identities through collective nicknames (75-76). Interjecting women's issues into literature, they claim, 'was often difficult and the highlighting of this inequality posed a potential threat to class cohesion and unity' (76).

Magnus Nilsson provides an overview of traditional Swedish working-class literature in his essay, 'The Making of Swedish Working-Class Literature.' Like the previous essays by Clark

(Russia and Soviet Union) and Hyttinen and Lawunis (Finland), Nilsson provides a review of evolving definitions and an understanding of the genre in Sweden. He situates Swedish working-class literature in the historical context of the labor movement, in which the texts sought to agitate workers into political action. Swedish working-class literature changed during the early twentieth century, as it began to attract readers from outside the labor movement (98). Historical shifts in Swedish class structure ultimately changed the types of working-class literature produced in the country. Nilsson asserts that the 'dynamic nature of the phenomenon of working-class literature' is highlighted through analysis of 'the heterogenous history of the construction of Swedish working-class literature' in conjunction with comparative criticism of other national working-class literatures.

In 'Mexican Working-Class Literature, or The Work of Literature in Mexico,' Eugenio Di Stefano provides clear historical contextualization for thinking about working-class literature in Mexico. The genre cannot be understood outside of the class upheaval that ultimately led to and followed the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The author considers the evolution of working-class Mexican literature 'in relation to different modernization projects' (128) and puts three specific types of literature into conversation: 1930s post-Revolutionary proletarian literature, 1960s testimonio (or biographical/first-hand documentary text), and contemporary literature of the early 2000s (128). Di Stefano notes that while Mexican Revolutionary novels—such as Mariano Azuela's canonical *Los de abajo* [*The Underdogs*] (1915)—attempted to convey a 'growing disillusionment' with the Revolution, proletarian literature (1920s-1930s) depicted an optimistic vision of constructing a classless society (131-132). The 1940s ushered in indigenous and mestizo themes (137) and the testimonio called for political justice. Unlike the proletarian literature that preceded it, the testimonio focused on 'the subaltern as a politically-charged subject whose real, popular voice directly testifies not only to injustices, but to the radical historical changes taking place' (141). Di Stefano asserts that contemporary trends in contemporary Mexican working-class literature 'function as a critique of contemporary neoliberal cultural logic' and 'offer the opportunity to revisit working-class theory and criticism' (151).

In the final chapter, Simon Lee focuses on the conflictive relationship between aesthetics and political objectives in 'British Working-Class Writing: Paradox and Tension as Genre Motif,' from Chartist fiction (a radical working-class movement) to kitchen sink realism (a type of social realism focused on the grittiness of working-class life). Lee argues that 'the very notion of an authoritative working-class literature resists formal consummation and is therefore subject to continual renovation contingent upon cultural need' (160). During the Victorian era, for example, aesthetics took precedence over social function, whereas during the postwar period, the depiction of working-class character underscored the reality of life during the modern welfare state. That is, British working-class literature evolved according to social concerns 'through the use of adapted literary techniques, refusing a fixed formal aesthetic and, therefore, curtailing the potential for commodification' (190). Lee's essay not only provides a succinct history of British working-class literature, but also clearly articulates the ways that contemporary societal concerns have influenced the balance between aesthetics and political goals in the genre across time.

The broad reach of *Working Class Literature(s)* makes it ideal as an introductory text for students of working-class literatures. Yet, the essays can also be read on their own. As standalone pieces, the individual chapters can serve as a complement to courses or research specific to one of the national literatures covered. For educators and students looking for an introductory text on global working-class literatures, this collection provides a clear genealogy

of Russian, Soviet Union, United States, Finnish, Swedish, or British national literatures. *Working Class Literature(s)* would pair well with selected canonical texts such as Georg Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* and *The Marx-Engels Reader*, as well as novels in the genre. The collection, however, lacks any essays that analyze working-class literatures from southern hemisphere countries. Therefore, students would benefit from an introductory course that combines *Working-Class Literature(s)* with essays on national working-class literatures from the southern hemisphere (including African countries and more Latin American countries).

