Colonial Traumas, Indigenous Survivance:

A Trans-Indigenous Literary Study

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Declaration

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that any material that has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University has been acknowledged.

Certain sections from Chapter Three have been published as “Beyond the End: Indigenous Futurisms’ Interventions in the Anthropocene” in the special issue “Trans-Indigenous Futurity” of *SFRA Review*, vol 51, no. 4, 2021, pp. 160–71.

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Abstract

This research explores representations of colonial trauma and Indigenous healings in a selection of twenty-first-century Indigenous novels from different Indigenous cultural and geopolitical contexts and distinct literary traditions and genres across what is known today as North America and Australia. The four core chapters are divided into two interrelated, over-arching axes centred on Indigenous representations of colonial traumas and healing. The first, comprising chapters One and Two, investigates literary representations of colonial traumas in Indigenous fiction by considering the structural/material and subjective/psychological dimensions of colonial domination within particularities of settler-colonial structures and histories of dispossession. Chapter One explores *There There* (2018) by Cheyenne novelist Tommy Orange and *Taboo* (2017) by Noongar writer and activist Kim Scott. It investigates narrative registers and aesthetic techniques employed by the authors to inscribe traumas of colonial modernity experienced by the Indigenous communities represented in their novels within the broader settler-colonial structures and histories of dispossession. Chapter Two examines representations of the psycho-affective dimension of colonial oppression in *Indian Horse* (2012) by Ojibwe writer and journalist Richard Wagamese and *Swallow the Air* (2006) by Wiradjuri writer Tara June Winch, focusing on the registration of the traumatic impact of racism. The second part, comprising chapters Three and Four, addresses representations of healing in Indigenous futurisms and wonderworks, attending to their aesthetic mobilisation of specific Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and worldviews to present narratives of Indigenous survivance that reflect Indigenous decolonial perspectives on sovereignty in its material, cultural, and subjective dimensions. Chapter Three approaches two works of Indigenous futurisms: *Killer of Enemies* (2013) by Abenaki writer Joseph Bruchac and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* (2012) by Palyku writer and scholar Ambelin Kwaymullina. It explores the aesthetics of survivance inscribed through the ethical and aesthetical engagements with and deployment of aspects pertaining to the authors' respective Indigenous knowledge systems, worldviews, and storytelling traditions in futuristic narratives. This, the chapter argues, reflects the novels' endeavours to create sites of healing by asserting visions of Indigenous cultural and territorial sovereignties and agencies. Chapter Four reads two Indigenous wonderworks: *Catching Teller Crow* (2018) by Palyku siblings and writers Ambeline and Ezekiel Kwaymullina (Australia) and *Split Tooth* (2018) by Inuk throat-singer and writer Tanya Tagaq (Inuit/Canada). It explores representations of healing from a psychological/subjective perspective, focusing on how healing, resilience, and psychological survivance are anchored within specific Indigenous worldviews and perspectives. This thesis contributes to the growing field of trans-Indigenous literary studies and aims to enrich the ongoing project of decolonising trauma studies.

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous Voices on the Global Stage

This thesis explores the representation of colonial traumas and Indigenous healings in a selection of twenty-first-century Indigenous novels that emanate from different Indigenous contexts, literary traditions, and genres across what is known today as North America and Australia. Within the Indigenous North American literary contexts, this selection includes *Indian Horse* (2012) by Ojibway author and journalist Richard Wagamese (fiction), *There There* (2018) by Cheyenne novelist Tommy Orange (fiction), *Killer of Enemies* (2013) by Abenaki writer and storyteller Joseph Bruchac (science fiction/ Indigenous futurism), and *Split Tooth* by Inuk writer and throat singer Tanya Tagaq ("magical" realism/ Indigenous wonderwork). For the Aboriginal literary texts, the selection comprises *Swallow the Air* (2006) by Wiradjuri novelist Tara June Winch (fiction), *Taboo* (2017) by Noongar writer and activist Kim Scott (fiction), *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolfe* (2012) by Palyku novelist and scholar Ambelin Kwaymullina (science fiction/ Indigenous futurism) and *Catching Teller Crow* (2018) by Ambelin and her sibling author Ezekiel Kwaymullina ("speculative" fiction/ Indigenous wonderworks). While futurism as a genre is relatively known, particularly through the literary and scholarly production of Afrofuturism on which Indigenous futurism draws heavily, this is not the case for Indigenous wonderworks. In *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (2018), Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice describes Indigenous wonderworks as "neither strictly 'fantasy' nor 'realism,' but maybe both at once, or something else entirely, although they generally push against the expectations of rational materialism. They're rooted in the specificity of peoples to their histories and embodied experiences" (154). While the chapter that approaches Indigenous wonderworks in both Indigenous literary contexts presents a thorough discussion of this genre and its relevance to the present study, it is sufficient at this point to understand wonderworks as literary works that are grounded in specific Indigenous ways of knowing and experiencing other worlds and other realities, hence the use of quotation marks to refer to them as speculative and magical.

At first glance, the concepts of trauma and healing may seem easy to grasp if approached from a binary perspective. However, when they are explored

within texts and contexts that address different histories of colonial and settler-colonial violence against Indigenous peoples in what is now the United States, Canada, and Australia, it soon becomes evident that both colonial traumas and Indigenous modes of healing and resistance are as complex and multidimensional as their representations in the abovementioned Indigenous literary works. With this in mind, the four core chapters of this study are organised around two pivotal and interrelated analytical axes explored through comparative readings and juxtapositions of the selected primary texts. On the one hand, Chapter One and Chapter Two engage with the works of Indigenous fiction to examine the representations of colonial traumas in their structural/material and subjective/psychological dimensions engendered by colonial domination within the particularities of settler-colonial histories and structures that the novels address. On the other, Chapter Three and Chapter Four approach the works of Indigenous Futurisms and Indigenous wonderworks to explore representations of healing in its material and psychological aspects. These two chapters examine the ways in which the authors engage with their specific Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, cultures, and worldviews in creating decolonial aesthetics that not only resist and reject settler-colonial structures of domination but also offer alternative realities, visions, and futures that assert Indigenous perspectives on sovereignty. By bringing together different Indigenous literary works from distinct Indigenous cultural and literary traditions around the broad themes of colonial trauma and healing, this study reflects a polycephalic aim that is at once literary and theoretical. First, this thesis aims to contribute to the growing scholarship Kon trans-Indigenous literary studies that, as its leading Indigenous scholar Chadwick Allen puts it, aims to "privilege reading *across, through*, and *beyond* tribally and nationally specific Indigenous texts and contexts" in order to create "the possibility of literary scholarship that is Indigenous-centered on a global scale" ("Decolonizing Comparison" 378). Second, since this study approaches the representation of trauma and healing in Indigenous literary works, the aim is to harness the insights offered by the novels' decolonial aesthetics and mobilise them in order to enrich the ongoing project of decolonising trauma studies in non-western literary texts and contexts. This, the thesis argues, demonstrates the importance of thinking *globally* about the value of Indigenous literatures, aesthetics, and scholarship.

The twenty-first century is characterised by an emergence of different Indigenous voices and activist movements across what is known today as Canada, the United States and Australia. Social media, particularly Twitter, has created a platform of trans-Indigenous solidarity that connects different Indigenous peoples who assert their sovereignty and self-determination on their lands and counter settler-colonialism's symptoms of racism, extractive capitalism, and heteropatriarchy, among others. This is evidenced by the spread of Twitter hashtags generated by these movements, including the #NoDAPL movement that campaigns against the Dakota Access Pipeline in the United States, the Indigenous sovereignty movement of Idle No More (#IdleNoMore) in Canada, as well as various Indigenous media platforms such as @IndigenousX in Australia and its spinoff, @IndigenousXca, in Canada. These Indigenous voices are also present on the international stage through their participation in trans-cultural solidarity with other decolonial and activist movements such as Black Lives Matter and the BDS Movement, among others.[1] The global reach of Indigenous activism has led to changes even in the marginal city of Exeter, located in the South-West of England. The city's local rugby team called "Exeter Chiefs," founded in 1871, has since 1999 adopted a stereotypical Native American "chief head" as their official logo. Subsequently, "Little Big Chief" became the official mascot of the club, and fans began wearing feathered headdresses to the games, chanting the "Tomahawk chop" in the bleachers of Sandy Park stadium, and having drinks in the "Pow Wow Bar," "Wigwam Bar," or the "Cheyenne Bar." In doing so, the Exeter rugby club imported a longstanding culture of stereotypical appropriation and amalgamation of Indigenous cultural aspects by the sports industry in North America.

However, campaigns to end race-based mascots that started in the USA and Canada soon caught up with the Exeter Chiefs. This first began in 2016 with the publication of an online article titled "Why the Exeter Chiefs Should Rebrand Themselves" by historian Rachel Herrmann[2] and was followed in 2018

[1] Lenape scholar Joanne Barker wrote extensively about trans-Indigenous and trans-cultural solidarity between activist movements in North America in *The Red Scare the State's Indigenous Terrorist*. University of California Press, 2021.

[2] Rachel Herrmann, "Why the Exeter Chiefs Should Rebrand Themselves." *The Junto*, 2016, https://earlyamericanists.com/2016/08/09/why-the-exeter-chiefs-should-rebrand-themselves/

by a call for the Exeter Chiefs to drop their offensive use of Native American imagery by Crow Creek Dakota (Sioux) scholar Stephanie Pratt in an article published by the online "Devon Live."[3] The turning point of this story took place in June 2020 when a group of rugby fans, most of whom are long-time fans of the Exeter Chiefs (including season ticket holders), formed a group on Twitter called Exeter Chiefs for Change[4] (@ExChiefs4Change). Along with Indigenous individuals and groups based in the UK, they launched an online petition to raise awareness about the longstanding activism by different Indigenous peoples to end the use of Native-based mascots and call on the Exeter Chiefs rugby team to change their branding. Following two years of activism, and with the help of other Indigenous organisations such as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the Exeter Chiefs for Change campaign was successful. The rugby club released an official statement announcing an end to their use of Native American branding and their adoption instead of a new logo inspired by the Celtic history and culture of the South-West of England.[5]

Nevertheless, the echo of Indigenous voices and their presence on the global scene is nothing new. They have had their share in the profound socio-political transformations that marked the world during the 1960s and 1970s, along with other civil rights, anticolonial, and feminist movements**.** In *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that Indigenous activism of the 1960s and 1970s was not only able to raise the cause of colonised peoples on the international political scene but was also able to federate peoples and communities through their different cultural backgrounds and their different colonial experiences in order to "share, plan, organise and struggle collectively for self-determination on the global and local stage" (39). In fact, in 1974, Secwépemc leader and president of the National Indian Brotherhood (known today as the Assembly of First Nations in Canada), George Manuel, along with other representative members of various Indigenous peoples around the world,

[3] Stephanie Pratt, interviewed in Edward Oldfield, "Why the Exeter Chiefs Should Work with Real Native Americans." *Devon Live*, 2018, https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/exeter-chiefs-should-work-real-1139539

[4] For more details about the Exeter Chiefs for Change campaign see the group's official website. https://exchiefs4change.org/

[5] Mark Stevens, *Chiefs Reveal New Visual Identity*, 27 Jan. 2022, https://www.exeterchiefs.co.uk/news/chiefs-reveal-new-visual-identity

gathered in Georgetown, Guyana and founded the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP). This gathering included Native Americans in the United States, South American Natives, First Nations in Canada, Inuit from Greenland, Sami people from Scandinavia, Aboriginal peoples from Australia, and Māori people from Aotearoa (New Zealand). It was then that the political and social definition of "Indigenous people" was first articulated. In *The Formation of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples* (1977), Douglas E. Sanders quotes this definition as follows: "The term [Indigenous peoples] refers to people living in countries which have a population composed of different ethnic or racial groups who are descendants of the earliest populations living in the area, and who do not, as a group, control the national government of the countries within which they live" (12). A year later, the WCIP issued a *Solemn Declaration* which, as Allen explains in *Blood Narratives* (2002), reflects a collective consensus about what defines "indigenous identity" (203). He writes: "The basis for such self-definition, the narrative [the Solemn Declaration] asserts, will be indigenous 'memories' and 'consciousness,' a sense of belonging to the narrative's protagonist 'We.' In other words, an identity constructed through self-reflexive 'emblems of differentiation' rather than 'objective' criteria" (211). Indigeneity, thus, conveys a sense of self-identification with and acceptance by an Indigenous community with which one shares common ancestors, a common culture, and shared future aspirations.

The 1960s' and 1970s' Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty movements also marked a new phase in Indigenous literatures across North America, Australia, and New Zealand that would continue to flourish in the decades to follow. In his comparative study of Native American and Māori activist literary texts, Allen terms this phase the Indigenous renaissance in literature, which was initially used to refer to the post-1960s Native American renaissance in literature (*Blood Narrative* 3). In fact, in their introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature* (2014), editors James H. Cox and Justice explain that "Native American renaissance" first appeared in1983 as the title of the work of Kenneth Lincoln, which was later used to describe a period that extended until the end of the 1990s, and which was characterised by an aesthetic and political renewal in Indigenous literatures in the United States and then later in Canada (3). Indeed, Cox and Justice argue that this body of writings "coincided with the rise of sovereignty and civil rights activism by grassroots and

Red Power leaders and by Indigenous students, faculty, and their allies" (3). This included the works of N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, James Welch, Gerald Vizenor, Paula Gunn Allen in the United States, and works by Jeannette Armstrong, Lee Maracle, and Richard Wagamese, among others in Canada. By the same token, in the introduction to the *Anthology of Australian Aboriginal Literature* (2008), Wiradjuri author and activist Anita Heiss and Australian poet and scholar Peter Minter state that "Aboriginal literature as we know it today had its origins in the late 1960s, as the intensification of Aboriginal political activity posed an increasing range of aesthetic questions and possibilities for Aboriginal authors" (5). This wave of Aboriginal writing is reflected in the works of Quandamooka poet and activist Oodgeroo Noonuccal, and Colin Johnson (Mudrooroo)[6] in the sixties, and the works of Noongar playwright Jack Davis in the seventies, among others. However, in the introduction to *A Companion to Australian Aboriginal Literature* (2013), editor Belinda Wheeler explains that "it is not until the lead-up to the 1988 Australian bicentennial celebrations" that Aboriginal literature saw a boom "in various genres including life writing, fiction, poetry, film, drama, and music" (1). Indeed, the authors that emerged during the 1980s wave of Aboriginal political activism for social equity, land sovereignty, and cultural expression, as well as after the 1992 Mabo Decision[7] include, inter alia, Sally Morgan, Sam Watson, Anita Heiss, Kim Scott, Doris Pilkington Garimara, Tony Birch, Alexis Wright, Melissa Lucashenko, Tara June Winch, and Claire G. Coleman.

Smith explains that after the end of the Second World War, and particularly from the 1960s onwards, Indigenous peoples' project shifted from surviving colonial wars, diseases, land removal and dislocation, and colonial oppression

[6] Colin Johnson's Aboriginal identity was questioned in 1996 when his sister publicly declared that her family has no relation whatsoever to Aboriginal peoples and is instead of Irish and African American descent. This is discussed thoroughly in Chapter Three of the thesis. See also Maureen Clark, "A Question of Belonging Somewhere." *Mudrooroo: A Likely Story: Identity and Belonging in Postcolonial Australia*, Peter Lang, 2007, 37–65.

[7] The 1992 Mabo Decision refers to the case won by Eddie Mabo against the State of Queensland concerning the ownership of his people of the traditional land at Mer Island, located in the Torres Strait Island Region. The Mabo Decision is significant for all Indigenous peoples in Australia as it put an end to the Australian colonial doctrine of terra nullius and recognised Indigenous land rights in Australian law. For more details, see http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/cases/cth/HCA/1992/23.html

towards projects of resistance, decolonisation, cultural resurgence, and the development of "global indigenous strategic alliances" (190–1). She states that this project paved the way for a new Indigenous research agenda that endeavoured to create an Indigenous world characterised by self-determination "through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains" (203–4). Indeed, in the introduction to *Critical Indigenous Studies* (2016), Dandrubin Gorenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson explains that it is precisely these Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty movements of the 1960s and 1970s that greatly influenced the emergence of the fields of Indigenous studies in universities such that the next two decades were characterised by an unprecedented number of Indigenous scholars entering universities across the United States, Canada, and New Zealand, "but not in Australia, where Aboriginal people were advocating to gain access to universities" (6–7). This, she adds, quickly led to debates around the transformation and the development of Indigenous programmes into independent disciplines based on fundamental concepts of "indigeneity encompassing culture, place, and philosophy, as well as sovereignty, history, and law" (7). As such, Moreton-Robinson explains that endogenous approaches to Indigenous belief systems ("history, language, politics, culture, literature, and traditions") constituted the basis of the development of Native American studies in the United States, Māori studies in New Zealand, "Native studies in Canada, Kanaka Maoli studies in Hawai'i, and later Aboriginal studies in Australia" (7–8).

This body of work, Moreton-Robinson writes, "provided the foundations" for the development of critical Indigenous studies that, as a discipline, reflects the collaborative endeavour to "operationalise Indigenous knowledge to develop theories" and to "challenge the power/knowledge structures and discourses through which Indigenous peoples have been framed and known" (5). Indeed, encompassing Native American Studies, Native/First Nations studies, Native Hawaiian studies, Māori studies, and Aboriginal studies, the field of critical Indigenous studies, Moreton-Robinson explains, is global, multidisciplinary, multicultural, and multinational with political and discursive horizons that focus on the mobilisation of "Indigenous epistemologies to serve as foundations of knowledge informed by the cultural domains of Indigenous peoples" (4). Delineating some basic tenets of this critical lens in the introduction to the *Routledge Handbook of Critical*

Indigenous Studies (2020), Māori scholar Brendan Hokowhitu explains that critical Indigenous studies bring together a "genealogy of Indigenous, Black, and Brown scholarship" that is "grounded in resistance to the multiple forms of violence and micro-aggressions that Indigenous peoples and communities face every day in their neo-colonial realities" and which upholds "sovereign claims to Indigenous lands, languages, cultures, ecologies, ontologies, and existentiality" (3). Indeed, this global, multidisciplinary, multicultural, and multinational character of critical Indigenous studies is reflected in its eventual institutionalisation in 2009 with the creation of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA)[8] and its biannual journal *NAIS.*

In "Currents of Trans/national Criticism in Indigenous Literary Studies" (2011), Justice asserts that scholars working within Indigenous literatures in Turtle Island (North America), Aotearoa/New Zealand, and Australia, among others, "are reaching out, learning about themselves and one another, looking for points of connection that reflect and respect both specificity and shared concern, localised contexts and broader concerns, rooted perspectives and *global* viewpoints" (344, emphasis added). Similarly, in "Indigenous Narratives" (2019), Eman Ghanayem and Rebecca Macklin assert that Indigenous narratives in their local contexts have always been global as they reflect on "the uneven experiences of colonial and capitalist oppression within regional or national spaces" (4). As such, they argue that by paying attention to the global reach of Indigenous narratives "it becomes possible to develop a more holistic understanding of planetary conditions of subjugation, allowing for international and local solidarities to intertwine" (4). Therefore, by bridging different Indigenous experiences and representations of settler-colonial histories of violence and shedding light on the aesthetic registration of Indigenous decolonial modes of resistance and resurgence, this thesis demonstrates the potential of trans-Indigenous juxtapositions in reflecting on Indigenous-centred solidarities. In addition, drawing on the insights of critical Indigenous scholarship in its global, multicultural, multinational, and multidisciplinary dimensions, and focusing on Indigenous narratives' global

[8] Some sections of Chapter One of the thesis were due to be presented in a paper for the 2020 NAISA annual meeting in Tkaronto (Toronto, Canada), located on the unceded Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat lands. The annual meeting was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

critique of empire in its colonial and neoliberal guises, this study engages Indigenous decolonial aesthetics in furthering the ongoing project of decolonising trauma studies and its endeavour to create cross-cultural solidarities. In this sense, the study illustrates the global significance of Indigenous literatures in "responding and delinking from the darker side of imperial globalization" and "open[ing] options for liberating the senses" (Transnational Decolonial Institute). Nevertheless, before delving into a study of this magnitude, it is essential to delineate the project's theoretical and ethical concerns. On the theoretical level, it is necessary to situate the study's theoretical and aesthetic cornerstones within the broad scholarly conversation about trauma studies in literature from its inception to the more recent decolonising interventions in the field. On the ethical level, it is crucial to provide an ethical justification for the comparative methodology through which these different Indigenous literary texts are approached and acknowledge the researcher's positionality as an outsider to the Indigenous scholarship and literatures explored in the thesis.

1. Trauma Studies: Early Developments, Subsequent Criticism, Decolonising Interventions

Studies of trauma in literature came to prominence in the late-twentieth century with the development of cultural trauma theory in the humanities. Emerging in the early 1990s from a confluence of psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and Holocaust literary studies, the field of trauma studies, as conceived by the field's major theorists, including Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felma, and Dori Laub, endeavoured to provide an ethical response to cultural and literary artefacts that bear witness to traumatic histories. In *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (1995), edited by Cathy Caruth, the definition of trauma takes its departure from *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III, 1980), in which it is conceived as a response to a traumatic stressor caused by "an event 'outside the range of human experience'" (qtd. in Caruth, "Introduction" 3). In this sense, trauma refers less to the traumatic event than to the symptomatic manifestations of traumatic stressors caused by human factors such as war, torture, rape, or natural elements such as earthquakes. Symptoms of these traumatic stressors are grouped under what is known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): a psychobiological response that was considered universal, timeless, acultural, and which includes

"repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event" (4). It is worth noting that the DSM-III model of PTSD received criticism even before the publication of Caruth's edited collection. Indeed, in *The Harmony of Illusions* (1995), Allen Young rejects the presumed universality and timelessness of the PTSD template and instead argues that it is a unique western construction whose emergence can be traced back to the end of the nineteenth century and that "[t]he disorder [PTSD] is not timeless, nor does it possess an intrinsic unity. Rather, it is glued together by the practices, technologies, and narratives with which it is diagnosed, studied, treated, and represented and by the various interests, institutions, and moral arguments that mobilised these efforts and resources" (5). In addition, because the 1980 DSM-III definition of what constitutes traumatic stressors was deemed too exclusive and restrictive, later editions such as DSM-IV (1994), DSM-IV-TR (2000), and DSM-V (2013) broadened both the category of traumatic stressors and the subsequent PTSD symptoms such that vicarious and collective traumatisation were recognised. Nevertheless, orthodox trauma theory proposed by its leading scholars such as Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub, and Shoshana Felman remained faithful to the DSM-III constructions.[9]

Indeed, the DSM-III event-based model of trauma informs Caruth's later monograph, *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), where trauma, as she puts it, is "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (91). This definition reflects another cornerstone of Caruth's theorisation of trauma, namely the Freudian psychoanalytical concept of "belatedness," which stipulates that the traumatised subject does not suffer from the symptoms of trauma immediately after the traumatic event happens; instead, it becomes "fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time" (17). Indeed, Caruth argues that "the most direct seeing of a violent

[9] For further discussion about the development of the DSM and the centrality of DSM-III for orthodox trauma theory, see Stef Craps, "Empire of Trauma." In *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma out of bounds*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 20–37. See also Irene Visser, "Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospects." *Humanities*, vol 4, no. 2, 2015, 250–65.

event occurs as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness" (91–92). Trauma, therefore, implies a response to a sudden and harmful stressor event(s) that penetrates the human psyche where it remains unprocessed and unassimilated by the conscious memory and instead manifests itself through traumatic symptoms that refer to that event. Much criticism has been levelled at the event-based trauma model even before the publication of Caruth's 1996 monograph. In her contribution to Caruth's edited collection *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (1995), feminist psychotherapist Laura S. Brown contends that the event-based model of trauma only designates traumatic events that are outside "the range of what is normal and usual in the lives of men of the dominant class; white, young, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian men" ("Not Outside the Range" 101). She asserts that the traumatic experiences of people of colour, women, LGBTQ, and lower-class people are ignored because their physical and psychological suffering is "a continuing background noise rather than an unusual event" (103). As such, Brown calls for the hegemonic definition of trauma to be more inclusive by being supplemented with what feminist therapist Maria P. P. Root calls "'insidious trauma'" which refers to "the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily wellbeing at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit" (qtd. in Brown 107). Insidious trauma, therefore, has been advised to account for those forms of traumas and psychic sufferings that do not emanate from single recognisable traumatic events but rather from ongoing and quotidian forms of oppression based on gender, sex, race, and class which are not taken into account by the event-based model of trauma.

In *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth asserts that "[w]hat returns to haunt the victim […] is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known" (6). This discourse of unknowability of trauma also implies its unspeakability because of the failure of language to represent and authentically articulate the traumatic event. In *Trauma: Exploration in Memory*, Caruth further asserts that narration and verbalisation of trauma betray the truth of the traumatic memory that is impermeable to representation (153–5). This understanding entails several aspects that reflect trauma studies'

approach to trauma narratives and the field's conception of the ethics and aesthetics of bearing witness to trauma in literature. In fact, in *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2008), Ruth Leys explains that Caruth's conception of trauma as manifesting itself as a "gap or aporia" both in "consciousness and representation" implies that the language of trauma narratives "is capable of bearing witness only by a failure of witnessing or representation" (266, 268). As such, this conception constitutes a deconstructionist approach to trauma narratives, shedding light on the ways in which language failure and the impossibility of meaning—reflected through linguistic indeterminacy, fragmentation, aporia, and indirect referentiality—can bear witness to trauma.[10]

By emphasising the unspeakability of trauma and centralising this deconstructionist emphasis on aporia, trauma narratives are regarded as entirely devoid of therapeutic and recuperative notions. In addition, trauma theory's insistence on fragmentation and aporia in trauma narratives is also reflected in the ethics and aesthetics of bearing witness to trauma in literature. In *Trauma Fiction* (2004), Anne Whitehead draws on Caruth's understanding of trauma as carrying "the force of a literality which renders it resistant to narrative structures and linear temporalities" (3). In this way, she argues that "if trauma is at all susceptible to narrative formulation," it calls for "a literary form which departs from conventional linear sequence" to reflect trauma's temporal disjunction (6). By the same token, in *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (2002), Laurie Vickroy asserts that trauma narratives "go beyond presenting trauma as a subject matter or in characterisation; they also incorporate the rhythms, processes, and uncertainties of trauma within the consciousness and structures of these works" (xiv). These formal requirements for trauma literature also reflect trauma studies' ethical and political dimensions that derive from the field's underpinnings in Holocaust literary studies. In *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (2004), Robert Eaglestone outlines the formal and aesthetic features of trauma in Holocaust testimonies, including interruptions, repetitions, and temporal and stylistic

[10] In *Unclaimed Experience,* Caruth draws heavily on Paul de Man's deconstruction of language, particularly in Chapter 4, titled "The Falling Body and the Impact of Reference." For a discussion on the deconstructionist theorisation of trauma, see Tom Toremans, "Deconstruction: Trauma Inscribed in Language." In *Trauma and Literature*, edited by J. Roger Kurtz, Cambridge University Press, 2018, 51–65.

disjunctions that reflect the impossibility of comprehending and narrating the Holocaust (42–65). This understanding posits the centrality of a particular set of trauma aesthetic techniques—anti-narrative, fragmentation, and non-linearity—that inscribe trauma's aporia in literature.

In a departure from trauma theory's aporetic approach to trauma narratives championed by Caruth and other theorists are the works of feminist psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman, who, in her influential book *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), presents a formulation that contradicts Caruth's view which denies the notion of healing and therapeutic recuperation. Instead, Herman stresses the therapeutic value of trauma narratives in enabling trauma victims "to speak" their traumatic experiences (179). According to Herman, a trauma narrative as an "organised, detailed, verbal account, oriented in time and historical context" is therapeutic as it enables psychic integration and resolution of trauma (177). Herman's understanding of the therapeutic role of trauma narratives has appealed to those in literary studies that investigate the healing and empowering virtues of trauma narratives. By the same token, in *The Trauma Question* (2008), Roger Luckhurst provides an overview of trauma theory, shedding light on its inherent inconsistencies, contradictions, and limitations for the study of literary texts that bear witness to trauma. He criticises trauma theory's Freudian theoretical framework and its insistence on maintaining the traumatic condition as "the only proper ethical response to trauma" (210). Indeed, Luckhurst argues that "there is a kind of injunction to maintain the post-traumatic condition" where memory is situated "entirely under the sign of post-traumatic melancholia" (210). Besides, he points out trauma theory's formalist prescriptiveness of modernist aesthetics of fragmentation and aporia that characterise avant-garde western texts as trauma aesthetics *par excellence*, against which any "other formal choices than those categorised as figuring aporia become unethical" (88–89). Instead, Luckhurst argues that beyond the narrow trauma canon of avant-garde texts, there is "a wide diversity of high, middle and low cultural forms [that] have provided a repertoire of compelling ways to articulate that apparently paradoxical thing, the trauma narrative" (83). In support of his assertion, Luckhurst examines a variety of genres such as popular trauma memoirs and novels, the trauma Gothic of Stephen King, as well as mainstream trauma works.

In Caruth's theorisation, individual trauma is inherently historical. In fact, she states that trauma as a pathological symptom (PTSD) is "not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of history. The traumatised, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot fully possess" (Caruth, "Introduction" 5). As such, while the textualist paradigm of poststructuralism and deconstruction received criticism for its indifference to aspects of history, politics, and ethics, Caruth suggests that a textualist approach to cultural and artistic representations of trauma does not lead away from history "to political and ethical paralysis" (*Unclaimed Experience* 10). Instead, she argues that such an approach allows for "recogniz[ing] the possibility of a history that is no longer straightforwardly referential (that is, no longer based on simple models of experience and reference)" (11). Caruth writes: "Through the notion of trauma, […] we can understand that a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not" (11). Caruth's rethinking of history through indirect referentiality is based on her reading of Freud's speculative account of the Jews' historical trauma in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), in which he describes the Jews' collective guilt for murdering Moses that "is not experienced as it occurs," but instead becomes "evident only in connection with another place, and in another time" (*Unclaimed Experience* 17). Caruth argues that Freud's account "can help us understand our own catastrophic era, as well as the difficulties of writing a history from within it" (12). Reflecting on trauma theory's ethical significance, Caruth argues that "the language of trauma, and the silence of its mute repetition of suffering, profoundly and imperatively demand" a "new mode of reading and of listening" (9). This new mode, she asserts, recognises that "[t]he meaning of trauma's address beyond itself concerns, indeed, not only individual isolation but a wider historical isolation that, in our time, is communicated on the level of our cultures" (Caruth, "Introduction" 11). Indeed, Caruth writes: "In a catastrophic era, that is, trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures" (11). This assertion reflects trauma theory's ethical

engagement of promoting cross-cultural dialogue and solidarity by bridging different histories of trauma.[11]

Caruth's veering away from historical factuality in favour of an indirect referentiality to history is, for Luckhurst, not only dehistoricising but also depoliticising. Luckhurst calls it a shocking failure "to address atrocity, genocide, and war" (213). Indeed, commenting on Caruth's adoption of Freud's indirect referentiality to history in *Moses and Monotheism*, he argues that it constitutes "ungrounded" speculation "on prehistory" that is "typical of Victorian anthropology" (10). For his part, Dominick LaCapra, in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001), draws on the historiography of the Holocaust to provide a distinction between historical trauma and structural trauma. On the one hand, LaCapra associates structural trauma with "absence" that is situated on a "transhistorical level" because it "is not an event" that implies past, present, or futures tenses but rather "applies to ultimate foundations in general, notably to metaphysical grounds (including the human being as origin of meaning and value)" (48–50). On the other hand, he associates historical trauma with "loss" that is situated "on a historical level and is the consequence of particular events" that can be personal, such as the loss of loved ones, or "on a broader scale, the losses brought about by apartheid or by the Holocaust in its effects on Jews and other victims of the Nazi genocide" (49). LaCapra writes: "the historical past is the scene of losses that may be narrated as well as of specific possibilities that may conceivably be reactivated, reconfigured, and transformed in the present or future" (49). As such, while absence can only be lived with, loss instead can be worked through "an articulatory practice" that allows one "to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realising that one is living here and now with openings to the future" (22). LaCapra's distinction between historical and structural traumas stands against trauma theory's poststructuralist and textualist approach to trauma narratives and its indirect referentiality to history by way of conceiving individual trauma as inexorably historical.

[11] An example of Caruth's understanding of cross-cultural solidarity is articulated in her reading of Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959). Cathy Caruth, "Literature and the Enactment of Memory." *Unclaimed Experience*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, 25–56.

It is evident that the timeless, psycho-historical model of trauma proposed by the leading scholars of the field can only be limiting, or worse, problematic and dangerous when it comes to approaching literary texts that deal with colonial traumas in non-western contexts. From the early criticism of trauma theory and its core concepts—the PTSD template, the event-based model, its insistence on aporia and fragmentation in trauma narratives, its prescriptiveness of modernist aesthetics in articulating trauma, and its so-called renewed engagement with history through indirect referentiality—it can be argued that trauma theory cannot capture the historical, cultural and socio-political particularities of non-western societies and cannot explain the nature and the mechanisms of colonial traumas. This is precisely what is raised by the contributors to the Spring/Summer 2008 issue of *Studies in the Novel* journal. In the introduction to this issue, titled "Postcolonial Trauma Novels," trauma theorists Stef Craps and Gert Buelens (2008) begin questioning trauma theory's potential to fulfil its ethical promise of creating cross-cultural solidarity between different histories of trauma, since the field's major works and core concepts are solely based on western forms of suffering and employ Euro-American critical methodologies (2). Indeed, they shed light on trauma theory's textualist paradigm, which, favouring a universal and timeless conception of trauma, veers towards dehistoricising and depoliticising tendencies that can only ignore and marginalise "non-Western traumatic events and histories and non-Western theoretical work" (2).

Craps and Buelens explain that trauma theory's narrow definition of trauma, which is based on an event that is outside the human norms, cannot account for ongoing forms of suffering produced by the structural violence of colonial systems as well as other psychic sufferings that are based on gender, sex, and class inequities (3–4). Related to this point is trauma studies' tendencies to individualise and psychologise suffering that, as the authors put it, are inadequate to colonial traumas and their collective, political, and socio-economic aspects (4). In fact, Craps and Buelens assert that "[a] narrow focus on individual psychology" in colonial contexts not only obscures the structures and conditions that led to traumatisation but also pathologises and victimises colonised populations (4–5). This understanding, they assert, implies that healing and recovery are purely psychological and immaterial but ignores material recovery, that is to say, "the reparation or restitution and, more broadly, the transformation

of a wounding political, social, and economic system" (4). Finally, the authors express the need to address the aesthetic prescriptiveness of literary trauma theory that posits experimental, (post)modernist textual strategies of nonlinearity and fragmentation as uniquely suited to portray traumatic experiences in literary text (5). Through their introduction to this issue, Craps and Buelens take stock of trauma studies' homogenising and universalist claims. Indeed, they shed light on the field's dehistoricising and depoliticising tendencies as well as on its Eurocentric insistence on the ethics and aesthetics of melancholia, all of which are at odds with the historical and political aspects of different forms of traumas engendered by colonisation and their literary representations in non-western cultural contexts.

Considering these limitations, the contributors to this issue take on the task of reconfiguring the Eurocentric characteristics of trauma studies by examining literary texts that address different aspects of colonial trauma such as dispossession, forced migration, diaspora, slavery, segregation, racism, political violence, and genocide. Taking into account the specificities of colonial traumas as well as the particularities of non-western texts and cultural contexts, the contributors endeavour, as Craps and Buelens put it, to create "alternative conceptions of trauma and of its textual inscription that might revitalise the field of trauma studies by helping it to realise its self-declared ethical potential" (3). While the issue's purpose is framed as "rapprochement" between trauma and postcolonial scholarship, the articles explore different contexts and literary traditions, including postcolonial Nigeria and Zimbabwe, South African apartheid, the Sri Lankan civil war, Indian partition, as well as Native North American and African American novels. Providing a summation of this issue in an article titled "Decolonising Trauma Studies: A Response," Michael Rothberg (2008) considers this multiplicity of engagements with the literary representations of trauma in various colonial/postcolonial contexts as a "much necessary and overdue work" that calls for "decolonising trauma studies" (226). Nevertheless, he states that the conclusions drawn by the contributors' publications veer towards doubting the efficacy of trauma theory in "provid[ing] the best framework for thinking about the legacies of violence in the colonised/postcolonial world" (226). As such, Rothberg argues that there is a need to break away from literary trauma theory's "Euro-American conceptual and historical frameworks" and develop a critical

vocabulary that is required for “the simultaneously intellectual, ethical, and political task of standing against ongoing forms of racial and colonial violence” (232). Following Rothberg’s call for the need to decolonise trauma studies, several articles, special issues, and monographs have appeared that endorse Rothberg’s argument and that have endeavoured to contribute to this project by examining representations of trauma in specific colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Craps’ *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (2012) is one such contribution towards the decolonising of trauma studies and which appeared in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Building on his earlier critiques of its Eurocentric biases, Craps exposes the aspects of trauma theory that need to be negotiated and reconfigured in the ongoing project of decolonising trauma studies. He delineates at least four reasons why trauma theory’s laudable and ethical endeavour to create cross-cultural dialogue and solidarity can only be doomed to failure. First, he explains that the field’s founding texts ignore and marginalise non-western traumatic histories, particularly those related to colonisation (2). Second, Craps highlights the field’s universalising and homogenising definitions of trauma and healing based solely on western history and conceptions of modernity (2). Third, Craps deplores trauma theory’s tendency to favour and prescribe a restrictive repertoire of modernist aesthetics (such as fragmentation and aporia) as uniquely suited for the literary inscription of trauma (2). Finally, he sheds light on the field’s disregard for “the connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas” (2). As such, Craps argues for astute readings that would “take account of the specific social and historical contexts in which trauma narratives are produced and received, and be open and attentive to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance that these contexts invite or necessitate” (5). This constant call to situate representations of traumatic histories within their cultural, socio-political, and historical contexts is what urged editors Gert Buelens, Sam Durrant, and Robert Eaglestone in *The Future of Trauma Theory* (2013) to describe contemporary trauma studies and their future directions as less than a rigid field or methodology and more of “a coming together of concerns and disciplines” as diverse as psychology, sociology, politics, history, as well as literary and cultural studies, because “issues of trauma theory are characterised by a ‘knot’ tying together

representation, the past, the self, the political and suffering" (3–4). Similarly, in *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014), editor Michelle Balaev asserts that the pluralistic approaches to the literary representations of trauma create "a set of critical practices that place more focus on the particular social components and cultural contexts of traumatic experience" and call for "the study of the relationship between language, the psyche, and behaviour without assuming the classic definition of trauma that asserts an unpresentable and pathological universalism" (3–4). Through pluralistic approaches to trauma and its representations in cultural artefacts, especially in non-western texts and contexts, trauma studies expanded to include forms of traumas related to longstanding violence of colonial oppression.

This expansion is aptly demonstrated in the 2015/2016 special issue of the journal *Humanities* titled "Decolonising Trauma Studies." In her introduction, guest editor Sonya Andermahr explains that the articles that comprise this special issue take up the challenge of putting into practice earlier insights developed in the field (4). This, she asserts, requires "a shift in power from the (Western) metropolitan centers of academe to more localised sites of knowledge" (4). The papers gathered in this issue explore the representation of traumatic histories of various non-western settings and conflicts, including postcolonial Nigeria and Haiti, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, and the Ivorian, Pakistani, and Jewish diasporas. In addition, the issue contains three articles that examine instances of colonial traumas in Indigenous contexts. These include two articles exploring the trauma of the Stolen Generations in the settler-colonial state of Australia and a paper that investigates the health of Indigenous girls in the settler-colonial state of Canada. However, it is essential to note that the project of decolonising trauma studies has, since its inception, worked for a rapprochement between trauma studies and *postcolonial studies*. Indeed, while the Spring/Summer 2008 issue of *Studies in the Novel* comprises an article titled "The Trans/Historicity of Trauma in Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* and Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*" by Nancy van Styvendale that examines the historicity of trauma in Native North American novels, the author does so from the premise that these two Indigenous contexts are postcolonial, while Indigenous scholarship on settler-colonialism is absent. The subtitle of the 2015/2016 special issue of the journal *Humanities*, "Decolonising

Trauma studies"— "Trauma and Postcolonialism"—similarly announces such a connection. The settler-colonial nature of Australia appears only incidentally in the two articles that deal with the trauma of the Stolen Generations and its representation in literature and film; respectively in "Australian Aboriginal Memoir and Memory" by Justine Seran and "*Oranges and Sunshine*: The Story of a Traumatic Encounter" by Dolores Herrero. This, with the exception of Métis sociologist Natalie Clark who, in "Shock and Awe: Trauma as the New Colonial Frontier," builds her work on Indigenous scholarship and critique of settler-colonialism such as the works of Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard, Kahnawake Mohawk activist Taiaiake Alfred, Mississauga Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, and Unangax̂ educator Eve Tuck, among others.

In her contribution to *Trauma and Literature* (2018), trauma studies scholar Irene Visser explores the potential of non-western texts and contexts in offering insights into and enriching trauma studies. She argues that the introduction of Indigenous perspectives and modes of thinking about trauma and healing, including scholarship on Native American and Aboriginal Australian literatures, "will be a vital enrichment and rejuvenation" of trauma theory as "the aftermath of historical, political, and ecological oppression" and provide "potentially fruitful directions for the future of trauma studies" (138). Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that the project of decolonising trauma studies has, from its inception, been approached from a postcolonial perspective; thus, a pressing question arises: Is it possible, or even appropriate, to apply uncritically the insights that have emerged from the project of decolonising trauma studies when exploring the representation of colonial traumas and healing in different Indigenous contexts and literary traditions that address ongoing settler-colonial experiences?

2. Indigenous Scholarship and the (Post-)colonial in Settler-Colonial Contexts

> "*Ideologies of US settler colonialism directly informed Australian settler colonialism*"
>
> ——Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonisation is not a Metaphor."

It is commonly understood that the modern states of Canada, the USA, and Australia are all settler-colonial states. In *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*

(2018), Daniel Heath Justice explains that settler-colonialism is different from other forms of colonialism wherein colonisers leave after claiming the resources of the colonised lands (9). Instead, settler-colonialism, he states, implies that the settler populations stay and create new social orders that are premised "in part on the ongoing oppression and displacement of Indigenous peoples" (9). Here arises the first inadequacy of the term "postcolonial" when it either designates nations that have recovered their independence from the former colonial powers and whose peoples control the governance of their independent states or the persistent effects of colonisation even after the independence.[12] However, in the settler-colonial states of Canada, the USA, and Australia, the colonisers' descendants dominate these countries even after their independence or detachment from the colonial metropole. Chadwick Allen explains that Indigenous peoples living in these states, namely Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives in the United States, First Nations in Canada, and Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia, fall into the category of "indigenous peoples who have become minorities in lands they once controlled" (*Blood Narrative* 7–8). Nevertheless, the limitations of a postcolonial critique in Indigenous contexts do not merely boil down to the referential ambiguity that the suffix "post" in postcolonial may entail, but rather to the field's approach to the ongoing colonisation endured by Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial states.

Commenting on this issue, Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that many Indigenous scholars consider the field of "post-colonialism" as a "strategy for reinscribing or reauthorising the privileges of non-indigenous academics because the field of 'post-colonial' discourse has been defined in ways which still leave out indigenous peoples, our ways of knowing and our current concerns" (65). This is, for instance, the view of Chadwick Allen, who asserts that orthodox postcolonial scholarship ignores the ongoing settler-colonialism that Indigenous peoples endure, for it was exclusively based on colonial experiences in the Indian subcontinent, African contexts, and the Caribbean (*Blood Narrative* 4). When postcolonial critics turned their attention to settler-colonial contexts, he explains,

[12] For a discussion of the different meaning of "postcolonial" and "post-colonial," see Bill Ashcroft, "Introduction." *Post-Colonial Transformation*, Routledge, 2001, 1–17.

they tended to focus on “the continuing psychological effects of the colonial past on European settlers and their descendants—not on the material or psychological circumstances of these nations’ indigenous minorities” (4). The result, he argues, is that works such as *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin marginalise “indigenous minority peoples” by putting forward the “‘plight’ of their [Indigenous peoples’] oppressors” (29). Allen asserts that “the notion of a double marginalisation [of Indigenous peoples]” argued for by the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* “continues to prioritise a settler perspective: ‘your’ oppression is a ‘special’ case of ‘ours’—not a different case—and ‘we’ all struggle against the same colonial legacy” (29). Similarly, in *The Transit of Empire* (2011), Chickasaw scholar Jodi A. Byrd calls for a critical revaluation of the historical processes of oppression that constitute the subject and the form of postcolonial scholarship, critical race studies, and queer studies by attending to “the ongoing conditions of settler colonialism *of* indigenous peoples” (xxvi). She explains that by taking forms of oppression such as race, class, gender, and sexuality as the “the primary violences of U.S. politics in national and international arenas,” these scholarships have “aligned [themselves] with settler colonialism” since “understandings of race and racialisation within U.S. post-colonial, area, and queer studies depend upon an historical aphasia of the conquest of indigenous peoples” (xxv–xxvi). While focusing on the United States’ settler-colonial context, Allen’s and Byrd’s observations can also be applied to other settler-colonial contexts such as Canada and Australia, where discourses of multiculturalism obscure the ongoing colonial oppression and marginalisation of Indigenous peoples.