Reviewer Bio

Lorena Gauthereau is the CLIR-Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Houston's Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project. She received her Ph.D. from Rice University in English literature and her M.A. from Rice in Hispanic Studies. Her research interests include Chicanx working-class literature, Chicana feminism, class analysis, decolonial theory, affect theory, and the digital humanities.

Calarco, Jessica (2018) *Negotiating Opportunities: How the Middle Class Secures Advantages in School*, Oxford University Press, New York, Ny.

Review by Jenny Stuber

Contemporary culture is fraught with anxieties about how to raise children and advice for doing the same. And contradictions characterize much of this conversation. On the one hand, public discourse mocks this generation of ‘snowflakes’— children who were raised to be overly sensitive and in need of personal attention and accommodation. On the other hand, there is concern and even mockery of ‘free-range parenting’ and other efforts to allow children to be curious, self-governed creatures. But how does social class figure into the culture of parenting and beliefs about what it means to raise a good child? Should parents raise their children to be assertive and to have their social and educational needs met at all costs, or should parents raise their children to be patient and cooperative, and to try to solve problems on their own, before seeking adult intervention? The complications surrounding parenting, and especially how social class informs child rearing, is just one theme addressed by sociologist Jessica McCrory Calarco in her fantastic new book— making it suitable for parents, educators, and those with an interest in sociology. Those interested in working-class studies will find in this book a careful analysis of class cultures and a respect for the cultural styles of working-class school children.

Questions about social reproduction in education have animated the field and captured the interest of sociologists since the 1970s, when Pierre Bourdieu first introduced his groundbreaking theory. Over the next several decades, researchers have diligently provided empirical illustrations of Bourdieu’s theory of social reproduction, illustrating how, for example, schools themselves operate according to a middle-class habitus and how parents pass on class cultures to their children through socialization. Jessica McCrory Calarco’s remarkably rich and sensitive book, *Negotiating Opportunities: How the Middle Class Secures Advantages in School*, contributes to this tradition, filling a long vacant gap. Calarco picks up where her mentor, Annette Lareau, leaves off: using a longitudinal research design, she explores how working- and middle-class elementary school children internalize the class socialization imparted by their parents, and how they activate this socialization within classroom settings. Her research fills an important gap in theories of social reproduction, vividly illustrating the link between culture (socialization and action) and social stratification.

Drawing on three years of field work in a mixed-class school, located in a suburb of a large East Coast metropolitan area of the US, Calarco examines how elementary school children (many of whom she later observes as 7th graders) interact with their teachers. More specifically, using detailed classroom observations, supplemented by in-depth interviews with children, their parents, and their teachers, she examines three ways students interact with their teachers, with separate chapters focusing on how students seek, or attempt to seek, *assistance*, *accommodations*, and *attention*. She focuses on differences among working- and middle-class students across these domains, ultimately arguing that the strategies used by middle-class

children to seek assistance, accommodations, and attention yield them profits, while the strategies of working-class children go unrecognized and, therefore, fail to yield profits. The profits earned by middle-class students include opportunities to develop cognitive capacities and enhance their academic achievement, but also opportunities to be creative and to feel like schools are set up to attend to their comfort and provide for their convenience (116). It is through these classroom strategies, and how teachers respond, that children's class-based behaviors translate into 'stratified profits' within the educational system.