3. Decolonising the Settler-Colony: Indigenous Perspectives on Decolonisation

> “[I]ndigenous peoples represent the unfinished business of decolonisation”
>
> ——Franke Wilmer. *The Indigenous Voice in World Politics*

In “Decolonisation is not a Metaphor” (2014), Unangax̂ scholar Eve Tuck and ethnic studies professor K. Wayne Yang take the critique of postcolonialism even further to suggest that scholarship’s theories of coloniality can prove debilitating when approaching settler-colonial contexts. In their article Tuck and Yang

delineate what they call "'settler moves to innocence'" and which, they explain, describe a set of strategies through which the settler attempts to alleviate feelings of guilt and responsibility for colonisation without renouncing power and privilege and without disturbing the settler-colonial status quo (10). However, it is crucial to note that for Tuck and Yang, the category of settlers is not limited to white people of European descent, which is precisely where the particularity of settler-colonialism lies. Indeed, Tuck and Yang explain that settler-colonial states function as empires operating through simultaneous forms of internal and external colonisation such that other "dispossessed people are brought onto seized Indigenous land through other colonial projects" (7). They write: "In this set of settler colonial relations, colonial subjects who are displaced by external colonialism, as well as racialised and minoritised by internal colonialism, still occupy and settle stolen Indigenous land" (7). In this set of settler-colonial relations, one of the "settler[s] moves to innocence" delineated by Tuck and Yang is what they call "colonial equivocation," and which implies a homogenisation of various and distinct colonial experiences and forms of oppression under the banner of "'[w]e are all colonised'" (17). They argue that in settler-colonial contexts, "[c]alling different groups 'colonised' without describing their relationship to settler colonialism is an equivocation" (17). They write: "In particular, describing all struggles against imperialism as 'decolonising' creates a convenient ambiguity between decolonisation and social justice work, especially among people of color, queer people, and other groups minoritised by the settler nation-state" (17). As such, Tuck and Yang argue that the anticolonial critique that informs postcolonial scholarship is not synonymous with "decolonising frameworks" in Indigenous contexts because such "anticolonial critique often celebrates empowered postcolonial subjects who seize denied privileges from the metropole" (19). In settler-colonial contexts, they argue, this "anti-to-post-colonial project" is tied with settler-colonialism because "[s]eeking stolen resources" form the metropole ultimately entails "re-occupying Native land" and its resources that were previously seized by the settler-colonial enterprise (19).

As aptly conveyed by the title of their article, Tuck and Yang assert that decolonisation for Indigenous peoples is not a mere metaphor. Outlining what is *not* decolonisation in settler-colonial contexts, the authors write that decolonisation "is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of

liberation; it is not a philanthropic process of 'helping' the at-risk and alleviating suffering; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes" (21). Rather, Tuck and Yang argue that "decolonisation specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (21). Such a process, they add, "must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, *all* of the land, and not just symbolically" (7). This conception of decolonisation is, in turn, reflected in Indigenous aesthetics. In "Fugitive Indigeneity" (2014), Plains Cree and Dene Suline scholar Jarrett Martineau and Eric Ritskes argue that the decolonising aspect of Indigenous art lies in its reclamation and revitalisation of art's creative potential to be activated within political struggles, thus offering an "aesthetic experience" that is "embedded in the embodied daily life experience of Indigenous Peoples, settlers and others globally" (II). They assert that Indigenous arts' decolonising aesthetics are engaged in a "*material struggle for decolonization*" (II). This present study draws on several insights proposed in the scholarship on decolonising trauma studies in its postcolonial underpinnings by considering the ways in which Indigenous and postcolonial scholarships intersect globally through their critique of empire in its colonial and neoliberal guises. Nonetheless, it argues for the centrality of Indigenous scholarship and aesthetics in its critique of settler-colonialism and its reflections on decolonisation. Indeed, Tuck and Yang argue that, in settler-colonial contexts, there is a need to reflect on "what is irreconcilable within settler colonial relations" and "what is incommensurable between decolonising projects and other social justice projects" (4). They assert that attending to "Indigenous decolonising analyses" that understand decolonisation from a material and not metaphorical perspective allows for the unsettling of "the innocence" of "transnationalist, abolitionist, and critical pedagogy movements" and creates opportunities for solidarity that "lie in what is incommensurable rather than what is common across these efforts" (28). Therefore, this study argues that if the project of decolonising trauma studies is to fulfil its ethical commitment of creating cross-cultural solidarity, there is an imperative to attend to how decolonisation is conceived and reflected in Indigenous texts and contexts.

4. Settler-Colonialism: Accumulation by Dispossession

The specificities and mechanisms of settler-colonialism are exhaustively explored in the works of Australian historian and scholar Patrick Wolfe, whose central idea is that settler-colonialism is not an event or a series of events but rather an ongoing structure whose primary purpose is the control of Indigenous land through various strategies and techniques which he calls the logic of elimination. In *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* (1999), he explains that, unlike other colonial systems, settler-colonialism is not primarily interested in the exploitation of "surplus value from indigenous labour. Rather, they are premised on displacing indigenes from (or replacing them on) the land" (1). He writes: "Settler colonies were (are) premised on the elimination of native societies. […] The colonisers come to stay - *invasion is a structure not an event*" (2, emphasis added). Wolfe reiterates this argument in "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native" (2006), where he provides a detailed analysis of what he understands as the logic of elimination that is inherent to the structural characteristics of settler-colonialism. He argues that the fundamental impetus behind settler-colonialism's endeavour to eliminate Indigenous peoples is neither race, religion, ethnicity, or civilisation; instead, it is primarily motivated by the "access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element" (388). Nevertheless, Wolfe states that while it is true that "genocide" is always hovering around discussions about settler-colonialism, it is only one of the manifestations of the settler-colonial logic of elimination (387). He explains that the settler-colonial logic of the elimination of Indigenous peoples in the United States and Australia is a holistic structure that includes various techniques adapted to specific historical circumstances ranging from genocide, mass killings, and removal during the period of frontier expansion, to the adoption of different policies of biocultural assimilation when the frontier expansion came to closure, with no additional space for removing Indigenous communities (389–403). Nevertheless, in "Settler Colonial Logics and the Neoliberal Regime" (2016), David Lloyd and Wolfe assert that these various techniques and strategies of elimination "have met with mixed success" as Indigenous peoples' modes of resistance were as varied and creative as the settler's own range of techniques (111). Thus, settler-colonialism is distinguished from other forms of colonisation because it constitutes a structure premised on settlers' sovereignty through the

establishment and reinforcement of new social orders at the expanse of the appropriation of Indigenous land and the ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples.

5. Marx and the Settler-colony

Referring to Wolfe's works on settler-colonialism as a form of structured dispossession in *Red Skin, White Masks* (2014), Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard addresses the relevance of Marx and Marxism in exploring the histories and relationships of Indigenous peoples to colonial capitalism in settler-colonial states. Indeed, he argues for the relevance of the "cluster of insights developed by Karl Marx in chapters 26 through 32 of his first volume of *Capital*", where he "thoroughly links the totalizing power of *capital* with that of *colonialism* by way of his theory of 'primitive accumulation'" (7). Nevertheless, Coulthard explains that the relationship between the fields of Indigenous studies and Marxism is characterised by hostile and polarising debates, which led to a "premature rejection of Marx and Marxism by some Indigenous studies scholars on the one side, and to the belligerent, often ignorant, and sometimes racist dismissal of Indigenous peoples' contributions to radical thought and politics by Marxists on the other" (8). Contrary to this, he argues for the potential that can emerge from ongoing conversations between these two scholarships in "shed[ding] much insight into the cycles of colonial domination and resistance that characterise the relationship between white settler states and Indigenous peoples" (8). Coulthard explains that, insofar as colonialism and settler-colonialism entail a form of structural dispossession, Marx's critique of capitalism and the link he draws between capitalist exploitation and colonialism through his theory of "primitive accumulation" is of crucial importance (7). Nevertheless, moving away from an uncritical appropriation of Marxism, he argues that "Marx's theoretical frame" needs to be "transformed *in conversation* with the critical thought and practices of Indigenous peoples themselves" (8). Indeed, Coulthard identifies "three problematic features of Marx's primitive accumulation thesis are in need of such a transformation" (8).

The first problematic aspect, Coulthard states, is the theory's "*normative developmentalism,*" according to which capitalist modernity would ultimately be

beneficial for those non-western societies that are placed at the bottom of human "historical or cultural development" (9–10). He writes: "Clearly, any analysis or critique of contemporary settler-colonialism must be stripped of this Eurocentric feature of Marx's original historical metanarrative" (10). The second problematic aspect of the theory of primitive accumulation, Coulthard explains, is its framing by Marx as a phenomenon that is "rigidly *temporal*" such that the phase of violent dispossession is only inaugural in the process of accumulation and that it is the compulsion for economic relations that seals capitalism's triumph over the working class (9). This formulation, he argues, does not reflect "our global reality" since "the escalating onslaught of violent, state-orchestrated enclosures following neoliberalism's ascent to hegemony has unmistakably demonstrated the *persistent* role that unconcealed, violent dispossession continues to play in the reproduction of colonial and capitalist social relations in both the domestic and global context" (9). Indeed, in *The New Imperialism* (2003), Marxist geographer David Harvey takes issue with the continuation and the proliferation of the process of accumulation that Marx identified as the primitive or the original stage in the development of capitalism (144). Instead, Harvey proposes the term "accumulation by dispossession," used above as the title of the previous section, that accounts for a myriad of contemporary practices of dispossession such as land commodification and privatisation, the conversion of common, collective, and/or state property to private property, the elimination of rights to the commons, the commodification of labour force and the elimination of Indigenous modes of production, the colonial and neocolonial processes of resource extraction, land taxation, slavery (orthodox and modern), and "ultimately the credit system as radical means of primitive accumulation" (145). To effectively address these two first problematic features of Marx's analysis, Coulthard suggests a contextual shift "from an emphasis on the *capital relation* to the *colonial relation*" that, as he puts it, "takes as its analytical frame the subject position of the colonised vis-à-vis the effects of *colonial dispossession*," rather than the primary subject position of the proletariat's "perpetual separation from the means of production" that remained "the dominant concern of the Marxist tradition as a whole" (10–11). Indeed, resolving the first two problematic aspects of Marx's analytical framework through this contextual shift provides four critical insights that can facilitate an analysis of colonial processes of dispossession in Indigenous contexts.

First, Coulthard asserts that by emphasising the colonial frame as the primary analytical lens, "the inherent injustice of colonial rule is posited *on its own terms and in its own right*" such that "it becomes far more difficult to justify in antiquated developmental terms" the assimilation of non-western, non-capitalist, and Indigenous modes of life "based on the racist assumption that this assimilation will somehow magically redeem itself by bringing the fruits of capitalist modernity into the supposedly 'backward' world of the colonised" (11). The second insight facilitated by such contextual shift lies in the very nature of settler-colonialism that, however different it may be across North America and Australia, is primarily oriented towards the access and control of Indigenous lands. Indeed, except for the increased urbanisation of Indigenous peoples in the United States, Canada, and Australia from the second half of the twentieth century due, in large part, to the settler-states' assimilation programs and economic pressures,[13] the exploitation of Indigenous labour has always been somewhat ancillary. Nevertheless, Coulthard argues that Marx's thesis of primitive accumulation is still relevant. Yet, instead of proletarianisation, it is rather histories and processes of dispossession that characterised the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settler-colonial states (13). Correspondingly, he adds, these processes of dispossession ground and inform Indigenous modes of resistance, such that Indigenous anticolonial and anti-capitalist struggles are fundamentally oriented around "*the question of land*" as a "*system of reciprocal relations and obligations*" that "can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms—and less around our emergent status as 'rightless proletarians'" (13). Related to this idea, the third insight that flows from this contextual shift, Coulthard asserts, is the "anti-ecological" tendencies that underly Marx's work that "adhered to an instrumental rationality that placed no intrinsic value on the land or nature" (13–14). As such, he argues that recognising the settler-colonial practices of dispossession as "co-foundational" to the critique of capitalism "opens up the possibility of developing a more ecologically attentive

[13] For a detailed exploration of the urbanisation of Indigenous peoples in the settler-colonial states of the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, see Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen, *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation.* UBC Press, 2013.

critique of colonial-capitalist accumulation" (14). Finally, the fourth insight that emerges from resolving the first two problematic elements of a Marxist critique, Coulthard explains, is "Marx's (and orthodox Marxism's) economic reductionism" (14). He explains that in settler-colonial contexts, the contemporary reproduction of colonial power relations does not boil down to the economic dimension but instead consists of a "host of interrelated yet semi-autonomous facets of discursive and nondiscursive power" such that the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands and their self-determination by capitalism is achieved "*in relation to or in concert with* axes of exploitation and domination configured along racial, gender, and state lines" (14). Therefore, Coulthard argues that an analytical shift from capital relation to colonial relation within a Marxist critique provides a strategy of decolonisation based on an intersectional analysis that goes beyond addressing economic relations and instead confronts "the multifarious ways in which capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the totalizing character of state power interact with one another to form the constellation of power relations that sustain colonial patterns of behavior, structures, and relationships" (14). Altogether, Coulthard's reconfigurations of the first two problematic aspects that underly a Marxist approach and Marx's thesis of primitive accumulation demonstrate the relevance of Marxism in exploring the mechanisms of settler-colonialism and its strategies of dispossession. Simultaneously, they highlight Indigenous visions and modes of resistance that are adequate to such mechanisms.

The third aspect of Marx's thesis on primitive accumulation that needs to be addressed and reconfigured to account for settler-colonial policies of dispossession and Indigenous modes of resistance is indeed the central argument of Coulthard's work which, in turn, informs and articulates this thesis's approach in the analysis of the representations colonial traumas in the abovementioned contemporary Indigenous novels. Coulthard explains that, according to Marx's primitive accumulation, the processes of dispossession and accumulation are initially reproduced through violence and then the silent compulsion for economic relations (15). However, he states that in contemporary "democratic," liberal, multinational settler-states such as Canada, the United States, and Australia, processes of colonial dispossession confronted by Indigenous peoples are, most of the time, reproduced neither through state violence and coercion nor through

the compulsion of capitalist economics, but rather "through the asymmetrical exchange of mediated forms of state recognition and accommodation" (15). Indeed, Coulthard explains that starting from the second half of the twentieth century, Indigenous-settler state relations are characterised by the adoption of recognition-based activism by "the international Indigenous rights movements", including Indigenous activist movements throughout "the Americas" and "Australia" (2). He writes that "[a]lthough varying in institutional scope and scale, all of these geopolitical regions have seen the establishment of Indigenous rights regimes that claim to recognise and accommodate the political autonomy, land rights, and cultural distinctiveness of Indigenous nations within the settler states that now encase them" (2). Coulthard states that Indigenous activism has indeed pressured colonial powers to change the ways in which their structures are maintained and reinforced, moving from direct coercive "policies, techniques, and ideologies explicitly oriented around the genocidal exclusion/assimilation double", to a "seemingly more conciliatory set of discourses and institutional practices that emphasise our *recognition* and *accommodation*" (6). Nevertheless, he asserts that, despite these amendments, "the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state has remained *colonial* to its foundation" (6). Among these practices of governmental recognition in Canada, Coulthard explains, the "'recognition' of 'existing aboriginal and treaty rights' under section 35(1) of the Constitution Act of 1982" is the most significant as it led to "the federal government's eventual recognition, in 1995, of an 'inherent right to self-government,' as well as the groundswell of post-1982 court challenges that have sought to both clarify and widen the scope of what constitutes a constitutionally recognised Aboriginal right to begin with" (2). Nevertheless, Coulthard argues, this shift aimed at reproducing and reasserting the same colonial domination of pre-1969: "the dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority" (25).

In the United States' settler-colonial context, several Native American scholars uphold, in varying degrees, a similar view regarding the practice of tribal sovereignty through the lens of the state's politics of recognition. In the introduction to a section titled "Sovereignty" of *Native Studies Keywords* (2015), Stephanie N. Teves et al. explain that for Lumbee legal scholar Robert Williams, "Native sovereignty" articulated through the court decisions of the Marshall trilogy offer "limited and temporary forms of sovereignty" and restrict Native peoples'

self-determination within what is “deemed permissible by federal courts and government agencies” (8). While less significant than the treaty-based sovereignties negotiated by Indigenous peoples in North America with the settler-states of Canada and the USA, the implementation of the Mabo decision in 1992 by the High Court of Australia made a critical shift insofar as it overthrew the Australian colonial doctrine of terra nullius and recognised Indigenous land rights within Australian law through the implementation of the 1993 Native Title Act. Nevertheless, in *The Cunning of Recognition* (2002), Australian scholar Elizabeth Povinelli argues that Native Title constitutes a continuation of colonisation because it is framed within Australian legal doctrines (6). Similarly, in “Settled and Unsettled Spaces” (2005), Tanganekald Meintangk Boandik legal scholar Irene Watson assert that the Native Title remains essential to the colonial regime because it does not pose any challenge to “Australian real property law, nor to the governance of the state. [It provides] no direction in the ‘road-map’ or journey of de-colonisation. [It] simply [reinforces] the colonial order and world view” (46). As such, in “Accumulating Minerals and Dispossessing Indigenous Australians” (2019), Catherine Howlett and Rebecca Lawrence argue that the Native Title functions as another settler-colonial strategy for furthering the dispossession of Indigenous people of their lands (819). Therefore, these contemporary governmental practices of recognition and accommodation adopted by settler-colonial states in Canada, the USA, and Australia towards Indigenous peoples constitute discursive and nondiscursive facets of historically-adequate land dispossession strategies.

6. Fanon in the Settler-colony: The Structural and Subjective Dimensions of Settler-colonial Politics of Recognition

Within the project of decolonising trauma studies, several scholars have argued for the relevance of Frantz Fanon’s works in approaching non-western texts that articulate traumas related to colonialism (Craps and Buelens 2008; Kennedy 2008; Craps 2013; Ward 2015; Dalley 2015). As the title of his work suggests, the relevance of Fanon’s insights on the mechanisms of colonial oppression in settler-colonial contexts is one of the theoretical cornerstones of Coulthard’s analysis of the colonial undersides that underly the contemporary politics of recognition adopted by the settler-states and societies towards Indigenous

peoples. Indeed, while the author's "empirical focus" is on the Canadian settler-colonial context, he notes that "readers will find many of my conclusions applicable to settler-colonial experiences elsewhere" (2). Coulthard argues that the settler-colonial politics of recognition "in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend" (3). He explains that when the colonial rule is not sustained by state violence and direct domination of Indigenous peoples, "its reproduction instead rests on the ability to entice Indigenous peoples to *identify*, either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly *asymmetrical* and *nonreciprocal* forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the settler state and society" (25). This form of recognition, Coulthard adds, is what Fanon describes as a colonised subjectivity in his critical analysis of Hegel's dialectic in *Black Skin, White Masks* and which, Coulthard notes, refers to "the production of the specific modes of colonial thought, desire, and behavior that implicitly or explicitly commit the colonised to the types of practices and subject positions that are required for their continued domination" (16). In addition, Coulthard demonstrates that Fanon's critique of colonial recognition consists of two dimensions. The first presents a structural problem that lies at the heart of colonial recognition as it occurs "in real world contexts of domination," such that "the terms of accommodation" of this recognition are regulated and shaped "by and in the interests of the hegemonic partner in the relationship" (17). The second dimension, he adds, presents a subjective problem that consists of the colonised peoples' psychological and affective attachment to "structurally circumscribed modes of recognition" that facilitate and perennate "the economic and political structure of colonial relationships over time" (17–18). Coulthard's critical analysis of the colonial undersides of the contemporary politics of recognition in settler-colonial contexts provides this study with its theoretical underpinnings in exploring the structural/material and the psycho-affective/subjective dimensions of colonial traumas in these settler-colonial contexts.

7. Indigenous Aesthetics of Survivance: A Resurgent Practice of Cultural Self-Recognition

As delineated above, scholars working on trauma within non-western contexts reject trauma theory's anti-therapeutic perspective that focuses on loss and aporia in trauma narratives and posits traumatic compulsion and prolonged grief as the only ethical and proportionate response to trauma. Indeed, this approach reasserts the colonial discourse of victimisation and pathologisation of colonised peoples warned against by many scholars. In "Mourning and Memory" (2005), for example, Rebecca Saunders and Kamran Scot Aghaie observe that "[it] is easier—and cheaper—to pathologise individuals than to critique or dismantle systems of war, empire, patriarchy, economic inequality, or racism" (19). By the same token, Craps states that survivors of colonial traumas are often "pathologised as victims without political agency" (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 56). As such, Craps argues for a critical commitment to and reading of narratives of colonial and/or postcolonial traumas that would "make visible the creative and political" rather than obscure them to the advantage of "the pathological and negative" (127). In "Decolonizing Trauma Theory" (2015), Irene Visser expresses a similar concern, asserting that if the emphasis within literary studies that deal with colonial and postcolonial traumas is put on "weakness, victimisation, and melancholia," themes of "recuperation and psychic resilience" will tend to be ignored and obscured (11). Nevertheless, the therapeutic trend within trauma studies is no less problematic when approaching non-western narratives of colonial traumas. As explained above, trauma theory, with its event-based understanding of trauma, follows a linear traumatological timeline in which a stable and healthy subjectivity existed before the traumatic event. Thus, a recovery of a unified subjectivity is possible for the traumatised subject by working through the traumatic event and detaching themselves from the traumatic past.