Like her mentor, Annette Lareau, Calarco provides a rich account of the 'class cultures' that school children employ in the classroom. While she does not focus her analyses on how these cultures get inculcated in children, or the reasons why parents may favor these cultural styles in their parenting, she illustrates the nature of these cultures and their consequences. She shows, for example, that the classroom behaviors of middle-class children reflect their *strategies of influence*, whereas the strategies of working-class students reflect their *strategies of deference*. In characterizing their strategies as such, Calarco echoes the earlier work of Melvin Kohn, who found that middle-class parents favor creativity and working-class parents favor conformity, as well as the work of Annette Lareau, who labeled the parenting strategies of middle-class families as concerted cultivation and the strategies of working-class parents as reflecting the logic of natural growth. In her work, Calarco ably shows middle-class students as proactive and direct in seeking assistance and attention. Even when teachers wish to blunt their requests, these students relentlessly lobby for their questions to be answered (how to approach a math problem, clarification on a social studies assignment) and requests for customization (to go to the bathroom, to submit late homework, to alter the directions for a project). In their strategies of deference, working-class students are relentlessly polite and compliant. Rather than pushing their own needs and agendas, Calarco describes these children as sensitive to classroom dynamics; quietly putting their hands down after starting to sense that the teacher is no longer in the mood to answer questions and eager to seek attention for helping another student rather than for an individual accomplishment. Ultimately, the classroom behaviors of working-class children align with their own and their parents' wishes to demonstrate a sense of *character* and avoid reprimand, while the behaviors of middle-class children reflect their own and their parents' wishes to prove a sense of *achievement* and reap rewards. Through these observations, Calarco contributes to a body of scholarship that has documented the 'class cultures' associated with people situated in various strata of the class hierarchy.

More than contributing to theories of social reproduction, Jessica McCrory Calarco makes a valuable contribution to the *sociology of childhood*. Like Bill Corsaro and others who paved a path before her at Indiana University — where the author is now a faculty member — Calarco takes children seriously. She sees children as active agents in their social worlds, making meaning, solving problems, and strategically interacting. Her work is especially rich in observing what children *do* in school. An immensely talented ethnographer, she brings detail to students' facial expressions and body language: the significance of Jesse's (a working-class student) shift from eagerness to slumped shoulders and the meaning of a hand going up to ask a question, only to be withdrawn a minute later. The love, dare I say, and dignity that she shows for the subjects of her analyses is remarkable. She brings a sensitive eye as well as a keen sociological instinct to her observations and the meaning she sees in these students' daily experiences.

Finally, Calarco provides a nuanced analysis of teachers' role in the reproduction of middle-class advantage. Unlike earlier work on social reproduction, Calarco does not argue that middle-class students are successful in school because they *match* the cultural expectations of

the schools and teachers. Rather, she argues that middle-class students are especially skilled actors, pushing teachers to match their own cultural styles and expectations, rather than the other way around. Calarco is especially sensitive in explaining why teachers often capitulate to the demands of middle-class students: at some point, if teachers resist the demands of middle-class students, their jobs may be in jeopardy due to the influence of middle-class parents. To some extent, teachers allow themselves to be co-opted by middle-class parents because pushing back against them and trying to level the playing field is laden with potential conflict and just too risky (149). This observation leads Calarco to place the onus for change squarely on the shoulders of middle-class parents. While teachers need to learn to say ‘no’ to requests from students in excess of what is fair or practical, middle-class parents need to ‘be mindful of the consequences of wielding their privilege’ and to recognize the limitations of advocating exclusively for their own children’s self-interest (199).

Negotiating Opportunities is an excellent book. Alas, it is not a perfect book. Substantively, I would have liked a bit more attention on the degree to which students sought assistance and attention from peers rather than their teachers. The analyses included focus primarily on student-teacher dynamics, and do not provide as much exploration of peer-to-peer interactions as I would have liked. Stylistically, Calarco’s writing is meticulous: each substantive chapter is organized in the same way, beginning with a vignette, moving through a brief literature review, presenting the data analysis, and conclusions. This provides great consistency, ensuring that her reader understand the nature of the argument. Additionally, she begins her book with a presentation of existing theories, diligently situating her working with existing scholarship and identifying the gaps, and then ends the book with an entire chapter on ‘Alternative Explanations.’ Her airtight presentation is so meticulous and deliberate, however, that it verges on defensive at times. It is as if she placed herself within the role of reviewer, which is natural, and preemptively responded to every critique that a reviewer might have. While such a strategy is, of course, smart, it leads to a slightly diminished sense of discovery and engagement on the part of the reader, and a slight feeling of being beaten over the head with the argument. This is a minor critique, however, of a book whose time has come and which will surely leave an enduring mark on the field.

Reviewer Bio

Jenny Stuber is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of North Florida. Her 2011 book, *Inside the College Gates: How Class and Culture Matter in Higher Education*, investigates how social class and first-generation status shape how students navigate the college environment, focusing specifically on their social interactions and extra-curricular involvement.

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DiPaolo, Marc, ed. (2018) *Working-Class Comic Book Heroes: Class Conflict and Populist Politics in Comics*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS

Review by Pamela Fox

I confess that until quite recently, I have not been remotely attracted to superhero comics. Perhaps I'm one of the audience 'skeptics' referenced by Marc DiPaolo early on in this volume's introduction, disdaining stories set in 'a heavily mythologized, escapist America free of social-class divisions, or in fantastical environments' (4). And in my case, they also seemed to exploit the most retrograde versions of gender difference. But my late discovery of 'working-class comic book heroes' Jessica Jones and Luke Cage, via their striking Netflix series, lured me into the Marvel universe and showed me the error of my flawed assumptions. I am thus delighted to review this groundbreaking and accessible essay collection, which reflects the diverse training, methodologies, and locales of its writers hailing from academia, the public humanities, and journalism but all representing the field of working-class studies. Their varying styles and voices prove to be a refreshing mix.

DiPaolo's lengthy opening essay serves as an instructive primer on the comic book as a genre, providing a historical context as well as some helpful analysis of its adaptation by film, television, and streaming media. He argues that the Marvel film versions of *Captain America*, *Daredevil*, and *Luke Cage* have proven successful at 'crystalizing the working-class themes found in the comic books instead of eliding them' (4). But while welcoming the much broader audience created by these media adaptations, the collection clearly foregrounds the original comic book form as later versions' source material (5). Indeed, many of the essays shift back and forth between the print source and the film variant, which can be rather confusing at times for a novice reader unfamiliar with the backstories of relationships between, and transformations of, Marvel or DC characters. But as someone who enjoys and teaches graphic novels, I appreciate the collection's attention to the comic form itself: how its panels and 'gutters' (lines that divide the panels) involve the reader more organically than in the passive role as media spectator.

DiPaolo conducts a brief review of superhero scholarship to highlight the volume's contribution as 'the first ... to explore issues of socioeconomic class, cultural capital, and economics in comic book 'heroic fiction'' (5). And it does so by making a key choice in terminology: 'comic book heroes,' not 'superheroes.' As he quips, 'once a working-class superhero gains access to a superpower ... do they cease being working class?' (36) Although superhero characters such as Batman are typically wealthy and must adopt aliases or masks in order to protect their class status, others, such as Cage, Jones, and Peter Parker (Spider-Man) blur their 'real' and 'super power' selves: Cage, for instance—a 1970s African American man with super abilities—is the first of his kind to charge money for his crime-fighting services (a 'Hero for Hire'). The book thus addresses not only the traditional comics genre but also 'the most culturally significant cowboy and gangster heroes of mixed-genres heroic narratives, including ... [those] found in comic book dystopian, post-apocalyptic, and steam-punk

universes' (5) in order to include those characters who can more readily function as 'analogues of real-life working-class figures' (7). Ultimately, DiPaolo writes, *Working-Class Comic Book Heroes* aims to promote 'greater empathy' within 'the very contemporary context of Trump's America' (7).

Part I covers a fascinating array of comics that on the surface would seem to have next to nil in common. Michelle Fazio's essay on *The Walking Dead* redirects 'zombie studies' in her deft working-class reading of both the comic book and television series. While noting that prior scholars have linked zombie narratives to the recent economic recession, Fazio focuses on labor as the texts' 'continuous narrative thread' both in the past and the survivalist present. She teases out characters' embedded work histories to reveal comradery around shared discontent but also pride in useful skills; in an apocalyptic world, manual work emerges as an almost privileged training promoting cross-class alliances. But she is also careful to note continuing gender oppression in this new social system.