Craps highlights the inadequacy of this approach to healing and recovery in non-western contexts and narratives that tackle colonial traumas. He argues that the therapeutic trend within trauma studies tends to privilege "psychological recovery" over the "transformation of a wounding political, social, or economic system" (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 28). In colonial and postcolonial contexts, he argues, hegemonic trauma discourse and its negation of "the need for taking

collective action towards systemic change" can constitute "a political palliative to the socially disempowered" (28). Besides, Craps refers to the work of Claire Stocks, in which she argues that, within trauma theory, the idea of the self is based on a western perspective "according to which a psychologically healthy subject is unified, integrated, and whole" (Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing* 33). Such a conceptualisation considers healing from trauma as "overcoming the fracturing of the self and the resulting division in identity caused by an extremely disturbing event" (33–34). This event-based model of trauma assumes, as Stocks puts it, "the preexistence of a state of perceived psychic unity" that "'healing' aims to restore" (qtd. in Craps 33). Craps explains that the inadequacy of this conceptualisation resides in the fact that it ignores colonial-related forms of traumatisation that are insidious, repetitive, cumulative, and ongoing; thus, he states, "there is no pre-traumatised state of being that can be restored in any straightforward manner" (33). In addition, in Indigenous texts and contexts, such perspectives on healing and recovery are, as Deborah L. Madsen (2008) points out, equated with a therapeutic reassimilation or reintegration of the fragmented self that aims to bring the patient "to a condition of cultural productivity," and in which "the concept of psychic integration or assimilation" is imperatively conflated with social assimilation ("On Subjectivity and Survivance" 64). In addition to their entrenchment in western conceptions and ideas about subjectivity, both the therapeutic and the anti-therapeutic trends of trauma studies over-psychologise and individualise processes of trauma and healing, detaching them from structural, political, and socio-economic dimensions. Such readings obscure colonised peoples' subjectivities and political agency and reassert colonial narratives that have long been built upon the presumed weakness and cultural inferiority of colonised peoples.

Against the anti-therapeutic and therapeutic trends within trauma studies, this study argues that healing in the selected works of Indigenous futurisms and Indigenous wonderworks is aesthetically registered as a practice of survivance. In *Fugitive Poses* (1998), Anishinaabe scholar and writer Gerald Vizenor explains that survivance is neither a mere survival nor an endurance and passive presence; rather, he asserts that "survivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy and victimry" (15). In "No Sense of the Struggle" (2006), Anishinaabe scholar Sonya Atalay engages with the Vizenor's works on

survivance, which she understands as an ongoing process of survival and resistance to colonial oppression (609). She argues that the concept of survivance is not about ignoring or forgetting stories of colonial horrors, tragedies, and the struggles of Indigenous peoples but is instead about emphasising the Indigenous presence and agency in the stories that feature "creative methods of resistance and survival in the face of such unimaginable turmoil" (609). Similarly, Martineau and Ritskes argue that narratives of Indigenous survivance reflect "a fugitive aesthetic that, in its decolonial ruptural forms, refuses the struggle for better or more inclusion and recognition" and, instead "chooses refusal and flight as modes of freedom" by "activat[ing] art in a transversal represencing of indigeneity throughout Indigenous lands, languages and territories" (IV–V). They write: "represencing helps Indigenous peoples 'make sense' of the chaos imposed by ongoing settler colonialism, and also to 'speak back' to create new ways of knowing/being/doing outside of settler logic" (VII). Being anchored in Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and worldviews, narratives of Indigenous survivance thus resist and reject settler-colonial patterns of recognition in their structural and subjective facets. In this way, they present themselves as artistic registrations of what Coulthard calls a "*resurgent politics of recognition*" that he defines as a decolonial praxis that focuses on Indigenous self-empowerment "through cultural practices of individual and collective self-fashioning" that aim at envisioning drastic alternatives to colonial recognition's structural and subjective dimensions (18). Insofar as works of Indigenous futurisms and Indigenous wonderworks are grounded within specific Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and worldviews, they have the potential to present themselves as narratives of Indigenous survivance, thus offering visions and perspectives on healing that articulate Indigenous sovereignties in their material, cultural, and subjective dimensions.

8. Methodology and Thesis Overview: A Trans-Indigenous Juxtaposition

Within Indigenous scholarship, there is an exponential orientation towards projects that aim to approach and connect different Indigenous histories, cultures, and literature in comparative frameworks (Allen 2002, Heiss 2003, Knudsen 2004, Allen 2007, Byrd 2011, Somerville 2012, Allen 2012b). On the other hand, within the scholarship of decolonising trauma studies, the adoption of cross-

cultural comparative frameworks is evidenced by the number of publications that draw on Rothberg's concept of "multidirectional memory." In his book of the same name (2009), Rothberg describes multidirectional memory as a mode where distinct traumatic histories circulate in a non-competitive space of "ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing" (3). Multidirectional memory, he asserts, has "the potential to create new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice" (5). However, a comparative reading mode is not without challenges when approaching Indigenous novels emanating from distinct Indigenous cultures and different geopolitical contexts, for there is always the risk of homogenisation. In *Trans-Indigenous* (2012a), Allen explains that an orthodox understanding of literary comparisons is that of a mode of reading different texts with the purpose of setting a "balanced" list of similarities and differences, or in other words, "compare and contrast" (xiii). Dissecting the Latin etymology of the verb "to compare," which means "together equal," he explains that it does not bear the same meaning as the coordinating conjunction of "and" that is found in the titles of works of literary comparison (xiii). As such, Allen argues that a reading mode of "together equal" is neither achievable nor appealing, especially for "anticolonial Indigenous-centered readings" of a distinct Indigenous literary tradition emanating from different cultural and geopolitical contexts, written in "the shared language of those who colonised the communities of their authors" (xiii).

Allen explains that Indigenous scholars are sceptical of the value of global comparative modes for Indigenous studies as more work needs to be prioritised within specific Indigenous traditions and communities (xiii). Thus, a comparative reading mode based on the premise of "together equal" compromises in the name of the global the academic place won by local Indigenous literatures in the academic realm (xiii). Another problem posed by Indigenous scholars, Allen adds, is the amount of knowledge that is required "to bring together multiple Indigenous literatures emanating from multiple distinct cultures and histories on a truly equal basis" (xiii). Finally, he contends that an Indigenous-to-Indigenous comparison based on an "abstract" perspective of "together equal" serves and re-centres the interests of the settler-nation state and culture by veering away from "the political interests of specific individuals, communities, and nations and various forms of coalition" and creating Indigenous hierarchies of oppression, legitimacy or authenticity of self-representation (xiii–xiv). As an alternative to the

global comparative frameworks and their complication, Chadwick suggests that a global Indigenous literary study should pursue a trans-Indigenous reading mode with the perspective of "together," yet distinct and different (xiv). A trans-Indigenous mode, Allen declares, is based on the juxtaposition of different Indigenous texts produced "across genre and media, aesthetic systems and worldviews, technologies and practices, tribes and nations, the Indigenous–settler binary, and historical periods and geographical regions" close together (xviii). Purposeful trans-Indigenous juxtapositions, he asserts, would "develop a version of Indigenous literary studies that locates itself firmly in the specificity of the Indigenous local while always remaining cognizant of the complexity of the relevant Indigenous global" (xix). Following a trans-Indigenous reading mode in exploring the representations of trauma and healing in a selection of novels that emanate from different Indigenous literary, cultural, and geopolitical contexts, this study captures the global interconnectedness of colonial experiences and modes of resistance among Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial contexts yet insists on the distinctiveness of Indigenous cultures and definitions of Indigeneity across the Indigenous global. By taking these aspects into account, trans-Indigenous juxtapositions have the potential to reveal new insights when bringing different Indigenous literary texts into productive discussions.

Chapter One of this thesis examines the representation of the structural and material dimensions of colonial traumas in *There There* (2018) by Cheyenne novelist Tommy Orange and *Taboo* (2017) by Noongar writer and activist Kim Scott. Drawing on Coulthard's reconfiguration of Marx's critique of capitalism and his theory of primitive accumulation in Indigenous contexts, this chapter engages with the materialist comparative reading of world-literature proposed by The Warwick Research Collective (WReC) in *Combined and Uneven Development* (2015). The WReC contributors' theorisation focuses on the ways in which literary productions that emanate from the peripheries and semi-peripheries of the world-literary system register, both in form and content, the combined and uneven development engendered by the modern capitalist world-system. Chapter One, therefore, investigates the narrative registers and aesthetic techniques employed by the authors to inscribe the traumas of colonial modernity experienced by the Indigenous communities represented in their novels within the broader settler-colonial structures and histories of dispossession in the USA and Australia.

Chapter Two explores the representation of the psychological dimension of colonial traumas in *Indian Horse* by Ojibway author Richard Wagamese and *Swallow the Air* by Wiradjuri novelist Tara June Winch. It draws on Coulthard's exploration of the psycho-affective dimension of colonial domination as proposed by Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks,* where he demonstrates how the non-recognition of colonised peoples, as well as their unconscious internalisation of racist forms of recognition that are imposed by the colonial rule, results in the traumatic annihilation of their subjectivity and leads to their self-objectification.

Chapter Three approaches two works of Indigenous futurisms: *Killer of Enemies* by Abenaki writer Joseph Bruchac and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* by Palyku novelist and scholar Ambelin Kwaymullina. This chapter explores the potential of these Indigenous futurist novels in presenting themselves as narratives of healing and cultural survivance through the authors' ethical and aesthetical engagement with and deployment of aspects that pertain to their respective Indigenous knowledge systems, worldviews, and storytelling traditions in futuristic narratives. This, the chapter argues, reflects the authors' affirmation and celebration of the survival and cultural survivance of Indigenous peoples and the relevance, flexibility, contemporaneity, and futurity of their cultures and knowledge systems. As such, these novels create sites of healing by asserting visions of Indigenous cultural and territorial sovereignties and agencies. Chapter Four brings together two Indigenous wonderworks: *Catching Teller Crow* by Palyku siblings Ambeline and Ezekiel Kwaymullina, and *Split Tooth* by Inuk throat-singer and writer Tanya Tagaq. This chapter explores the literary devices and aesthetic techniques used by these authors to capture and register the protagonists' individual traumatic histories that are anchored in the broader history of colonialism and its traumatic aftermath on their respective Indigenous communities. In addition, it investigates the ways in which these novels read against the expectations of both the anti-therapeutic and therapeutic trends within trauma studies in their western entrenchment. Instead, the chapter demonstrates how *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth* offer a decolonising reading of healing that is articulated as an ongoing process of survivance, reflected through each novel's ethical and creative engagement with the authors' specific histories, cultural heritage, Indigenous worldviews, and elements that pertain to the Sacred.

9. Positionality: Identifying the Outsider Status

This is the only section of the thesis where the author uses "I" to enunciate themselves. Being an Indigenous North African and member of the Kabyle people, it is important to acknowledge my positionality as an outsider to the Indigenous scholarship and literature that I approach in this thesis. Indeed, Smith explains that approaching Indigenous materials as an outsider needs to be ethical, respectful, and humble (233). My decision not to use the first-person pronoun in the entire thesis is motivated by Smith's remarks insofar as it provides more visibility for the insights offered by Indigenous scholarship and aesthetics. Moreover, Smith argues that decolonising methodologies in Indigenous research need to centre Indigenous peoples' "concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (89). While this thesis centres and engages with Indigenous scholarship in the study of Indigenous literatures, my approach cannot be considered Indigenous research *per se* and does not aim at producing Indigenous analytics. Indeed, Moreton-Robinson explains that the use of "critical" in critical Indigenous studies signals a "separation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous analytics" as Indigenous analytics mobilises Indigenous knowledge systems, modes and methods of inquiry, along with ethical and cultural protocols" that differ from those of employed by non-Indigenous scholars in their academic practice" (*Critical Indigenous Studies* 4). As such, she writes: "Indigenous-embodied knowledges means non-Indigenous scholars can engage with Indigenous analytics but not produce them" (4). Nevertheless, in "An Introductory Conversation" (2007) Somerville and Allen argue that the "outsider status, once identified, could enable rather than disable their analyses" (13). Being an outsider in relation to this scholarship and these literatures constantly reminds me of my responsibility as a research outsider, which, as Smith puts it, is "*Getting the Story Right, Telling the Story Well*" (273, emphasis added).

10. Note on Terminology

It is essential to bear in mind constantly the diversity and the heterogeneity of Indigenous peoples around the world. In this study, the term "Indigenous" is used when referring collectively to the original inhabitants of what is known today as

the settler-colonial states of the United States, Canada, and Australia. The term is used with a capital letter, for as stated by Justice, it asserts a “distinctive political status of peoplehood,” rather than denoting “an exploitable commodity, like an ‘indigenous plant’ or a ‘native mammal’ (6). Indeed, he argues that “Indigenous” as a “proper noun affirms the status of a subject with agency, not an object with a particular quality” (6). Other generalising terms are used to refer collectively to Indigenous peoples in different geopolitical contexts. This includes Native Americans in the United States, First Nations and Inuit in Canada, and Aboriginal peoples in mainland Australia. Moreover, as is already evident in this introduction, Indigenous authors and scholars cited in this work are referred to using their specific nation/tribe affiliation.

CHAPTER I

Traumatic Modernities, Traumatised Peripheralities: A Trans-Indigenous Reading of Tommy Orange's *There There* and Kim Scott's *Taboo*

> The Aboriginal people, I was told, were failing. They were dying off at such rate that they wouldn't last another decade. It was sad to see them passing away, but their problem, according to the men who gathered in the bar after work, was that they did not have the same mental capacities as Whites. There was no point in educating them because they had no interest in improving their lot and were perfectly happy living in poverty and squalor. The curious thing about these stories was I had heard them all before, knew them, in fact, by heart.
>
> ——Thomas King*, The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*

1. Introduction

This chapter explores the representation of the structural and material dimensions of colonial traumas in *There There* by Cheyenne novelist Tommy Orange and *Taboo* by Noongar writer and activist Kim Scott. Scholars working on decolonising trauma studies in literature argue that trauma theory within its Euro-American methodological underpinnings tends to focus exclusively on the psychological dimensions of trauma and suffering, thus presenting one of the inadequacies of the latter when it comes to approaching trauma in colonial/postcolonial texts and contexts**.** This explains Michael Rothberg's suggestion in "Decolonizing Trauma Studies" to rethink trauma in these contexts as "collective, spatial, and material (instead of individual, temporal, and linguistic)" (228). Indeed, in the *Splintered Glass* (2011), Dolores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allué assert that in colonial and postcolonial contexts, the focus on "individual/ psychological" aspects of trauma "may pose the danger of separating facts from their causes, thus blurring the importance of the historical and social context" (xi). Further explaining the dangers of over-psychologising traumas related to colonisation, Stef Craps states that such an approach can obscure the socio-political and economic conditions that facilitate and produce such traumas, leading to immaterial and psychological recovery "being privileged" over material

compensation and structural change, that is the "reparation or restitution and more broadly, the transformation of a wounding political, social, and economic system" (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 28). Attending to the political and socio-economic facets of traumas related to colonialism has, indeed, been one of the initial steps taken by scholars contributing to the scholarship on decolonising trauma studies. Nevertheless, as indicated in the introduction to this thesis, it is crucial to place the insights of this scholarship within the Indigenous and settler-colonial contexts that the abovementioned novels address in order to adequately understand the political and socio-economic particularities of settler-colonial oppression and, in turn, shed light on Indigenous views on resistance.

Within the field of psychology in Indigenous contexts, the concept of historical trauma has gained prominence with the works of Lakota clinician Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart. In "The American Indian Holocaust" (1998), Brave Heart and L. M. DeBruyn compare the psychological impact of colonisation on Indigenous peoples of North America to that of the Holocaust on Jewish survivors and their descendants. Drawing on concepts of cross-generational transmission of trauma developed out of psychoanalytical studies on descendants of Holocaust survivors, they explain that "social ills" such as suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, and domestic violence endured by Indigenous communities are "primarily the product of a legacy of chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations […] originating from the loss of lives, land, and vital aspects of Native culture promulgated by the European conquest of the Americas" (60). The concept of historical trauma thus brings together the historical oppression of colonisation and psychological suffering. In "American Indian Historical Trauma" (2014), William E. Hartmann and Gros Ventre psychologist Joseph P. Gone provide a summary of what constitutes the concept of historical trauma in Indigenous contexts using what they call "the *Four Cs* of Indigenous HT [historical trauma]" (275). This includes "*Colonial injury*" as the result of conquest and dispossession by settler states and societies, the "*Collective experience*" of colonial injuries by Indigenous communities that impaired their cultural identities and social lives, the "*Cumulative effect"* of these colonial injuries through ongoing oppression that "'snowballed' over time through extended histories" of violence by dominant settler states and societies, and the "*Cross-generational impacts* [that] result from these injuries as they are transmitted to subsequent generations

in unremitting fashion in the form of legacies of risk and vulnerability" (275). The American Indian historical trauma concept has been adopted in other Indigenous contexts,[14] including First Nations historical trauma and Aboriginal historical trauma.[15]

Nevertheless, there exist three different and, at times, conflicting engagements within the field of historical trauma. In "American Indian Historical Trauma" (2019), William E. Hartmann et al. explore these three engagements within historical trauma, namely as "a *clinical condition*, *life stressor*, and *critical discourse*" (7). Since this chapter is concerned with colonial traumas' structural and material dimensions, it is convenient to explore historical trauma as a critical discourse. Indeed, as the authors explain, while the two first engagements consider historical trauma as a clinical condition and/or life stressor that is "amenable to psychological or health inquiry and intervention," scholars that engage with historical trauma as a critical discourse question "the utility of psychology and health fields" in addressing and remediating such traumas (11). Instead, these scholars, Hartmann et al. state, draw on "political theory from Indigenous Studies", such as the works of Glen Coulthard, to advance a sociological perspective through which trauma is addressed as a socio-political parable that contextualises Indigenous peoples' hardships within colonial structures that maintain and reinforce their socio-economic dependence on the settler-colonial state (11). Hartmann et al. write: "Such resistance to reductionist narratives of human hardship is common to critical discourse in psychology and health where attention to discourse can illuminate how popular psychological and health framings of adversity eclipse attention to socioeconomic, cultural, and structural factors in favor of a less political focus on intrapersonal injury or deficit" (11). As such, approaching colonial traumas in Indigenous contexts from a critical

[14] For a discussion about the applicability of the concept historical trauma in other Indigenous contexts, see Teresa Evans-Campbell, "Historical Trauma in American Indian/Native Alaska Communities: A Multilevel Framework for Exploring Impacts on Individuals, Families, and Communities." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 23, no. 3, Mar. 2008, 316–38.

[15] For a discussion on historical trauma in First Nations and Aboriginal contexts respectively, see Joseph P. Gone, "Redressing First Nations Historical Trauma: Theorizing Mechanisms for Indigenous Culture as Mental Health Treatment." *Transcultural Psychiatry*, vol. 50, no. 5, Oct. 2013, 683–706. See also Karen Menzies, "Understanding the Australian Aboriginal Experience of Collective, Historical and Intergenerational Trauma." *International Social Work*, vol. 62, no. 6, Nov. 2019, 1522–34.

discourse perspective allows for a retreat from the narrow prism of psychology in order to focus instead on examining and critiquing the settler-colonial structures and policies that continue to produce such traumas.

1.1. On the Structural and Material Dimensions of Colonial Traumas

As delineated in the introduction to the thesis, Coulthard, in *Red Skin*, *White Masks*, argues that Frantz Fanon's critical analysis of the structural/material and subjective/psychological dimensions of colonial oppression is relevant in exploring the colonial undersides of contemporary politics of recognition adopted by settler-colonial states and societies toward Indigenous peoples. Indeed, he states that although Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* primarily investigates colonialism's psychological dimension and repercussions on colonised populations, his analysis cannot be separated from the structural and material dimensions (33). He writes: "Fanon was enough of a Marxist to understand the role played by capitalism in exasperating hierarchical relations of recognition" (33). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon explains clearly and without reservations that the socio-economic structures of the colonial environment exacerbate colonised peoples' traumas. He goes further, placing first the "economic" aspect in the double process of the inferiority complex and "subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalization—of this inferiority" (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 4). In this respect, Fanon posits material restitution and reparation as a prerequisite for "effective disalienation" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 4). Through this analysis, Fanon reminds us of colonisation's materialist and capitalist genesis and calls for the need to adequately address the ensuing structural and material oppression endured by colonised populations. Following Fanon's reasoning, Coulthard argues that the structural and the material problem within the contemporary politics of recognition adopted by settler-colonial states towards Indigenous peoples is that they "occur in real world contexts of domination" such that the "terms of accommodation usually end up being determined by and in the interests" of the settler-state being "the hegemonic partner in the relationship" (17). As such, he argues that "settler-colonial formations are *territorially acquisitive in perpetuity*" because, no matter how the eliminatory strategies adopted to dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands and resources changed to given historical circumstances, "the *ends* have always

remained the same: to shore up continued access to Indigenous peoples' territories for the purposes of state formation, settlement, and capitalist development" (125). As such, Coulthard highlights how settler-colonial accumulation by dispossession is intrinsically related to the development of settler-states and, in a broader sense, to global capitalism.

Indeed, this is what is argued by Patrick Wolfe in "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," where he posits settler-colonialism as "foundational" to capitalism and modernity insofar as it not only presupposed a commonality between "the private and official realms" through frontier settlers seeking protection from the states but also "presupposed a global chain of command linking remote colonial frontiers to the metropolis" (394). He explains that the Industrial Revolution, traditionally understood to have started in European metropoles, required land and labour from the colonies in order to produce the raw materials necessary for metropolitan factories to be processed by the industrial proletariat, which, in turn, were commercialised in colonial markets (394). Wolfe writes: "The expropriated Aboriginal, enslaved African American, or indentured Asian is as thoroughly modern as the factory worker, bureaucrat, or *Flâneur* of the metropolitan centre" (394). This idea is further explored in "Settler Colonial Logics and the Neoliberal Regime," where David Lloyd and Wolfe demonstrate the central and inherent continuity that exists between the development of European settler-colonialism and the development of the contemporary neoliberal world order (111). Indeed, they explain that globally, the dispossession of Indigenous peoples in Australia and North America enabled industrial capitalism and the emergence of the modern state, and, as many scholars demonstrate, the processes of these historical conjunctures—primitive accumulation, conquest, and imperialism—are not in discontinuity with contemporary modernisation in its pollical and economic sphere (112–4). Wolfe and Lloyd thus conclude that it is possible to recognise the "lines of continuity" that bind together "the enterprise of 'primitive' accumulation" that is inherent to the emergence of settler colonialism with the current "phase of 'accumulation by dispossession that has seen the refunctioning of settler colonial logics of law and violence as the means to furthering and safeguarding the neoliberal economic regime" (116). As such, as an ongoing process of accumulation through the

dispossession of Indigenous peoples, settler-colonialism is a structure that is intrinsically bound to the global development of capitalism and modernity.