Other essays continue this engagement with form. Kelly Kanayama approaches the comic book *Preacher* as a revisionist Western that also revamps horror and southern fiction genres to promote a feminist working-class outlook. Its gun-toting female protagonist, Tulip O'Hare, manages to reject most gender normative expectations yet also remains tethered to feminized care work that meets men's needs. In 'Alan Moore and Anarchist Praxis in Form,' James Gifford and Orion Ussner Kidder mount perhaps this volume's most challenging examination of the political relationship between content and form as they chart the shifting presence of anarchist thought in two of Moore's most significant works, *V for Vendetta* and *Black Dossier*. Closing out this unit, Phil Bevin's chapter on Superman revisits Clark Kent's status as working-class 'everyman' by focusing on one particular writer's updating of this beloved comics hero: from 'drudge' reporter in a dingy walkup to socialist champion of the oppressed to a more global human rights activist (141).

Part II pivots to Marvel comics' most recent celebrated superheroes, thanks to their star turns in massively popular media adaptations. While focusing on different figures and preoccupations, the essays address the complexities of class, race, gender, and power within specific historical moments and locales. Blair Davis' essay on Luke Cage and Man-Thing, for instance, spotlights the 1970s as a key turning point in comic book class and racial representation. A survey circulated by Marvel's rival, DC comics, queried readers about their preference for different storylines concerning racial and urban issues, and in response, Marvel created a Black hero whose backstory includes being a former gang member as well as prisoner who 'acquired super-strength and an impenetrable body' (149) during a botched medical procedure. While eschewing the Panthers and other radical politics of the era, he literally embodies a working-class 'black power.' Writing on *Daredevil*, Kevin Michael Scott offers a fascinating review of the blind superhero's class origins and politics. Debuting in 1964, 'no other comic ... placed its hero so squarely in the realm of the poor and working classes' (169)—namely, Hell's Kitchen. Scott tracks three chronological periods of *Daredevil*, associated respectively with acclaimed writers Stan Lee, Frank Miller, and Brian Michael Bendis, to explore the comic's changing approach to combatting what Scott terms 'BIG POWER': 'the corrupting bargain made between government, crime, and wealth ... to profit from the working classes' (171). Andrew Alan Smith's essay on the Fantastic Four's 'The Thing' (aka Ben Grimm) serves as a thumbnail bio of this superhero's co-creator Jack Kirby. A Jewish working-class artist from New York city's lower East side, Kirby clearly enjoyed mapping his own blue-collar vernacular and pleasures (wrestling, poker) onto his 'alter ego' character.

The collection's final two chapters shift our attention to the rare *female* superhero: one a lesser light, the other—thanks to Netflix—now a bona fide star. Christina Knopf's essay on Shamrock, an intermittent Northern Irish member of the Guardians of the Galaxy franchise, walks us through this unlikely heroine's complex history featuring her Irish Republican father's travails and her own post-superhero work history as a 'schoolteacher,' bartender, and Dublin hairdresser. While developing a thought-provoking feminist reading of this character, Knopf lost me when she argued that Shamrock's *non*-sexy costuming registered 'women's subordinate, overlooked, and forgotten place in Irish history and society' (209). Finally, 'The Working Class PI (AKA Jessica Jones)' builds a multi-layered reading of the title character's transformation from the comic book *Alias* to the television series *Jessica Jones*. Terrence Wandtke posits that the comic's non-glamorous, no-nonsense young woman who works as an 'ordinary' private investigator (with super abilities) is the new avatar of the American working class. He rightly notes that she resists the long standing conventions for women's representation in detective narratives – the 'femme fatale,' the 'good girl' (233). Alas, the essay ends with a disappointing yet convincing critique of the Netflix series. Jones remains a compelling female working-class figure, Wandtke suggests, but her prior radical nature has been somewhat 'co-opted by conventional expectations' (241-42). Happily, this volume does not succumb to such a fate.

Reviewer Bio

Pamela Fox is a feminist scholar of working-class and women's literature/culture at Georgetown University (USA) and the author of numerous articles, two books, and one co-edited critical volume: *Class Fictions: Shame and Resistance in the British Working-Class Novel, 1890-1945* (Duke UP); *Natural Acts: Gender, Race, and Rusticity in Country Music* (Univ. of Michigan Press); and *Old Roots, New Routes: The Cultural Politics of Alt.Country Music*, co-edited with Barbara Ching (Univ. of Michigan Press). She teaches classes for both the English Dept. and the Women's and Gender Studies Program on British and American working-class literature and popular culture, and cultural constructions of motherhood.

Dotter, Earl, (2018) *Life's Work: A Fifty Year Photographic Chronicle of Working in the U.S.A.*, AIHA Press (American Industrial Hygiene Association), Falls Church, VA.

Review by Janet Zandy

‘The camera has allowed me to do meaningful work.’ Earl Dotter

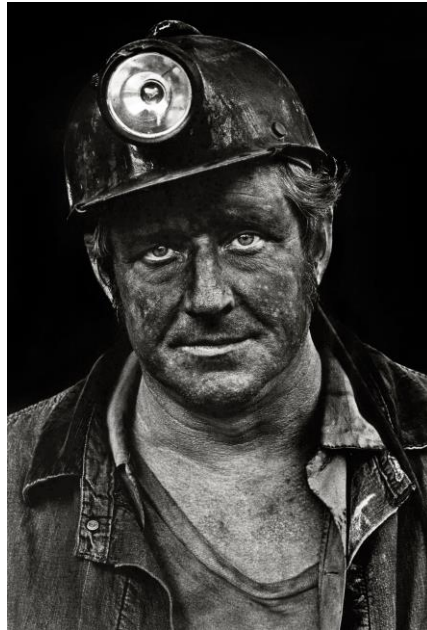
Earl Dotter’s photographs of miners, textile workers, cleaners, farm laborers, fishers, nurses, emergency responders, window washers, industrial hygienists, and other workers, especially those exposed to dangerous and hazardous conditions, constitute a narrative of labor both crucial and largely invisible. As was true of Lewis Hine’s efforts to ameliorate the cruelty of child labor, Dotter’s photographs have agency, revealing the struggle for safe work and democratic unions, the aftermath of job-related deaths and injuries to workers and their families, and the marks of labor on a person’s body as evidenced by missing limbs or ‘quiet’ chronic sickness. Dotter’s photographs are [under]grounded, rooted in a particular vernacular of labor and, simultaneously, a dense and wide canopy of workers’ lives. He masters the technical challenge of photographing in a coal shaft or on a fishing boat during a winter storm, as well as the necessary empathetic human connection of photographing without turning his subjects into distanced victims or sociological categories.

On the complicated question of his relationship to his subjects, Dotter recalls his experience working as a photographer for the *United Mine Workers Journal* (1973-77): ‘I was made welcome into the homes of mining families. I’ve learned that before I ever bring my camera out of the bag, the first thing I try to do is to let folks know who I am, why I want to take their picture. Then, if they are satisfied with what I’m up to, they are better able to respond and live out their life in front of the camera rather than act it out.’

Dotter has an interior drive to connect with people from *within* their own life circumstances. While he was a student at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, he took a photography course that was catalytic and transformative. He learned that ‘aesthetic decisions flowed’ from a respectful connection with one’s subjects. As was true for many of his generation (Dotter was born in 1943), 1968 was a pivotal year. While living in lower Manhattan, he composed a series of photos emerging from his interactions with people in his neighborhood. His photos of the urban response to Martin Luther King’s assassination appeared in the final issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*. In 1968 he joined VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and was assigned to the Cumberland Plateau Region of Tennessee. After his stint in VISTA he remained in the Appalachian Region to photograph the rank and file movement to reform the United Mine Workers Union. In 1972 he was staff photographer for the reformers’ newspaper (delivered free to every miner), and after a successful democratic union election, he went to work for the *United Mine Workers Journal*. The decade that he worked with and for the miners was for Dotter a period of ‘intense creative development’ where he learned ‘not just what to

photograph, but how to create an image that would impact the viewer both visually and emotionally. The lessons learned during my ‘coalfield years’ still guide my work today.’