Since this chapter focuses on the representation of the structural and material dimensions of colonial traumas in Indigenous novels that address different settler-colonial experiences, it is essential to attend to the global aspects of settler-colonialism insofar as it provided the foundation for the development of capitalist modernity, while simultaneously paying attention to how such phenomena are experienced locally within specific Indigenous contexts in order to remain faithful to trans-Indigenous modes of reading that, as Chadwick Allen puts it, are based on the premise of "'together (yet) *distinct*'" (*Trans-Indigenous* xiii). One such approach is advised by The Warwick Research Collective (WReC) in *Combined and Uneven Development*, in which they propose a comparative materialist theory of world-literature. The WReC contributors draw on Franco Moretti's appropriation of world-systems theory in the literary sphere to articulate the idea of a world-literary system correspondent to international capitalism, which is a singular but unequal system composed of a core, a periphery, and a semi-periphery bound together by an increasing unevenness (7– 8). This articulation, they argue, reactivates the Marxist political economy concept of uneven and combined development, which, in the humanities and social sciences, finds an echo in the work of Fredric Jameson, who conceives modernity as a singular phenomenon corresponding to capitalistic modernisation; yet, just like capitalism, modernity is governed by an increasing unevenness due to the heterogeneous receptions and experiences of capitalist social relations in the core, periphery, and semi-periphery of the world-capitalist system (12). The emergence and the effect of modernity, the WReC contributors argue, are not regulated by chronology, geography, or sexual division of labour; instead, they explain, even if "capitalist modernisation entails development […] this 'development' takes the forms also of the development of underdevelopment, of maldevelopment and dependent development" (13). As such, the WReC contributors write: "We understand capitalism to be the substrate of world-literature […]; and we understand modernity to constitute world-literature's subject and form—modernity is both what world-literature indexes or is 'about' and what gives world-literature its distinguishing formal characteristics" (15). This, they explain, is achieved through a "peculiar plasticity and hybridity" of the forms

of (semi-)peripheral literary works in which “multiple literary levels, genres and modes, but also other non-literary and archaic cultural forms” are incorporated together (16). This, they argue, is apparent, for instance, in the form of realistic literary representation raptured by modernist and experimental narrative modes and the juxtaposition of old and contemporary literary devices (16). In fact, in their study, the WReC contributors theorise a materialist comparative reading that focuses on how literary productions that emanate from the peripheries and semi-peripheries of the world-literary system register, both in form and in content, the combined and uneven development engendered by the modern capitalist world-system.

Since the WReC contributors argue that (semi-)peripheral literary texts that register the combined and uneven modernity “are necessarily performed in the harsh glare of past and present imperial and colonial dispensations,” and that this literature encompasses works that emanate from the peripheries and the semi-peripheries of core capitalist countries due to class, ethnic or regional marginalisation (52, 55), their theorisation could be pertinent in exploring the literary representation of the structural and material dimensions of colonial oppression in Indigenous contexts. Nevertheless, some problematic features need to be addressed and reconfigured when approaching Indigenous literary texts. First, in their work, the WReC contributors tend to steer away from imperialism and colonialism. In fact, they state that the “co-relation between the capitalist world-system and modern imperialism and colonialism do not directly concern us here, although they certainly inform our thinking” (52). This tendency could be explained by their assertion that the combined and uneven nature of capitalist modernisation is also experienced in metropolitan centres, for “core countries have their own peripheries and semi-peripheries” (70). Second, on the formal and aesthetic levels, the WReC contributors explain that the literary registration of combined and uneven modernity in (semi-)peripheral works is achieved through a juxtaposition of realist and what they term “irrealist” aesthetics, which, they argue, is not to be conceived as a “depreciation of realism,” but rather as “refinement of it, under the specific circumstances of combined and uneven development” (70). Among these “irrealist” aesthetics, the WReC contributors include narrative registers that pertain to specific “indigenous materials”, qualifying them as “residual” (75). This conceptualisation is

problematic for Indigenous literatures that mobilise narrative registers anchored within specific Indigenous knowledge systems and worldviews. Such a view reiterates a Eurocentric perspective of reality that is empiric and material against which any other conception of reality is deemed irrational, inconsistent, and fabricated.

The limitations of the WReC contributors' theorisation in relation to Indigenous literatures lie in their study's Marxist underpinnings. However, if, as Coulthard suggests, a Marxist theoretical framework has the potential to be relevant for exploring the settler-colonial practices of dispossession in Indigenous contexts—provided it is reconfigured in tandem with Indigenous critical scholarship—such reconfiguration can be equally pertinent in redeeming the limitations mentioned above of the WReC's literary theory of combined and uneven development. Indeed, as explained in the introduction to the thesis, Coulthard argues that a Marxist approach can be relevant in exploring colonial processes of dispossession in Indigenous contexts if some of its foundational features are reconfigured within Indigenous/settler-colonial relations. These reconfigurations include first, stripping Marx's theoretical frame from its Eurocentric normative developmentalism that places Indigenous ways of life on the bottom scale of cultural and historical development or as remnants of a pre-colonial past. Second, they include positing the violence of the colonial rule in its own terms, rather than as a mere by-product of capitalism. Third, they entail addressing first the processes of dispossession and then proletarianisation in defining the settler-colonial histories of oppression endured by Indigenous peoples and in grounding Indigenous modes of resistance. Finally, it also requires attending to how such processes of dispossession are reproduced through the contemporary liberal politics of recognition enacted by settler-colonial states and societies towards Indigenous peoples. In the same vein, the WReC's literary theory of combined and uneven development would benefit from such contextual shifting when approaching Indigenous literary texts insofar as settler-colonial processes of dispossession become the overarching framework of analysis when exploring the registration of capitalist modernity in these texts. In addition, narrative registers that are anchored within specific Indigenous histories, worldviews, and ways of knowing should not be conceived of as "irrealist" but

rather as an aesthetic reflection of legitimate and meaningful ways of experiencing the world and reality.

1.2. Narrating a History of Colonial Traumas in Settler-colonial Contexts

The second aspect that is addressed in this chapter is to assess the extent to which the above-mentioned Indigenous novels offer a historicist approach to colonial traumas in settler-colonial contexts. Indeed, as explained in the introduction to the thesis, the aspect of history is highly problematic concerning orthodox trauma in its poststructuralist entrenchment. Nevertheless, while the historical and political vacuity that characterises Cathy Caruth's theorisation of trauma makes it inadequate in approaching literary texts that explore traumas related to colonialism, Sam Durrant's *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning* (2004) adopts an anti-historicist approach as he argues for "the centrality of a deconstructive, anti-historicist ethics of remembrance" in the literary works that bear witness to traumas related to colonisation (7). This, he states, is because colonial trauma is a product of what he seems to describe as a "primordial" forgetting of the humanity of the colonised other that, as an extra-historical "event," resists narration and representation. Durrant capitalises "Forgetting" to refer to Jean-François Lyotard's distinction between "forgetting" as a "secondary repression" that is "representable, reversible forgetting," and "Forgetting" as "primary repression or foreclosure" that "constitutes a 'Forgetting that thwarts all representation'" (qtd. in Durrant 5). In fact, Durrant explains that in *Heidegger and "the jews"* (1998), Lyotard posits the impossibility of recovering a history of the Holocaust as an event because such history cannot remember "the Forgetting of Jewish humanity that is foundational to the construction of European identity" (6). Analogising this formulation to colonial trauma, Durrant asserts that the "Forgetting" of the humanity of the colonised and racialised other is a "primary repression" that "founds the European subject" and constitutes "the *prehistory* of [that] subject" (5). Thus, he writes: "This denial is not a simple forgetting that occurred at a particular point in history (secondary repression) but a *foreclosure* of the very possibility of the other's humanity (primary repression)" (5). By "prehistory," Durrant means that the racialisation and the othering of the colonised other did not occur at a particular point of history; instead, he argues that it transcends historicity. Exemplifying this formulation, he turns his attention

to “The Fact of Blackness” in Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*. Durrant explains that Fanon’s experience of racism is memorialised as a traumatic event without any chronology because this account does not “retrieve an encounter with the white man’s gaze that occurred at a particular place and time” (16). Instead, he contends, the experience of racism is not subject to historicity because, on the one hand, it is a repetitive and shared experience among black people, and on the other hand, the experience of racism constitutes a “breakdown of chronology, a confirmation that the black man is indeed, to paraphrase Hegel, outside history, forcibly excluded from the time of modernity” (16). Following this line of reasoning, Durrant argues that this very incapacity to recover and narrate a history of the racialisation of the colonised other constitutes the impossibility of a historicised reading of colonial trauma.

Durrant’s anti-historicist approach to colonial traumas has been subject to criticism from scholars working on trauma in non-western literary texts and contexts. In “Colonial Trauma, Utopian Carnality, Modernist Form” (2014), Greg Forter states that Durrant’s approach can be “laudable” for the way in which it resists “‘the project of ‘historicism’” that characterises those “forms of historiography that homogenize time in the name of putting the (colonial) past securely to rest” (75). However, he asserts that his anti-historicist approach ends up producing an “ahistorical mythology in which colonial domination is inaugurated by the exclusion of a Real that the analysis names ‘race,’ and in which race exists ‘in’ history only as that which punctures and ruptures the sequence of historical time” (75). Moreover, Forter is right when he also states that Durrant’s approach to colonial trauma provides a “dubious causality” that places racism as a primary endeavour behind colonialism, while “the racialization of dominion” is only a result of “colonial capitalism’s expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (75). For her part, Nancy Van Styvendale in “The Trans/Historicity of Trauma”, points out the way in which Durrant’s approach conceives “history” as a unique “territory” of “the European subject” (215). Moreover, she questions the way in which Durrant places the “forgetting” of the humanity of the colonised other, which for him lies at the heart of colonial trauma, “outside of history,” thus rendering obsolete any historicist approach to recover or represent such traumas (215). Rather, Van Styvendale argues that “the challenge is to redefine the historicity of (post)colonial trauma as something other

than its singular location in time and space" (215). This, redefinition, she explains, would do away with the anti-historicist approach to colonial trauma, while at the same time complicating "any easy assumption of the historical location of trauma" that would convey the idea that "the wounds of colonization were [only] inflicted in the past" (216, 217). Van Styvendale proposes to think of traumas related to colonialism in Native American texts and contexts as "trans/historical" which, she stresses, does not entail that such traumas transcend historicity, thus being located *outside* history; instead, Van Styvendale asserts, a focus should be put "on the way in which the prefix 'trans' attaches to the historicity of trauma a sense of moving across or through–rather than beyond–history" (218).

The trans/historicity of trauma differs from the collective and cross-generational trauma models within Holocaust studies that later became the foundation of the American Indian historical trauma concept discussed above. Indeed, to demonstrate this, Van Styvendale turns to Dori Laub's concept of the "second holocaust" delineated in "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening" (1992). She explains that Laub's analysis constructs the holocaust as a historically "bounded event" whose trauma is "ongoing in psychic life" of children of Holocaust survivors rather than in their "material circumstance" (219). Van Styvendale writes: "trauma in the above case study might possess the present, but it is possessed or owned by the past; indeed, it is the parent's trauma that returns" to the children (220). By contrast, because colonisation is an ongoing reality for Indigenous peoples of North America, she explains, its trauma "is present not only in its psychic return but also in its continuation in everyday, material condition" (220). Thus, Van Styvendale asserts that not only does the trans/historicity of trauma attend to how a traumatic past affects the present, it also captures a continuation of trauma in the present with "its own materiality, its own conditions of production, its own traumatic effects" (220). Indeed, in her analysis of *Indian Killer* (1996) by Spokane–Coeur d'Alene novelist Shermane Alexie and *Slash* (1985) by Okanagan author Jeanette Armstrong, Van Styvendale argues that the trauma of dislocation and removal of the protagonists is trans/historical because they "bear witness to a trauma-specifically, the trauma of dislocation and rootlessness that exceeds their individual experiences of this wound; in their respective narratives, these characters testify to a collective, intergenerational trauma that exceeds-yet informs-its unique articulations" (213).

Through her trans/historical approach to colonial traumas in Native American texts and contexts, Van Styvendale thus offers a critical vocabulary that can grasp the ongoing colonial oppression that Indigenous peoples endured and continue to endure in the settler-colonial states that encase them.

Van Styvendale's trans/historical approach has informed several studies addressing colonial traumas in Indigenous texts and contexts (Angel 2012, Carpenter 2012, Ben-Zvi 2012, Coulombe 2014, Martínez-Falquina 2015, Seran 2015, Suhr-Sytsma 2016, Laminack 2017, Calcaterra 2019). While not grounding her study in the scholarship that attends to the particularities of settler-colonialism (the same applies to those authors that rely on her approach in their works), Van Styvendale's trans/historical concept indirectly echoes Wolfe's conceptualisation of settler-colonialism not as an event or events, but rather as a structure sustained through a project of elimination and replacement of Indigenous peoples on their lands (*Settler Colonialism* 163). Wolfe argues that the eliminatory logic of this project manifests through "a range of historical practices that might otherwise appear distinct—invasion is a structure not an event" (163). Indeed, as thoroughly delineated in the introduction to this thesis, the settler-colonial practices that are geared toward eliminating and replacing Indigenous peoples on their lands in North America and Australia are as different as the historical circumstances to which they are adapted, starting with the genocidal practices of mass murder and removal during the frontier expansion, to the various post-frontier policies of assimilation and urbanisation, and finally to the contemporary liberal politics of recognition. In addition, since the trans/historicity of trauma suggests a historical multiplicity, accumulation, and proliferation through different spatio-temporal and material realities, it has the potential to aesthetically register historical trauma as a critical discourse which, as explained above, grounds the aspects of historical trauma in Indigenous contexts (colonial injury, collective experience, cumulative effect, cross-generational impacts) within the contemporary settler-colonial structures that continue to produce and facilitate such traumas.

2. Dispossession as Prologues

There There by Tommy Orange is a multi-generational novel built around the narrative perspectives of twelve different yet interrelated Native American characters, most of whom are of Cheyenne descent. The novel's plot takes place sometime before the organisation of a powwow in Oakland, where all the main characters meet. Among the main characters of the novel is Tony Loneman, who suffers from a foetal alcohol syndrome bequeathed to him by his imprisoned mother. Tony descends into drug dealing and violence, leading to his involvement along with Octavio Gomez in a plan to steal the dance prize money in the Oakland powwow. Dene Oxedene sets a booth at the powwow to collect stories of Oakland Native Americans for a documentary film that his uncle started before dying from alcoholism. Native American Literature graduate Edwin Black secures an internship at the Indian Centre and joins the powwow committee while battling against his internet addiction and striving to meet his Cheyenne father, Harvey. Jacquie Red Feather is ten days sober when she lands in Albuquerque for the Substance Abuse conference. At the conference, Jacquie reconnects with Harvey, who, during the 1970s Alcatraz occupation, assaulted her and got her pregnant with a girl she gave up for adoption. Jacquie and Harvey travel together to the Oakland powwow, where they meet Harvey's son Edwin and a committee member named Blue, who also happens to be their adopted-at-birth daughter. Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield is Jacquie's half-sister and carer of her three grandchildren. The robbery goes wrong at the Big Oakland Powwow, and violence breaks out, resulting in the wounding and killing of many people during an exchange of bullets between the robbery accomplices.

There There's characters and their individual narratives account for the experience of second and third-generation urban Natives living in present-day Oakland, California. In the non-fiction essay that opens his novel, Orange states that "[u]rban Indians were the generation born in the city" (Orange 11). While there have always been Native Americans living in urban centres in the US, the post-World War II period has witnessed a deliberate endeavour from the US government to dissolve tribal sovereignty with the passing of the 1953 Termination policy that aimed at "legally" transforming Native Americans into taxpaying American citizens. As part of the Termination policy, several Relocation programmes were launched between the 1950s and 1960s, encouraging Native Americans living on reservations or nearby to move to urban centres with the

promise of housing and employment opportunities. In her introduction to *Indigenous Cities* (2017), Laura M. Furlan explains that those who were willingly or forcibly relocated usually "found themselves in unstable positions as day laborers, living in lower-class neighborhoods, often in tenement buildings, in a sense, becoming a part of the urban poor" (15). She writes: "During the span of the three decades of relocation, American cities were racially segregated and economically and environmentally challenged. Relocated Indians moved into the ghettos, where they struggled to gain wage labor and satisfactory housing" (16). Commenting on the role of urbanisation within the US settler-colonial structure, Wolfe explains that by the end of the frontier expansion in the US, the settler-state's policies of dispossession veered towards "the containment of Indian groups within Euroamerican society" through a range of strategies "whose common intention was the destruction of heterodox forms of Indian grouphood" ("Settler Colonialism" 400). As such, he argues that the post-World War II policies of Termination and Relocation that were "held out as liberating individual Indians from the thralldom of the tribe," reinforced these destructive strategies (400). As such, the policies of Termination and Relocation that led to the increase of Native Americans in US urban centres are to be understood as historically-adapted strategies of dispossession and elimination mobilised by the settler-state to assimilate and absorb Native Americans established on reservations into mainstream US society, thus dismantling their tribal structures and clearing the way into the lands on which these reservations are set.

Kim Scott's *Taboo* is a fictional work grounded on the 1880 Cocanarup/Kukenarup massacre perpetrated by white settlers against the Noongar people of Ravensthorpe (southwest Australia) after a settler named John Dunn is killed for attacking and raping a fourteen-year-old Aboriginal girl.[16] The story behind this Frontier massacre informs Scott's work, which is set in contemporary post-Native Title Australia, as the premise of the novel involves a nineteenth-century massacre perpetrated against the Wirlomin Noongar after one of the settlers is killed for raping a thirteen-year-old Aboriginal girl. There are three

[16] Kim Scott provides more details about the Kukenarup Massacre in the novel. For more details see Kim Scott. "Afterword." *Taboo*. Picador, 2017, pp. 284–7. Also, see "Season 8 Episode 2 Kukenarup Memorial" by Noongar Dandjoo, uploaded to YouTube on 22 February 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqvBLp16Qus&ab_channel=NoongarDandjoo

key locations around which most of the events of the novel take place, each of which has a real-life equivalent put here between brackets: The city of King George Town (Albany), the town of Hopetown (Hopetoun), the town of Kepalup (Ravensthorpe), and Kokanarup (Kukenarup).[17] *Taboo* is told mainly from an unnamed narrator's third-person point of view. It is centred around the descendants of the people killed in this massacre and tells the story of their travel to their ancestral lands in order to hold a culture camp in Hopetown's caravan park. Moreover, for the very first time since the massacre, the Wirlomin Noongar group are to return to Kepalup for a Peace Park opening initiated by the late wife of Dan Horton, a direct descendant of the massacre's perpetrators. Both Dan and his wife want to see the concretisation of the Peace Park as an act of commemoration and reconciliation. Among the Wirlomin Noongar characters of the novel is the main protagonist, sixteen-year-old Tilly Coolman, who has been fostered by Dan and his wife, along with their son Doug, until she was returned to her birth mother, Ellen. Being of white settler descent, Ellen only informs Tilly about her imprisoned Aboriginal father, Jim Coolman, when the latter asks to see his daughters after discovering that he is dying of an illness. Jim Coolman urges Tilly to reconnect with her Wirlomin Noongar relatives and asks her to join them for the culture camp in Hopetown caravan park. As the commemoration of the Peace Park approaches, Dan Horton comes up with the idea to give the Kokanarup farm where the massacre took place to Tilly and his son Doug which, for him, constitutes a genuine act of reconciliation between the descendants of the Wirlomin Noongar and settlers. However, he finds this plan hindered by the reality of Doug's multiple sexual assaults on Tilly sometime before the novel's events take place.

Being grounded on a frontier massacre (both the real and the fictional) that occurred during the Australian frontier wars (1788– early-twentieth century), *Taboo* provides an account of the settler-logic of elimination and dispossession of the Noongar people that is manifested through frontier homicide. Indeed, most of the Wirlomin Noongar characters in *Taboo* live in the suburbs of the urban city

[17] Tony Hughes-d'Aeth. "Kim Scott's *Taboo* and the Extimacy of Massacre." *Journal of Australian Studies*, 2021, pp. 165–80.

of King George Town and not on their traditional land in Kepalup, which their surviving ancestors left after the massacre. As a result of this, their descendants cannot claim their lands under the post-Mabo Native Title Act, for one of its requirements is for Aboriginal peoples to prove their ongoing connection to the land they wish to claim since the late-eighteenth century when the British crown claimed sovereignty over what is now Australia. Such continuous connection proves challenging for Aboriginal peoples, given the increased urban and agricultural exploitation of lands by the settler-state, coupled with the violent histories of frontier wars and massacres, forced removal through assimilation policies, and the increased urbanisation of Aboriginal peoples in the mid-twentieth century. In the introduction to *Mabo's Cultural Legacy* (2021), Editors Geoff Rodoreda and Eva Bischoff explain that in terms of land repatriation, the Mabo decision and its resulting native title have proven to be of little benefit to the majority of Indigenous peoples in Australia, for most of them have been "dispossessed of their traditional lands or their native title rights have been putatively extinguished by land grants to settlers" (2). Seen from this angle, it is therefore easy to see how the Mabo-based native title fits within those contemporary liberal politics of recognition adopted by settler-colonial states towards Indigenous peoples, which, as argued in the introduction to the thesis, are shaped by and for the interests of the settler-state and society.

While it is true that Orange's *There There* and Scott's *Taboo* emanate from different Indigenous literary traditions and address distinct settler-colonial experiences, the plots of both novels are anchored within settler-colonial structures of dispossession and elimination of Indigenous peoples. Indeed, Wolfe argues that strategies of termination, relocation, and even frontier homicide are all characteristic of settler-colonialism's logic of elimination that produces and reinforces Indigenous peoples' dispossession ("Settler Colonialism" 388). He explains that attending to these strategies makes it possible to consider settler-colonialism's invasion not as an event but as a structure whose history "moves on from the era of frontier homicide" (402). As such, he asserts that narrating a history of settler-colonialism requires delineating, in a non-hierarchical procedure, "the continuities, discontinuities, adjustments, and departures whereby a logic that initially informed frontier killing transmutes into different modalities, discourses and institutional formations as it undergirds the historical development

and complexification of settler society" (402). Following Wolfe's line of reasoning, an analysis that aims at exploring the representation of the structural and material dimensions of colonial traumas in contemporary Indigenous novels such as *Taboo* and *There There* needs to attend to how such traumas are imbedded within the settler-colonial histories and structures of dispossession endured by Indigenous peoples insofar as they not only inform and affect their contemporary experiences of colonial modernity but also ground their modes and strategies of resistance in post-Termination era USA, and post-Native Title Australia. Indeed, as argued by Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Indigenous peoples' colonial experiences trap them "in the project of modernity. […] It means that there is unfinished business, that we are still being colonized (and know it), and that we are still searching for justice" (81). Since, as delineated above, settler-colonial dispossession of Indigenous peoples in North America and Australia is foundational to global capitalist modernity, this analysis draws on insights of the WReC contributors' theory of world-literature as corresponding to the capitalist-world system where they argue that literary texts that emanate from different peripheries and semi-peripheries in the capitalist world-system share similarities in terms of themes, plots, and subjects in the ways in which they register the violence of capitalism and the unevenness of modernity that it entails (51). The following sections thus explore the narrative registers and aesthetic techniques employed by Orange and Scott in their respective novels in order to demonstrate how the political and socio-economic oppression that characterises the traumatic experiences of colonial modernity by the Indigenous communities represented in their works needs to be understood as being indissociable from the broader settler-colonial histories of dispossession endured by these Indigenous peoples. Indeed, in the contemporary setting depicted in *There There* and *Taboo*, the characters face urban problems as they are, in one way or another, trapped within traumatic experiences of poverty, discrimination, unemployment, family dissolution, as well as violence and substance abuse. While both novels address these personal and social issues, they do so by embedding them within the overarching settler-colonial structure of land dispossession. As will be demonstrated in the coming sections, this is achieved through an explicit thematic representation and the novels' formal and stylistic features, whereby both authors use realist narrative modes undermined and

subverted by the mobilisation of a catalogue of “irrealist” aesthetics and narrative registers.

2.1. Allegories of Dispossession: Trauma and Urban Modernities in *There There*

In *There There*, the final chapter of the novel’s third part, titled “Return”, presents the narrative of Thomas Frank, who appears to be addressing the readers directly through the use of the second-person narrative point of view. Thomas struggles with substance abuse which led to his dismissal from his job as a janitor in the Indian Center. Thomas started drinking in his twenties to calm the irritation and the itching caused by what he calls his “skin problems”, which, as he states later, is what “[t]he doctors wanted to call […] eczema” (Orange 217). Nevertheless, before he names this disease and then describes some of its physical symptoms, one would have thought that Thomas is speaking about his skin and its colour to refer to his Cheyenne identity. This is succinctly expressed in the passage where he explains the reason for his dismissal from his job. Thomas declares: “How you ended up getting fired was related to your drinking, which was related to your skin problems, which was related to your father, which was related to *history*” (217, emphasis added). Elaborating on what he means by history, Thomas states that it is “[t]he one story you were sure to hear from your dad, […] was that your people, Cheyenne people, on November 29, 1864, were massacred at Sand Creek. He told you and your sisters that story more than any other story he could muster” (217). In this cause-and-effect procession, Thomas unequivocally connects the oppressive character of his current socio-economic environment to the Sand Creek massacre of 1864. Indeed, during the American Indian Wars, the US Army, under the command of Colonel John Chivington, massacred the Cheyenne and Arapaho people to gain control of the lands of the Great Plains of eastern Colorado as settler miners started moving to the region in search of gold in the Rocky Mountains. The final section of this chapter thus presents a thorough discussion of the relevance of the 1864 Sand Creek massacre in Orange’s contemporary novel.

The novel’s first part, titled “Remain,” presents the narrative of Tony Loneman when he first begins to notice how his face is distorted by fetal alcohol

syndrome. The “Drome,” as he calls it, weighs on him both physically and psychologically as he battles with feelings of insecurity and worthlessness that trap him in a cycle of violence and substance abuse. Once again, the author aesthetically grounds Tony Loneman’s suffering within the US settler-colonial history of oppression and dispossession of Indigenous peoples, apparent when Tony states that “[t]he Drome is my mom and why she drank, it’s the way *history* lands on a face” (16, emphasis added). Indeed, the sentence that opens Tony’s narrative reads, “[t]he Drome first came to me in the mirror when I was six” (15). Here, Tony presents the “Drome” as a spectre that haunts him since, as he puts it, “the day I found it there on the TV, staring back at me like a fucking villain” (16). Subsequently, this spectralisation becomes the register Tony uses when he describes himself, as if the “Drome” has possessed him entirely. He declares: That’s how looking like a monster works out for me. The Drome. And when I stand up, when I stand up real fucking tall like I can, nobody’ll fuck with me. Everybody runs like they seen a ghost. Maybe I am a ghost” (19). In “Is There an Indigenous Gothic?” (2013), Michelle Burnham notes that Indigenous authors that experiment with the Gothic tend to both adopt and subvert its conventional elements (228). In some instances, she explains, these texts depict Indigenous protagonists “who more often experience than cause fear and terror, [and] who are haunted by and driven to expel the destructive mechanisms and results of US imperialism and capitalism” (228). In other instances, Indigenous characters may be depicted through Gothic conventions while still presenting a critique of “dominant Western culture” (229). In this case, Burnham writes, “[t]he villainous objects […] take on such forms as consumer capitalism, acquisitive Hyper individualism, or historical amnesia” (229). In the novel, the use of aspects ingrained within the western Gothic reflects these two forms of subversions which Burnham attributes to the Native American novels that intervene within this genre insofar as Tony Loneman is both haunted by the “Drome” and also comes to embody these same haunting qualities. Moreover, in their work, the WReC contributors explain that the recourse to irrealist vocabulary such as the Gothic and phantasmagoria in (semi-)peripheral literary texts can be read as registering the “compound instability of life” in the (semi-)peripheries due to the socio-economic experience of capitalist modernity under the sign of combined and uneven development (75–77). In *There There*, the gothicisation of Tony Loneman

in the passages that describe the effects of his mother's alcohol consumption during her pregnancy can thus be read as a deliberate choice by the author to aesthetically register one of the destructive aspects that characterise the colonial modernity imposed on urban Natives by the settler-state, with all the socio-economic oppression and marginalisation this entails.

In (semi-)peripheral literary texts, the WReC contributors explain, the stylistic registration of the incommensurabilities attendant on combined and uneven development is achieved through an approximation of "discordant discourses and unrelated narrative registers moving between the mundane and the fantastic, the recognisable and the improbable, the legible and the oneiric, the worldly and the mystical" (95). This tendency can be noted in *There There,* wherein the indissociable character of the traumatic modernity endured by the urban Natives and the US settler-colonial histories and structures of land removal and dispossession is stylistically captured through the injection and juxtaposition of diverse realist and irrealist narrative registers and different spatio-temporal realities. This is reflected primarily in the chapters that tackle the stories of Dene Oxendene, Jacquie Red Feather, Edwin Black, and Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield. As mentioned earlier, Dene Oxendene gets involved in the Oakland powwow in order to carry on his late uncle's project of filming and recording stories of different urban Natives who live in Oakland. Indeed, this echoes Tommy Orange's own structure for the novel: Dene's narrative opens while he is on his way to present his project to a funding panel so that he can pay the participants in his documentary film. Through a series of flashbacks, Dene recalls his uncle's passion for the film industry; notably, he remembers his uncle telling him about a science fiction screenplay that he is writing. He states:

> It'll be in the near future. I'm gonna have an alien technology colonize America. We'll think we made it up. Like it's ours. Over time we'll merge with the technology, we'll become like androids, and we'll lose the ability to recognize each other. The way we used to look. Our old ways. […] Then I'm gonna have a half-breed hero rise up, inspire what's left of the humans to move back to nature. Get away from technology, get our old way of life back. Become human again like we used to be. […] The alien colonizers

> win, of course. We'll only think we won by getting back to nature, back to the Stone Age. (Orange 31)

The incorporation and metaphorisation of a science fiction narrative in this passage are not innocuous. By taking a closer look at the events described in this part of the uncle's scenario, one can perceive, in the first sentence, a parallel between the alien invasion and the western colonisation endured by Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. Nevertheless, the description of a kind of fusion between the alien technology and humans in such a way that they end up not recognising each other can precisely be read as a reflection on the US settler-state's assimilative project of urbanising and diluting Indigenous peoples within the settler society that, as explained earlier, is one the many strategies of dispossession adopted by the settler-state in order to encroach further on reservation lands.

Jacquie Red Feather's narrative also reflects on the correlation between the socio-economic oppression and marginalisation that characterise urban Natives' traumatic experiences of modernity and the settler-colonial histories of dispossession endured by Indigenous peoples. However, it does so through the incorporation of Cheyenne storytelling of the trickster spider "Veho." Jacquie Red Feather is in Albuquerque to attend a conference organised by "Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration" under the theme of "Keeping Them form Harm" (98). The conference is meant to address the increasing suicide rate among Native youth. Thirteen years ago, Jacquie's own daughter, Jamie, battled with heroin addiction and committed suicide by shooting herself between the eyes. In her hotel room, Jacquie remembers when she was called to identify the body: what she sees first is the hole left by the bullet between Jamie's eyes, like "an empty third-eye socket", reminding her of the story her mother used to tell her about the trickster spider called Veho who "was stealing eyes to see better" (106). In this story, Veho is "the white man who came and made the old world watch with his eyes. Look. See here, the way it's gonna be is, first you're gonna give me all your land, then your attention" until "the needle, the bottle, or the pipe is the only thing in sight that makes any sense (106). In this passage, Jacquie inscribes her daughter's drug addiction and suicide within the continuity of settler-colonial violence against Indigenous peoples, symbolised here by the hole

between her daughter's eyes that looks like an empty eye socket left after she falls prey to Veho. Similarly, Edwin Black's narrative includes a story of invasion and dispossession that is recounted through a mundane and colloquial narrative register. Indeed, while on his way to the powwow with Blue, Jacquie's adopted-at-birth daughter, he tells her about a story he is writing which involves a Native person named Phil who sees the apartment bequeathed to him by his grandfather taken over by a white "friend" John who, as the days pass, invites other white people over (244). John gives a blanket to Phil that makes him sick and bedridden for weeks, and when he finally comes out, he finds that his apartment has been transformed into "some kind of start-up" (245). When he complains, John produces a gun and paperwork that supposedly Phil had signed and subsequently moves him to the apartment closet: "[s]uddenly feeling very tired, and hungry, Phil retreats to his under-the-stairs closet-room" (245). While Edwin Black's story is set in an urban setting and is characterised by a rather mundane narrative style, it carries a strong political statement offering a modern take on the histories and processes of land dispossession—invasion, diseases, violence, removal, tricky treaties, and confinement—adopted by the US settler-state against Indigenous peoples

Finally, Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield's narrative revisits a significant historical event that paved the way for a new phase of Indigenous activism in the US settler-colonial context, the Occupation of Alcatraz Island (1969–1971) by a Native American protest group called the "Indians of all Tribes" (IOAT). There, Opal's teddy bear, Teddy Two Shoes, is anthropomorphised and endowed with the capacity to speak in order to call to attention how settler-colonial states deal with their genocidal histories, particularly those related to the period of frontier expansion, making them seem as "one big heroic adventure across an empty forest" (51). Addressing Opal, Teddy Two Shoes explains how the name "Teddy Bear" is related to Theodore Roosevelt, who refuses to shoot an old bear he finds in the forest during a bear hunting session. Following this story, newspapers publish a comic about it, portraying Roosevelt as a merciful nature lover. After this incident, stuffed bears are made and called "Teddy's bear," which eventually morphs into "teddy bears" (51). However, he states that the newspaper reported only half of the story without revealing that, instead of shooting the bear, Mr Roosevelt "slit that old bear's throat. It's that kind of mercy they don't want you to

know about" (51). Then, Teddy Two Shoes draws a parallel between what happened to the bears and the Native peoples during the frontier expansion, explaining to Opal that she has to know about the history of her people because "[h]ow you got to be here [Alcatraz Island], that's all based on what people done to get you here. Us bears, you Indians, we been through a lot. They tried to kill us" (51). He declares: "That big stick is the lie about mercy. Speak softly and carry a big stick, that's what he said about foreign policy. That's what they used on us, bears and Indians both. Foreigners on our own *land*. And with their big sticks they marched us so far west we almost disappeared" (52, emphasis added). In the parallel drawn by Teddy Two Shoes between bears and Native peoples, several important ideas emerge. First, it reflects on the way in which both were targeted by the settler-colonial logic of elimination insofar as they were on the lands coveted by the US settler-state during the frontier expansion. Second, by insisting that these histories of elimination and dispossession are indissociable from their presence on Alcatraz Island, Teddy Two Shoes attends to the entangled relationship between the violence of these histories and the modernity lived by the Indigenous peoples in the settler-colonial states that encase them. Finally, the use of a speaking teddy bear in the above passages echoes the WReC contributors' assertion that among the dialectical images that register the essence of modernity under the sign of combined and development in (semi-)peripheral literary texts is the presence of "discrepant encounters, alienation effects, surreal cross-linkages, unidentified freakish objects, unlikely likenesses across barriers of language, period, territory" (17). Indeed, through the anthropomorphism of Teddy Two Shoes, the novel demonstrates that just as the bear killed by Theodore Roosevelt was commodified and transformed into a teddy bear to be sold and bought, so too were Native peoples killed and commodified in hyperreal images that appear "on flags, jerseys, and coins" (Orange 7).

2.2. Dispossession and Encasement: Trauma and Carceral Modernities in *Taboo*

Throughout *Taboo*, Kim Scott explicitly reflects on the intrinsic relationship between the trauma of dispossession of the Wirlomin Noongar people from their lands in Kepalup after the massacre and the traumatic character of colonial modernity lived by their descendants in contemporary Australia. As discussed in

the introduction to this chapter, the WReC contributors explain that the combined and uneven dispersal of modernity within the capitalist world-system is also experienced in core capitalist countries, for they also comprise peripheries and semi-peripheries where the development entailed by capitalist modernisation can be lived in the form of maldevelopment, destructive development, and dependent development due to racial, ethnic, and regional marginalisation. In these contexts, they argue, one of the dialectical images of modernity in an economic logic of combined and uneven development is reflected through "the fabric of built space[s]" of, for example, interstitial townships (148). In Scott's novel, the peripheralisation and encasement of the Wirlomin Noongar characters within the settler-colonial state of Australia are aesthetically registered through the author's use of irony and sarcasm in the description of architectural aspects of the spaces occupied by the Aboriginal characters both in the urban core of King Geroge Town and its suburbs where most of them live as, in a way or another, carceral spaces.

Throughout *Taboo*, it seems that the only space occupied by the Aboriginal characters in the King Geroge Town is the local prison that can be considered a geographical and socio-economic periphery since it entails a sort of enclave within the urban city where Aboriginal characters such as Jim Coolman and his cousin Gerald are incarcerated for substance abuse and violence (Scott, *Taboo* 16, 154). However, the prison's carceral character seems to be only internally apparent, for "[f]rom the outside [it] could have been a factory, perhaps even a stadium. The barbed wire and the high fences might have held something valuable; been there to keep people out, not in" (161). In contrast, the suburb of Flinders where the Wirlomin Noongar characters live internally is described as a small, poorly maintained urban town where the only amenities that are still active are those related to food supplies such as supermarkets, while cultural and entertainment facilities such as the "Aboriginal Centre" are either neglected or wholly deserted (12–19). Nevertheless, while King George Town's prison does not seem to be a carceral space from the exterior, Flinders' external boundaries ironically embody the incarceration quality that King George Town's prison lacks. Indeed, Flinders is presented as being surrounded by invisible carceral walls, conveyed in the novel through the lack of transportation in and out of the suburb, such that one of the most extended paragraphs that describes this suburb reads:

“Flinders was one of those suburbs *it’s hard to leave*” (68, emphasis added). In fact, in this passage, the lack of transportation in and out of Flinders (and other suburbs) appears to be intentional, thus epitomising the settler-state’s endeavour to confine Aboriginal peoples within the peripheral interstices of Australia.

In addition, the mobilisation of the aesthetics of irony and sarcasm in the registration of the form of “development” entailed by the settler-state’s capitalist modernisation experienced by the Wirlomin Noongar characters of the novel is inscribed within the built fabric of the houses in Flinders. Indeed, one of the first characters introduced in *Taboo* is Gerald, Tilly Coolman’s uncle, who has just spent a few weeks in the local prison of King George Town. From “the top of the main street” of King Geroge Town, Gerald walked for one hour to reach the suburb of Flinders, and “[t]he first place he went was Aunty Margie’s” which is described as an “asbestos house that weeds had punched through. Fibro, people said now, not asbestos. Fibro and weatherboard” (12–13). Note the repetition of “asbestos” and “fibro” that refer to the same construction material. However, here there is a kind of sarcastic insistence on using “fibro” as a politically correct term that, in a way, attempts to avoid the negative connotation associated with “asbestos,” considering its cancerogenic effects. Standing in contrast to Aunty Margie’s house are the newly built houses Gerald notices on the driveway made of “fresh brick and tile with carports” (17). At first glance, one might assume a turnabout in the descriptive register used by the unnamed narrator, wherein they abandon their sarcastic tone for a more genuine one, for the bricked houses could indeed be understood as a sign of development and improvement in comparison to those made of asbestos. Yet, the rest of this sentence quickly undermines any such assumption as it reads, “two or three [houses] crammed where there’d been just one” (17). The narrator goes on with further sarcastic praise of this “development”; they declare: “People had good houses now. All sorts of help to get ahead, to get to where you could scratch and struggle with the white people. Join the assimilationists” (17). Indeed, this passage satirises a kind of assimilation and urbanisation that allows the Aboriginal community to rise just enough to brush the ranks of other struggling white settlers. Surprisingly, there is a paucity of research regarding the use of irony, sarcasm, and satire as aesthetic devices in Aboriginal literature. Yet, in “Humor in Contemporary Aboriginal Adult Fiction” (2013), Paula Anca Farca argues that Aboriginal writers employ humour, irony,

parody, and sarcasm as a way “to respond to gender, racial, and ethnic stereotypes” endured by Aboriginal peoples in Australia in order to offer a “renewed understanding of the physical and psychological damage that these stereotypes can cause” (137). In the above passages from *Taboo*, however, irony and sarcasm are not used in a perspective of critiquing and/or correcting stereotypical representations of Aboriginal peoples and culture. Instead, the critical charge embodied within these aesthetic techniques is entirely directed towards the aspects of urban modernity experienced by the Wilomin Noongar characters of the novel.

As explained above, *Taboo* weaves into the narrative the traumatic history of Tilly’s sequestration and rape by her foster bother Doug sometime before the culture camp at Hopetown caravan park. Yet, while Tilly is the main protagonist of the novel, her traumatic history does not feature prominently in the novel. Indeed, of the novel’s nineteen chapters, only a chapter and a half are exclusively dedicated to it, in addition to a couple of flashbacks sporadically spread throughout the chapters that make up the first part of the novel. Commenting on this aspect in a review titled “In Taboo, Kim Scott Revisits Australia's History of Conflict” (2017), Rohan Wilson makes a similar point as he considers that Scott’s handling of “Tilly’s traumatic past is perhaps the weakest element of the novel” which he reads as a metaphor or “an image with a notable history in the representations of Aboriginality” (para. 15). Yet, he writes: “As an organising metaphor, I don’t think it has the revelatory power that Scott hopes. Rather, it renders Doug down to cardboard-villain status and undermines the salient point the novel wants to make about white black relations” (para. 15). For his part, Tony Hughes-d’Aeth, in “Kim Scott’s *Taboo* and the Extimacy of Massacre” (2021), reads Tilly’s trauma of rape as being intertwined with the traumatic history of the Wirlomin Noongar massacre and dispossession in a way that gives the Kokanarup massacre an “extimate quality” insofar as it “describe[s] the intimate exterior of psychic reality” that “transects the formal distinctions between public and private that organise social life” (166). He writes: “It seems that these events must be separate, or at best just incidentally connected, but what makes the novel both scandalous and profound is the way in which they turn out to be so intimately joined that Tilly cannot move forward in respect of one without being faced with the other” (166). Of the two readings, Hughes-d’Aeth’s interpretation seems more

interesting to explore, for it is true that Tilly's rape echoes the Kokanarup Massacre that, as noted previously, is premised on the rape of an Aboriginal girl, a distant ancestor of Tilly, by a white settler, a distant ancestor of Doug. Nevertheless, Hughes-d'Aeth's psycho-social reading of this intertwining risks creating a hierarchy of importance between the personal traumatic history of Tilly and the collective traumatic history of the Kokanarup massacre, such that one inevitably ends up serving as a stage through which the other is revealed and explored. However, and more importantly for the discussion in this chapter, a second limitation of Hughes-d'Aeth's psycho-social reading lies in the way in which it leaves the material significance of this intertwining unexplored.