His photograph of Lee Hipshire⁷⁸, a West Virginia coal miner at the end of his shift, proves there is no oxymoronic contradiction between a beautiful portrait and the marks of a day’s labor on the human face and body. (Lee Hipshire died of Black Lung Disease at the age of 56.) Hipshire’s iconic, often reprinted portrait is included in *Life’s Work*.



As is his photograph of a miner’s widow. Her husband survived action in Vietnam only to die in the 1976 Kentucky Scotia Mine disaster that took the lives of 26 miners. It is a photograph of immense poignancy. Through a local newspaper Dotter approached the Griffith family and earned permission to photograph the out-of-the-way mountaintop funeral.



⁷⁸ All images reproduced with permission from the artist.



As the widow was leaving the graveside funeral service, Dotter photographed her. That photograph became a double-page spread in *The United Mine Workers Journal*. Some thirty years later, the widow, Mrs. Griffith, came to an exhibit of Dotter's mining photos. She was in a wheelchair and with her daughter with whom she was pregnant at the time of the earlier photo. Dotter recalls their encounter: '[She] explained to me about her life since the picture was made and how she had a pretty difficult life. She said that the coverage that ensued in the *Mine Workers Journal* was ultimately beneficial toward promoting mine safety. So there are continuing stories.'



Indeed, 'continuing stories' could be an apt subtitle to *Life's Work*, Dotter's new book, his *Fifty Year Photographic Chronicle of Working in the U.S.A.* Each of the fifteen chapters focuses on Dotter's photographs of an occupation with brief and useful accompanying commentary from experts in the fields of industrial health and safety. The book is beautifully designed with black background and white lettering dividing each chapter. With no dominating chronological order, the reader can move in and out of the visual job space Dotter creates. Through Dotter's informed photographic eye, readers see commercial fishermen in 'The Price of Fish,' (2002), emergency responders in 'When Duty Calls' (2001), nurses and health care workers in 'Maimonides at Work' (2012) and 'Just a Nurse,' (2007), Southern Textile Workers in 'Rise Gonna Rise' (1979), immigrants, migrants and new Americans in 'The Farmworkers Feed Us All' (2007), Native Americans developing energy resources in 'Holding Mother Earth Sacred' (2010) and Dotter's work with generations of miners, 'In Our Blood' (1970s) and the people of Appalachia (1969-1999).



This intelligent book is an alternative to clichéd presentations of so-called 'heart wrenching' conditions. It is structured so that we recognize not only the damage done to people by the work they do, but also the efforts to resist and improve those conditions. The physicality of labor is palpable in Dotter's photographs. We see the strained human arm on the poultry processing line, the compression of the body entering a narrow trench, *and* the masks limiting exposure to asbestos dust and the better harvest tools for the stooping body.

Imagine this book in the hands of teachers and politicians. Rather than societal divisions, we see, instead, what James Agee described in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* as 'an effort in human actuality.' Dotter reveals the connective tissue of labor, a circuitry achieved through his exhibits and workshops. Dotter's photographs call for response and answerability. His quiet, fifty-year, photographic achievement illuminates the dignity of labor and every person's absolute right to safe work. He enables us to see the intelligence of labor, what Mike Rose calls 'the mind at work.' We now have this crucial book as *tikkun olam*, a tool to repair the world.

Reviewer Bio

Janet Zandy is a Rochester Institute of Technology emerita professor. She is the author of the award winning *Hands: Physical Labor, Class and Culture* and other books on the working classes and culture. Her most recent book is *Unfinished Stories: The Narrative Photography of Hansel Mieth and Marion Palfi*, researched at the Center for Creative Photography, as an Ansel Adams Fellow. She was general editor of *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 1997-2001. She can be reached at janetzandy52@gmail.com.

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