Indeed, the story of Tilly's sequestration and rape fills many gaps in the narrative, as it reveals that Doug is doing "community service" by working as a parole officer for the prison. Yet, it turns out that he is the drug supplier of many of the Aboriginal characters in King George Town's prison, including Tilly's own father, for as Gerald puts it, "Doug likes that power over people" (Scott, *Taboo* 186). Doug meets Tilly when she visits her father in prison, accompanied by her aunt, Cheryl Coolman, who is herself under the influence of Doug and his drugs. Gradually, Tilly is introduced to Doug and Cheryl's hedonistic lifestyle and becomes herself prey to Doug and his drugs, for he convinces her to "'[t]hink of it like medicine, but you're not sick. So it's a bonus'" (165). After the death of her mother (with Doug's involvement), Tilly finds herself living permanently in Doug's house, with "TV, DVDs, music. Magazines and books. He left medicine—her bonus—and the implements she preferred" (182). Yet, after some time, she realises that she is imprisoned inside Doug's house: the front is reinforced with "[s]ecurity screens and sliding metal doors" and there was "certainly no exit via the rear of the house with those dogs waiting for her" (182). Doug's house thus becomes another space within King George Town where an Aboriginal character is internally incarcerated. At first, Tilly does not protest her situation, "[b]ecause what difference did it make to be locked up anyway? She was safe. And once she relaxed, what did it matter if she was locked up? Good enough for her father, good enough for her" (182). Nevertheless, when she finally does protest, her real ordeal begins:

> When she awoke she was naked but for the underpants […]. She had a collar around *her neck*. […] [Doug] pulled on the leach [and] pointed to a bowl of dried dog biscuits on the floor. […] She knew what he wanted. She ate, kneeling. […] Remembered it later; amazed, disgusted, resigned to it happening again. […] In the evenings he sometimes chained her up with the dogs. […] The house had a glass sliding door between two of its main rooms. Tilly walked into that glass and staggered back with her hand to her head. She approached it again, both hands out in front of her, feeling the glass. She roamed the house grinding her teeth, bumping into doorframes, lashing out in frustration. (183–4)

As indicated earlier, Tilly and Doug are each descendant of the Wirlomin Noongar people massacred at Kokanarup and the white settlers who perpetrated this massacre. Thus, it becomes evident that the character of Tilly, her dependence on Doug and his drugs, as well as the sequestration, rape, and dehumanisation that Doug subjects her to, are synecdochic of a larger collective traumatic history. Indeed, this is demonstrated in a scene involving Tilly and the Aboriginal elder Nita who, at Hopetown's caravan Park, "took her hand away [from Tilly's hand] and gestured over her shoulder at the camp. "'We're a mess. I don't know…' she hesitated" (83). At this point, Tilly becomes "a *tiny self*. A doll within *many layers*. She felt herself huddled in her own filth, and the filth of others. *A receptacle of theirs*…" (83, emphasis added). Tilly's trauma of rape is thus embedded within that of her extended community; she becomes an inconsequential "doll" stuffed among a bigger pile of other dolls that are her people. Not only is she swamped by her own "filth," but also by the "filth" of others, such that she ultimately becomes its "receptacle," the author declares, its very container. Analysed from a macrocosmic level, the above passages can be read as a condensation that exposes the settler-colonial structures of oppression endured by Indigenous peoples in Australia. Indeed, Doug's house echoes the whole settler-colonial state of Australia and its dispossession and encasement of Indigenous peoples, insofar as the house is not only built on stolen lands but also becomes a sort of prison for Tilly. In addition, Tilly's normalisation of her confinement and her dependence on Doug reflects the settler-state's endeavour to normalise its existence and territorial sovereignty by imposing or bestowing patterns of recognition that produce and perpetuate Indigenous peoples' socio-economic

dependence on the settler-state. Tilly's character, therefore, epitomises the novel's effort to present the traumatic modernity endured by the novel's Wirlomin Noongar characters as being indissociable from the larger settler-colonial structure of dispossession.

3. Across Time, Across Space: The Trans/Historicity of Structural Genocides

Despite the contemporaneity of the events in their novels, Tommy Orange and Kim Scott seem to agree on the need to go back in their respective stories in order to anchor their plots in one of the massacres that the settler-colonial states of the US and Australia perpetrated against their respective peoples during the frontier wars of expansion in the nineteenth century. This may be attributed to the authors' efforts to capture the depth of the collective trauma that these massacres engendered among their respective communities and whose impact continues to haunt their present collective memory. Indeed, in a section titled "Massacre as Prologue" in the nonfiction essay that opens *There There*, Orange writes: "Some of us grew up with stories about massacres. Stories about what happened to our people not so long ago. How we came out of it" (8). One of these massacres occurred at Sand Creek when "[v]olunteer militia under Colonel John Chivington came to kill us […]. They did more than kill us. They tore us up. Mutilated us. […] They tore unborn babies out of bellies, took what we intended to be, our children before they were children, babies before they were babies, they ripped them out of our bellies. They broke soft baby heads against trees" (8). Indeed, the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre perpetrated by the United States Army under the command of Colonel John Chivington against the Cheyenne and Arapaho peoples in the Colorado Territory occurred within the context of the Native American Wars and was primarily motivated by a desire to control the gold resources of Colorado's Rocky Mountains. It is worth noting that, even though Orange is speaking about a massacre that took place in 1864—more than a century and a half ago—he states that it happened "*not so long ago*" (8, emphasis added). By insisting that these massacres are not that far back in time, Orange highlights the extent to which these stories continue to shape the collective memory of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people in contemporary times. In addition, Orange inscribes this idea even within the novel's structure by aesthetically and

formally linking these massacres to the Oakland powwow shooting that occurs at the end of his novel. Indeed, in a passage that appears to be closely related to the Sand Creek massacre addressed in “Massacre as Prologue,” Orange writes:

> When they first came for us with their bullets, we didn’t stop moving even though the bullets moved twice as fast as the sound of our screams […] The bullets moved on after moving through us, became the promise of what was to come, the speed and the killing, the hard, fast lines of borders and buildings. They took everything and ground it down to dust as fine as gunpowder, they fired their guns into the air in victory and the strays flew out into the nothingness of histories written wrong and meant to be forgotten*. Stray bullets and consequences are landing on our unsuspecting bodies even now*. (10, emphasis added)

In this passage, Orange contends that the bullets fired at his people not only lodge in their bodies but also carry on moving through time in a kind of prediction or “[a] promise of what was to come, the speed and the killing” (10). He draws a parallel here between the void into which the stray bullets of victory fly and the very oblivion into which those genocidal histories are thrown, as they are “written wrong and meant to be forgotten”.

However, Orange asserts that these stray bullets are not lost, as both the bullets and their consequences land and continue to land on their bodies, “even now” (10). The way in which this passage informs the historicity of settler-colonialism lies in Orange’s use of history in the plural form when he speaks of “the nothingness of histories,” as if to suggest a multiplicity and proliferation throughout history and up to the present time, closing the paragraph with the adverb of time, “now” (10). Indeed, the image of “stray bullets” traversing time and space is prevalent across the narrative, such that it behaves like a thread, linking all the sections of the novel together. The image of the stray bullets resurfaces in the middle of the text: “A stray bullet, like a stray dog, might up and bite anyone anywhere […] The bullets have been coming from *miles. Years*. Their sound will break the water in our bodies, tear sound itself, rip our lives in half (141, emphasis added). The stray bullets mentioned in this second quotation appear to be the same ones mentioned at the beginning of the novel, emphasised

through the use of the present perfect: “The bullets have been coming from miles” (141). Nevertheless, by resuming the sentence in the future tense, saying that “[t]heir sound will break the water in our bodies,” Orange implies that the bullets will continue their spatio-temporal travel perpetually. In fact, the image appears again when Octavio Gomez recounts how his father is killed by stray bullets that were meant to kill his older brother Junior and his uncle Sixto. He declares: “Me and my dad had both moved from the couch to the kitchen table for dinner when the bullets came flying through the house. It was like a wall of hot sound and wind. […] My dad put himself in front of me, blocked the bullets with his body” (174). Finally, the bullets reappear at the end of the novel during the robbery, as stray bullets wound Orvil and Edwin and kill Bill Davis and Thomas Frank.

In a similar way, the opening line of Scott’s novel *Taboo* reads, “Our hometown was a *massacre place.* People called it taboo. They said it is haunted and you will get sick if you go there. Others just bragged: we shot you and poisoned the waterholes so you never come back” (Scott, *Taboo* 1, emphasis added). As in Orange’s *There There*, Scott stresses the lingering effects of the massacre on the Wirlomin Noongar people of Kepalup. However, while Orange conveys this explicitly through the title of the section, “Massacre as Prologue,” and in which he addresses the Sand Creek massacre, in *Taboo,* Scott does this implicitly through his choice of tenses: the unnamed narrator uses the past tense when they say “our home *was* a massacre place,” referring to the original massacre. However, in the subsequent sentence, they shift to using the present and future tenses instead: “it *is* haunted” and “*you will* get sick if you go there” (1, emphases added). In addition, this is conveyed at the beginning of the novel when Tilly, Gerald and Gerald’s twin brother Gerard visit Dan Horton’s property where the massacre took place. On their way there, Gerard repeatedly reminds Tilly of the lingering effect of that massacre, particularly the recurrence of the fact that the descendants of the victims of that genocide never returned to Kepalup. Gerard states: “‘You know most blackfellas never even stop Kepalup ’cause of what happened. That murderer.’ […] ‘Not many blackfellas been here for a long time, since nearly everybody was wiped out…’” (36, 39). Indeed, these repetitions register the techniques employed by Scott in his endeavour to involve the readers in the understanding of the continuous effect of this massacre on the Wirlomin Noongar people. However, the author is not content with stylistically registering

the traumatic impact of that genocide; he does this aesthetically too, as the same idea is repeated in two instances involving Tilly's father. Once they arrive at Dan's property, Gerard informs Tilly that her dad "never really been either. He only knowed to wind up the windows and keep driving. 'Cause of the massacre, see'" (50). What is striking in this passage is that not only does Tilly's father not stop when he passes by the town, but he also closes his car windows as if something harmful could penetrate inside. This is explained later in the novel by Wilfred, one of the Aboriginal elders invited for the "Peace Park" opening. He declares: "'Massacre country, they say; lotta people reckon it's taboo; *bad spirits* everywhere, you know, they […] roll up their car windows while passing through Kepalup, and not even stop for food or petrol'" (93, emphasis added). Scott's deployment of gothic aesthetics materialised through the spectralisation of Kepalup aesthetically registers the lingering traumatic impact of the Kokanarup massacre.

In addition, just like Orange in *There There*, Scott inscribes this idea in the way in which the Kokanarup massacre structures the plot of *Taboo*, as the paragraph that follows the novel's opening lines reads: "But we were never hungry for human flesh or revenge of any kind. Our people gave up on that Payback stuff a long time ago, because we always knew death is only part of a story that is *forever beginning*…" (1, emphasis added). It is innocuous to avenge a death, the narrator explains, when death itself is merely a consequence, a small part of a larger story that keeps on repeating itself. Indeed, like Orange, Scott explicitly conveys the historical multiplicity, proliferation, and continuation of settler-colonialism in the Aboriginal context, a story that is "forever beginning." In one of the novel's final scenes, Tilly sleeps on the bus that she and the other Aboriginal community members take to their ancestral land. As the bus starts moving, Tilly sees two people at the front, one of them driving the bus. She recognises one of the twins but cannot tell if it is Gerald or Gerard. The driver is Doug, and Tilly hides so that he does not see her. When the bus stops, and as Doug leaves, Gerard discovers Tilly and reassures her that he is Gerald. After persuading Tilly that he is going to protect her from Doug. Tilly informs him that, at some point, Gerard inappropriately touched her buttocks, to which Gerard replies, "'[y]eah GERALD!'" Tilly is shocked by his answer, for she thought he was Gerald. As she realises that this is indeed Gerard, Doug grabs her from behind

and pulls her against his pelvis, telling her it is "'[n]othing you haven't had before, Tilly. Plenty of times. You must miss it.'" (251). Gerard holds her arms, and Doug tries to put what appears to be a pill in her mouth, but Tilly spits it out. With a sadistic smile, Doug says, "'I'm not gunna do nothing to you I ain't done before, Tilly dear. You thanked me, remember, *once upon a time*'" (252, emphasis added). Then, addressing Gerard, he says "'[t]here's no rush […]. We'll share her. We'll share you Tilly. You gunna cry'" (251). Gerard whispers in Tilly's ear: "'You're not family enough that I can't fuck you'" (252). This scene symbolises the re-enactment of Tilly's trauma of rape by Doug. Nevertheless, by using "once upon a time," the narrative appears to be referring to something that happened a long time ago: the incident of rape which lies at the origin of the massacre that occurred in the town. Tilly's rape, which happens in another historical period and under different circumstances, thus highlights the ongoing Australian settler-colonialism and its destructive effects on Indigenous peoples.

The historical multiplicity and proliferation that underlie the representation of the collective traumas engendered by the massacres in both *There There* and *Taboo* challenge the traditional understanding of historical trauma as an event or experience situated exclusively in a colonial past. Instead, these traumas are to be understood as "trans/historical" because, as Van Styvendale puts it, they not only represent traumatic pasts that affect the present, but they also suggest a continuation of traumas in the present with their own materiality, condition of production and traumatic effects due to settler-colonialism as an ongoing reality for Indigenous peoples (220). This understanding echoes Wofle's conceptualisation of settler-colonialism's invasion as "a structure rather than an event, [because] its history does not stop—or, more to the point, become relatively trivial—when it moves on from the era of frontier homicide" (402). In this respect, Wolfe argues that when the settler-colonial logic of elimination manifests through genocide, it is more appropriate to refer to it as structural genocide to not only avoid qualified genocide's inherent questions of degree and hierarchy among the victims, but also to retain settler-colonialism's "structural induration" such that "a historical perspective on structural genocide" attends to the way in which it is "in abeyance" rather than "being a thing of the past" (403). Following this line of reasoning, the Sand Creek massacre in *There There* and the Kokanarup massacre in *Taboo* should not be conceived of as historically isolated genocidal events,

but rather as part of the ongoing settler-colonialism structures in the US and Australia. Indeed, as demonstrated throughout the previous sections, the traumas engendered by these massacres are present not only in terms of transgenerational psychic transmission within the subsequent generations of the Indigenous communities represented in the novels, but also inform their contemporary material conditions and realities.

4. Resistance as Epilogues: This is Indigenous Land

In *Indigenous Cities*, Furlan explains that "given the importance of place to Native peoples" and "how much the reservation experience has come to define 'Indianness' in the United States" since the mid-nineteenth century Andrew Jackson era, mainstream ideas about the relationship between Native peoples and place are often "clichéd and misunderstood" as it is "commonly assumed that American Indians are people who grew up on reservations and remain connected to their communities and their tribes" (17, 20) Urban Native narratives, she asserts, subvert such ideas insofar as they assert the ways in which "the reservation (and other Indigenous geographies)" continues to act as an anchor for urban Natives as they "appear and reconfigure themselves in the urban landscape, staking claims in the city space" (17–18, 19). Indeed, Furlan explains that for urban Natives, all of America's cities are built on stolen Indigenous land; thus, "dispossession often remains central in Native [urban] consciousness and cultural productions" (23). As an urban Native American novel, *There There* reflects this subversion and rejects such a pattern of recognition as, early on in a section titled "Hard, Fast" of his non-fictional essay, Orange asserts that while the urbanisation entailed by the termination and relocation policies were "supposed to be the final, necessary step in our assimilation, absorption, [and] erasure," the city instead "made us new, and we made it ours" (8–9). Orange adds that this is also the case for urban Indians who were born in the cities, with whom land moves "like memory. An Urban Indian belongs to the city, and cities belong to the earth. […] Being Indian has never been about returning to the land. The land is everywhere or nowhere" (11). Even the title of the novel *There There* and the reference to Gertrude Stein's "There is no there there" in her *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937) in the narrative of Dene Oxendene can be read as an assertion that Indigenous land is everywhere: Indigenous land is *There* (reservations) and

There (urban cities), whereas "There is no there there" can be understood as there is no difference between these two settings, for both are set on Indigenous lands (qtd. in Orange 38).

Moreover, as demonstrated throughout the chapter, the novels' characters navigate the urban space of Oakland with the awareness that it is as Indigenous as any other space throughout the Americas. Nevertheless, this awareness finds its best expressions in the narrative of Opal, where her mother explains why they are moving to Alcatraz Island: "We're going to be with our relatives. Indians of All Tribes. We're going over to where they built that prison. Gonna start from the inside of the cell, which is where we are now, Indian people, that's where they got us, even though they don't make it seem like they got us there. We're gonna work our way out from the inside with a spoon" (48). Commenting on the significance of this activist event, Furlan explains that the Alcatraz Occupation came to fruition thanks to [t]he convergence of Native peoples in the urban space" that "gave rise to a reinvigorated tribal consciousness and a new kind of political activism that sometimes united urban and reservation Indians" (18). Indeed, she states that while being joined later by reservation Natives, the Occupation was primarily led and achieved by urban Natives who were "collectively demanding ownership of nonreservation property" by issuing a proclamation addressed to the federal government in which they enumerated "the resemblance of Alcatraz to Indian reservations" (18–19). While meant to be satirical, the proclamation reflected a constellation of similarities between Alcatraz Island's isolated and isolating character and the state of reservations.[18] Although the participants were forced to leave the island by the end, Furlan argues that the Occupation was not a total failure, for it "became a catalyst in the making of a new tribal consciousness based on common political goals and perceived commonalities that crossed tribal lines. Alcatraz called attention to Indian concerns both on and off the reservation" (19). This is precisely what is conveyed in the above passage from Opal's narrative, for her mother suggests that the prison in Alcatraz Island is symbolic

[18] "The Occupation of Alcatraz, 1969: The Proclamation." *LibGuides at University of Massachusetts Lowell*, 21 Mar. 2022, https://libguides.uml.edu/c.php?g=945022&p=6878950.

not only of the reality of Native Americans who live on reservations which, initially, were created to confine Native peoples and to protect settlers, but also for the urban Natives whose modern experience of urbanity is marked by ghettoisation, proletarianisation, and pauperism. As such, Opal's narrative reasserts the importance of land for Indigenous peoples and posits land dispossession not only as informing the US settler-colonial histories of oppression endured by Indigenous peoples but also grounds, in form and content, strategies of resistance for Native American peoples, whether living in urban centres or on reservations.

Regarding the post-Mabo native title in Australia, Rodoreda and Bischoff explain that from a juridical and political perspective, "the Australian nation-state and its institutions would appear to be the determiners, the chief authors and agents, of its legacy" (2). Nevertheless, they argue that what the Australian settler-colonial state and its judicial institutions have less control over is the Mabo decision's cultural legacy (2). They assert that insofar as the Mabo decision's primary focus was on land and territory, it paved the way for a new wave of Indigenous cultural production that responded to "not what Mabo affirmed—an Indigenous presence—but what it denied Indigenous people: sovereignty" (5–9). Indeed, in "Sovereignty, Mabo, and Indigenous Fiction" (2017), Rodoreda explains that the post-Mabo Indigenous fiction of the twenty-first century is marked by a shifting "*away* from life-writing modes and life writing's focus on assertions of identity" that characterised the literary production of the 1980s and 1990s, towards a format of the novel that asserts what he calls "a *sover-eignMentality*, a self-evidentiary, no-need-to-justify sense of embodied belonging in place, in literary characters" (344). At the core of this literature of sovereignty, Rodoreda states, is the articulation of a "sovereign space and place" wherein Indigenous characters, whether they are "so-called traditional owners, native title holders or aspirants, city dwellers or fringe dwellers," appear to be cognisant of their "sovereign custodianship of particular country *irrespective* of the legal status of their landholding in the narrative" (347). These characters, he argues, perform a "*sovereignMentality*" insofar as they "are self-assured of their identity and their communal/ancestral bonds to a specific place *regardless* of who technically owns the land within the colonized nation-space of the novel" (348). As a post-Mabo Aboriginal novel, *Taboo* falls amply within the perspective of

"*sovereignMentality*." While the Wirlomin Noongar characters of the novel are in Hopetown's caravan park for a "culture camp" and are to attend the "Peace Park" opening in Kepalup as a form of symbolic "reconciliation," what is performed by the narrative and the characters goes beyond mere cultural reconnection, mocking and parodying the language of symbolic acknowledgement and recognition.

Throughout the novel, there is a recurrence of sentences and paragraphs in which the characters affirm and articulate their Wirlomin Noongar identity and their connection to Kaplup as their ancestral country. However, this connection is most powerfully articulated in a chapter titled "A Pile of Sticks," in which the Aboriginal elders Wilfred and Milton discuss what they will be doing during the "Peace Park" opening. Addressing Milton, Wilfred declares: "'They want us to do something, the white people. […] Like to give 'em something good. Not what they expect but, not just pat themselves on the back and a little nod for us. Like to sit 'em back in their socks . . .'" to which Milton responds by saying, "'[u]p to us to show them what we are, who we are, how we link up to before the town, before the massacre and all that […]. Make it a Wirlomin place again'" (Scott, *Taboo* 94). Indeed, the novel's Wirlomin Noongar characters exhibit a sense of rejection and refusal to identify with the kind of recognition and reconciliation meant by the phrase "Peace Park." This is also articulated in multiples scenes where the characters mock and parody the symbolism that this phrase entails, captured in the chapter through a procession of phrases that gradually deform its original name: "'Peace Plaque thing,' she said. 'Is that what they want? Peace Plaque? Peace Park?' 'Park,' said a voice. 'Plaque,' another. 'Police Park?' 'Please Plaque'" (90−91). In this sense, while the Wirlomin Noongar characters of the novel agree to participate in the "Peace Park" opening organised by the settlers, the importance they give to this event does not exceed the symbolism its name implies. Instead, they are in Kepalup to assert a sense of sovereignty that settler-colonial native title regulations denied them and remind the settlers that they are on Indigenous land.

5. Conclusion

This chapter offered a juxtaposed reading of two Indigenous novels that emanate from different Indigenous literary traditions and distinct cultural and geo-political contexts. This trans-Indigenous reading of Tommy Orange's *There There* and Kim Scott's *Taboo* explored the representation of the structural and material dimensions of colonial traumas engendered by histories of settler-colonial oppression against Indigenous peoples in what is known today as the USA and Australia, respectively. In doing so, this chapter responds to one of the first steps taken by scholars contributing to the scholarship on decolonising trauma studies, which consists of accounting for the political and socio-economic facets of traumas associated with colonialism. Nevertheless, given the particularity of settler-colonialism, it is crucial to place the insights that emerged from this scholarship within the Indigenous/settler-colonial contexts addressed in the abovementioned novels in order to fully grasp the political and socio-economic particularities of colonial oppression endured by these Indigenous peoples and, in turn, shed light on Indigenous perspectives on resistance and resurgence. Within this perspective, the chapter first addressed psychological and sociological studies of historical trauma in Indigenous contexts and identified the critical discourse engagement with this scholarship as adequate in exploring the structural and material dimensions of colonial trauma in Indigenous novels. Indeed, as explained above, scholars who engage with historical trauma as a critical discourse place Indigenous peoples' hardships within the settler-colonial state's structures of political and socio-economic oppression that continue to produce and facilitate such traumas. Addressing historical trauma as critical discourse entails exploring aspects of political theory in Indigenous studies, which, in this chapter, involved delving into the work of Glen Coulthard's *Red Skin White Masks*. Throughout his study, Coulthard demonstrates the applicability of Fanon's insights into the interrelated yet semi-autonomous structural and subjective dimensions of colonial domination in exploring the dynamics of settler-colonial oppression against Indigenous peoples. Indeed, insofar as Fanon posits capitalist exploitation as the heart of the colonial enterprise, Coulthard argues that in settler-colonial contexts, colonial capitalist exploitation is manifested through a process of accumulation by dispossession, whereby the settler state' object of desire is primarily the acquisition of Indigenous peoples' lands and

territories. This process is maintained by various coercive and non-coercive strategies, all geared towards developing and reinforcing the settler-state's formation within global capitalism. Coulthard's positioning of settler-colonial histories of dispossession within global capitalism is also articulated in studies on settler-colonialism, for scholars such as Patrick Wolfe and David Lloyd explicitly relate the ongoing settler-colonial processes of accumulation by dispossession endured by Indigenous peoples in the US and Australia to the development of global capitalism and modernity. Indeed, this aspect of settler colonialism comes to justify the adoption of the comparative materialist reading mode advanced by the WReC contributors in *Combined and Uneven Development,* where they argue for a theory of world-literature that registers, in both its form and its content, the combined and uneven character of modernity in the literary works that emanate from the (semi-)peripheries of the capitalist world-system. Because the WReC's theory of world-literature is anchored within Marxist underpinnings, some of its aspects are reconfigured in tandem with Coulthard's insights on addressing the limitations of Marx and Marxism in examining settler-colonial histories of dispossession and Indigenous modes of resistance.

Therefore, the first part of the chapter explored the narrative register and aesthetic techniques employed by Tommy Orange and Kim Scott in their respective novels in order to inscribe the political and socio-economic oppression that characterises the traumatic experiences of colonial modernity by the Indigenous communities represented in their novels within the broader settler-colonial histories of dispossession in the US and Australia. In *There There,* Orange employs cause-to-effect analogies, subversive use of Gothic tropology, and the juxtaposition of various realist and irrealist narrative registers. Through this panoply of narrative and aesthetic techniques, he presents the personal and social issues faced by the novel's urban Native characters as a continuation of the US settler-colonial strategies of elimination and land dispossession, particularly those that unfolded during the nineteenth-century American Indian wars and the mid-twentieth century Termination and Relocation policies. On the other hand, Kim Scott in *Taboo* draws a parallel between the trauma of dispossession engendered by the nineteenth century Kokenarup massacre against the Wirlomin Noongar people and their removal from their lands in Kepalup with the traumatic character of colonial

modernity lived by their descendants in contemporary Australia. The author subversively mobilises the aesthetics of irony and sarcasm in registering the peripheralisation and encasement of the novel's Wirlomin Noongar characters and which is reflected in the carceral aspects that characterise the spaces these characters occupy both within the core and the peripheries of the urban setting where they live after the massacre. In addition, Scott weaves together the collective trauma of the nineteenth-century massacre of the Wirlomin Noongar people with the protagonist's trauma of drug addiction, rape, and sequestration in a house built on stolen land and owned by a descendant of the massacre's perpetrators, in order to address the continuity that exists between settler-colonial histories of dispossession and the contemporary traumatic modernity endured by the novel's Wirlomin Noongar characters.

Given the historical particularity of settler-colonialism as neither an event nor a series of events but rather an ongoing structure of dispossession, the second aspect addressed in this chapter is the representational methods that the authors adopt in capturing the historicity of the traumas addressed in their novels. Against the historical vacuity of orthodox trauma studies in literary studies and against the tendencies of historical fixity that characterise studies of historical and collective traumas, *There There* and *Taboo* register, both in form and content, the structural induration of settler-colonialism insofar as the histories of the massacres that inaugurate the two novels function as narrative threads that reflect the trans/historicity of these traumas that are present in the psychic return within subsequent generations of the Indigenous communities represented in the novels and inform their contemporary material realities. Finally, the third part of the chapter explored the novels' aesthetics of resistance against and rejection of settler-colonial patterns of recognition when it comes to the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land. On the one hand, Tommy Orange's *There There* fits within the subversive and corrective frameworks of urban Native narratives that, as delineated above, assert the importance of reservation and other Indigenous geographies for urban Natives in reclaiming the city spaces, as all US cities are built on stolen Indigenous land. Orange demonstrates this aspect in his non-fiction essay but also in the novel's plot, in which he revisits the historically-significant Alcatraz Occupation that was led by urban Natives claiming a non-urban stolen Indigenous land. On the other hand, Kim Scott's *Taboo* is a

post-Mabo sovereignty novel *par excellence,* given its language of rejection and mockery that is directed towards the colonial undersides of the Australian liberal politics of recognition and reconciliation which still curtail Indigenous sovereignty over their lands.

CHAPTER II

Racism, Trauma, and Subjectivity: A Trans-Indigenous Reading of Tara June Winch's *Swallow the Air* and Richard Wagamese's *Indian Horse*.

> Because it...den[ies] the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "In reality, who am I?"
>
> ——Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth.*

1. Introduction: On Racism and Trauma

In Chapter One, the trans-Indigenous reading of a Native American Cheyenne urban novel and an Aboriginal Noongar novel explored the representation of the structural and material dimensions of colonial traumas. Indeed, the chapter demonstrated how the novels mobilise a panoply of narrative registers and aesthetic techniques to embed the socio-economic and political oppression that characterise the modernities lived by their characters within the continuities of settler-colonial histories of dispossession. On the other hand, this chapter examines the representation of the psychological/subjective dimension of colonial traumas in *Swallow the Air* by Wiradjuri writer Tara June Winch (Australia) and *Indian Horse* by Ojibwe author and journalist Richard Wagamese (Canada). This trans-Indigenous juxtaposition examines the authors' representations of the psychological aspects of these colonial traumas, particularly the traumatic impacts and manifestations of racism in their novels. Scholars working on decolonising trauma studies highlight the particularity of the traumatic impact of racism which does not find genesis in a singular recognisable traumatic event and thus cannot be accounted for by the event-based model that informs orthodox trauma theory. Instead, they understand the traumatic impact of racism as a form of what feminist psychologist Maria P.P. Root (1994) calls "Insidious trauma," and which refers to "the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily wellbeing at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit" (qtd. in Brown 107). Indeed, this is how Stef Craps conceives the trauma of racism in *Postcolonial*

Witnessing, taking as an example what he calls “daily microaggressions,” which include “being denied promotions, home mortgages, or business loans; being a target of a security guard; being stopped in traffic; or seeing one’s group portrayed in a stereotypical manner in the media” (26). Craps writes: “One such incident alone may not be traumatizing, but traumatization can result insidiously from cumulative micro-aggressions: each one is too small to be a traumatic stressor, but together they can build to create an intense traumatic impact” (26). As such, to understand racism as insidiously traumatic is to attend to how such forms of violence and oppression constitute a quotidian reality for the targeted people.

While attempting to ground his work on psychological interventions into racial trauma, Craps ignores the works of racial trauma theorist and psychologist Robert Carter, who, in “Racism and Psychological Emotional Injury” (2007), highlights the inadequacy of PTSD templates when it comes to diagnosing “traumatic stress injury” related to racism (87). These templates, Carter argues, pathologise “the target or victim of racism” and ignore the subjective and emotional pain (87). In his study, Carter instead proposes what he calls a “nonpathological race-based traumatic stress injury” which, he offers, considers both physical and emotional pain—as well as the threat of pain—that emanate from racism “in the forms of racial harassment (hostility), racial discrimination (avoidance), or discriminatory harassment (aversive hostility)” (88). Carter notes that the “target may and does experience significant emotional reaction(s), and symptom clusters emerge that reflect that reaction, but the racial component or encounter(s) is important in recognising and connecting the racism to the emotional distress and pain” (88). He explains that the racial encounters that provoke “race-based traumatic stress” can occur at multiple levels: “They can occur on an interpersonal level (microaggressions, verbal assaults, use of symbols or coded language), and can be the effect of structural or systemic acts. Racism may occur on an institutional level, as an application of racial stereotypes or as encounters and assault(s), and it may occur through cultural racism” (88). In addition, he explains that “race-based traumatic stress” can be caused by a “cumulative” or a “clustered” exposure to racism, such that a “last straw event may serve as the trigger for the trauma” (90–91). Indeed, Carter notes that “one may be stressed, but the level of stress may not reach the threshold for being

traumatic until the trigger or last straw. In such an instance, the trigger experience may be a minor or major event" (91). He argues that the traumatic reactions to these forms of racism can be physiological, cognitive, behavioural, and emotional and can be manifested through "anxiety, anger, rage, depression, compromised self-esteem, shame, and guilt" (90). Indeed, this "nonpathological" model developed by Carter to diagnose traumas of racial origins endeavours to recognise the traumatic impact of racism that is often dismissed, as it does not always fit neatly within the criteria of PTSD templates used to diagnose various other forms of trauma.

It is worth highlighting that Hartmann et al.'s article, "American Indian Historical Trauma," discussed in Chapter One of the thesis, is a contribution to the field of racial trauma that appeared in a special issue titled "Racial Trauma: Theory, Research, and Healing" (2019). Indeed, in their article, the authors explore the theoretical tenets of racial trauma theory and its possible development through conversation with historical trauma's three engagements, namely as a clinical condition, a life stressor, and critical discourse (7). As previously noted, Hartmann et al. explain that scholars who engage with historical trauma as a critical discourse retreat from the narrow psychological and mental health prisms that characterise the two other engagements and approach trauma from a socio-political perspective in which Indigenous peoples' hardships are situated within the settler-colonial structures that produce and reinforce their socio-economic dependence (11). Similarly, the authors assert that engaging with racial trauma theory as a critical discourse could help advance the understanding of its "organising ideas (racism, wellness, and race) in psychology and health fields" (16). They argue that scholars who work with racial trauma as a critical discourse could draw on postcolonial scholarship in order to "consider a shift in the current focus on racist incidents to a broader interest in racialised adversity, power structures, and colonialism" (16). Hartmann et al. offer the example of the anticolonial theorist Frantz Fanon, whose works investigate the "psychological effects of racialised colonial knowledge structures" and stress the necessity of removing "colonial systems and structures" as an imperative for healing (16). If, as stated in Chapter One, Hartmann et al. identify Glen Coulthard's works on political theory in Indigenous studies as relevant for scholars working on historical trauma as a critical discourse, their suggestion of

Fanon's works as a way to engage with racial trauma as a critical discourse can only be persuasive.

The relevance of Fanon's works in approaching non-western literary texts that articulate traumas related to colonialism is also argued for by scholars working within the scholarship of decolonising trauma studies. In *Lamentation and Modernity* (2007), Rebecca Saunders notes that "[t]hough rarely read as a trauma theorist, Frantz Fanon draws attention to crucial, yet often overlooked, episodes in the history of trauma: to the specific forms of trauma produced by colonial wars, by colonisation itself, and, more diffusely, by racism" (13). Similarly, in "The After-Life of Frantz Fanon" (1996), Stuart Hall asserts that Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952) offers a "psychoanalytically-inspired exploration of the unconscious mechanisms of racism and colonialism" (15). Indeed, Fanon's relevance in the study of the psychological impact of colonial racism is particularly evident in this seminal work, whose autobiographical structure provides a critical analysis of the psychological impacts of colonial oppression on colonised peoples, with a strong emphasis on the ways in which the dehumanisation of colonised peoples—through their non-recognition and their internalisation of colonial discourses and narratives—constitute the psychologically traumatic impacts of racism.

1.1 Settler-colonialism and the Racialisation of Indigenous Peoples

In the introduction to *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that the dehumanisation and otherness of Indigenous peoples have always been central to the colonial and imperial projects in settler-colonial states such as Australia and Canada, and remain so even today. Smith maintains that the imperial and colonial discourse of the "other" is an integral part of western history in its entrenchment within the ideas of Enlightenment and modernity (74). Indeed, she states that such views are based on a comparison between the western subject with "'something/someone else' which exists on the outside" of the west such as "the oriental, the 'Negro', the 'Jew', the 'Indian', the 'Aborigine'" (77). Smith highlights that, while it is true that ideas of "otherness" existed in Europe prior to the Enlightenment, it is during this period that these ideas were "formalised through science, philosophy and imperialism, into explicit systems of

classification and 'regimes of truth'" (77). She writes: "History was the story of people who 'were regarded as *fully human*. Others who were not regarded as human (that is, capable of self-actualisation) were prehistoric" (78). Indeed, Smith argues that colonialism built its narratives of conquest around this supposed primitivism and backwardness of the colonised peoples who lack minds and intellects (67). These narratives, she explains, excluded Indigenous peoples from civilisation and humanity altogether (67). Smith writes: "we were not 'fully human'; some of us were not even considered partially human" (67). It is precisely this dehumanisation of Indigenous peoples, she states, that was usually behind justifications of colonialism and imperialism from the nineteenth century onwards and which in turn were decorated with principles of liberal humanism that asserted the moral values that constitute the "civilised 'man'" (68). Yet, Smith argues that these justifications "did not necessarily stop the continued hunting of Aborigines in the early nineteenth century, nor the continued ill-treatment of different indigenous peoples even today" (68). As Smith points out, the dehumanisation of Indigenous peoples has always been an essential cog within the colonial enterprise that is used as justification not only for the primary goal of the colonial act, which is the occupation and the exploitation of colonised lands, but also for the various oppressive colonial policies of displacement and forced assimilation of colonised peoples under the banner of the "civilising mission."

If, as explained in the introduction to the thesis, settler-colonialism has its particularities, it should be right to assume that the processes of racialisation that it adopts towards the Indigenous peoples whose lands it covets also have their particularities. Indeed, in "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang argue that Indigenous peoples' racialisation in the US settler-colonial context is based on a portrayal that entails a lack of authenticity and Indigeneity of "contemporary Indigenous generations" to progressively erase "Indigenous claims to land and usher in settler claims to property" (12). Seen in this light, it becomes clear that this form of racialisation constitutes another eliminatory strategy through which settler-colonial states dilute Indigenous peoples within mainstream settler-society in order to terminate their presence and their claims to their lands. Further explaining the relationship between the racialisation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their lands in "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," Patrick Wolfe explains that while

it is true that “race” has been the organising principle of both settler-colonialism and genocide as historically practised by Europeans, “different racial regimes encode and reproduce the unequal relationships into which Europeans coerced the populations concerned” (387). In the United States, he states, the racialisation of Black peoples and Indigenous peoples worked in opposition, thus reflecting “their antithetical roles in the formation of US society” (387). Indeed, Wolfe explains that the racialisation of Black people made their increase productive because Black slavery’s “inclusive taxonomy automatically enslaved the offspring of a slave and any other parent” (387). This racialisation, he adds, is organised around the principle of the “‘one-drop rule,’ whereby any amount of African ancestry, no matter how remote, and regardless of phenotypical appearance, makes a person Black” (387–8). However, for Indigenous peoples, Wolfe explains, non-Indigenous ancestry “compromised their indigeneity producing ‘half-breeds,’ a regime that persists in the form of blood quantum regulations” (388). He states that while the increase of enslaved people was productive, as it entailed the increase of the owners ‘wealth, the increase of Indigenous peoples was counterproductive because it impeded “the settlers’ access to land” (388). Therefore, Wolfe argues that “the restrictive racial classification” of Indigenous peoples through blood quantum policies “furthered the logic of elimination” that is at the heart of settler-colonial structures (388). In short, the racialisation of Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial contexts has pure capitalist undertones wherein the settler-state object of covetousness does not reside in the exploitation of these peoples’ labour but rather in the access to and exploitation of their territories.

1.2 On the Subjective Dimension of Colonial Traumas

While the racialisation of Indigenous peoples by settler-colonial states and societies is primarily oriented towards the facilitation of the access to territoriality rather than the exploitation of Indigenous peoples’ labour force, such racialisation, like any other forms of racialisation, engenders psychological and subjective problems that need to be addressed in their own terms. As explained in the introduction to this thesis, Glen Coulthard’s *Red Skin, White Masks* demonstrates the relevance of Fanon’s insights and critique of colonial recognition and its structural and subjective dimensions in exploring settler-

colonial histories of oppression and dispossession of Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial contexts such as Canada and Australia. While Chapter One of the thesis explored the representation of the structural and material dimensions of settler-colonial oppression and trauma in two different Indigenous texts and contexts, this chapter follows a similar trans-Indigenous approach, while emphasising the subjective or psycho-affective dimension of settler-colonial oppression. Indeed, Coulthard argues that in contrast to his contemporary Marxists, whose approaches are often characterised by an economic reductionism, Fanon stands out for his insistence on bringing astute transformation to both the subjective and the socioeconomic realms of colonial domination (33). He writes: “Fanon revealed the ways in which those axes of domination historically relegated in Marxism to the superstructural realm—such as racism and the effects it has on those who are subject to it—could substantively configure the character of social relations relatively autonomously from capitalist economics” (34). In addition, Coulthard explains that in contexts where the politics of recognition are characterised by unevenness, there is a tendency to ignore the individual, subjective, and psychological dimensions in favour of targeting the political and social structures for the sake of avoiding the victimisation of those who endure this unevenness (37). This, he states, is not the case in Fanon’s approach, who “was unambiguous” in attributing the colonised subjects’ feeling of inferiority to the “colonial social structure” in place; yet “although socially constituted,” the ensued psychological problems “can take on a life of their own,” thus needing to be independently investigated in line with “their own specific logics” (37). In settler-colonial contexts, Coulthard explains that the psycho-affective dimension of colonial domination as explored by Fanon manifests in the form of “racist recognition” that is ingrained within the psyche of Indigenous people “by the states’ political, religious, educational, and media institutions, as wells as by ‘racist individuals’ in the settler-colonial society” itself (41). Building on this body of work, the following sections of this chapter focus on the representation of the psycho-affective/subjective dimension of colonial oppression and explore the narrative registers and aesthetic techniques employed by Richard Wagamese and Tara June Winch in their respective novels in order to capture the traumatic impact of racism from the perspective of the novels’ protagonists.

2. Traumatic Preludes

Richard Wagamese's *Indian Horse* opens with the protagonist, Saul Indian Horse, at a rehab centre, where he is recovering from alcohol addiction. Prompted by Moses, one of the social workers in "The New Dawn Centre", he begins to write his story. Saul is reluctant, declaring that he "doesn't give a shit about any of that. But if it means getting out of this place quicker, then telling my story is what I will do" (2). In this opening chapter, the novel presents a setting of healing: "They call it sharing", Saul declares, a collective tradition of the Ojibway people (2). This process, the narrative suggests, is expected to be therapeutic. Saul states: "They say I can't understand where I'm going if I don't understand where I've been" (2). Noticing discomfort among the other rehab patients whenever he tries to speak, Saul decides to "write things down" instead (3). By opening his novel in this way, Wagamese establishes trauma as an ever-present background theme and, indeed, as the novel progresses, more about Saul's trauma will be revealed. Wagamese's novel directly tackles the traumatic history of the Canadian residential school system during which Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their parents, and which took place from the late-nineteenth century (with the Indian Act of 1876) and up until 1997 when the last state-funded residential school, Kivalliq Hall, was permanently closed. In 2008, the Canadian government, under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, issued a formal apology to Indigenous peoples, in which he recognised that the "policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country" ("Indigenous and Northern Affairs" 2008). Nevertheless, the Canadian settler-state's efforts to assimilate Indigenous peoples did not cease with the closure of the residential schools; the so-called "Sixties Scoop" (1950s–1980s) and the ongoing "Millennial Scoop" (1980s–present) describe assimilationist projects whereby Indigenous children were (or, indeed, continue to be) removed by protective services and put up for fostering or adoption. In fact, in *Indigenous Writes* (2016), Chelsea Vowel notes that "by 2002, over 22,500 Indigenous children were in foster care across Canada—more than the total taken during the Sixties Scoop and certainly more than had been taken to residential schools" (183).

In Wagamese's *Indian Horse*, Saul's childhood is already marked by a profoundly traumatic environment; he states: "there was a *spectre* in our camp.

We could see the shadow of this dark being in the lines of our mother's face" (Wagamese 8, emphasis added). As an Indigenous novel, Wagamese's deployment of a gothic narrative register in this early passage reflects a multi-layered subversion. As examined in Chapter One of the thesis, Michelle Burnham explains that within what she refers to as a "Settler Gothic"—such as the Canadian Gothic or the US Gothic—the Indigenous presence provides a "source of horror, guilt, and trauma" (266). Thus, when Indigenous authors write within the Gothic, "[t]heir texts represent an effort to 'write back' to a colonialist tradition in which the Indian represented the repressed unconscious of the nation's (and the continent's) own violent history" (227). Indeed, Burnham states that these Indigenous authors often adopt and subvert western Gothic's traditional elements in describing the destructive mechanisms of colonisation, imperialism, and capitalism endured by Indigenous peoples (228–9). In Wagamese's *Indian Horse*, the use of Gothic tropes fulfils its subversive quality by reflecting these two tendencies outlined by Burnham above. On the one hand, being one of the colonial assimilationist policies that meant to terminate the Indigenous presence, the Canadian residential school system is endowed with a sense of haunting spectrality that establishes, from the very beginning of the novel, a tense environment and which in turn arouses feelings of apprehension and anticipation of an almost fatal misfortune as this "spectre" lingers around Saul's camp, waiting to attack at any moment (Wagamese 8). On the other hand, this spectrality is also reinforced as the author paints phantasmagorical features on the face of Saul's mother, suggesting that she has already fallen prey to the ghost of the residential school system and, as a result, "shadows of this dark being" can be seen on her face. This is made explicit when Saul declares that "it was the school that had turned my mother so far inward she sometimes ceased to exist in the outside world" (9). Saul's choice of words here is suggestive of the two-fold traumatic consequences of the residential school system, which physically removes children from their families and extracts the very essence of existence from them, leaving them in a state of nonexistence. Indeed, Saul already lives under the constant fear of being removed from his family as a child. He states: "I grew up afraid of the white man. As it turned out, I had reason to be" (10). This line from the early pages of the novel foreshadows Saul's own removal, which consequently happens after his grandmother's brutal death: "I huddled in the

arms of the old woman and felt the cold freeze her in place. I understood she had left me […] Indeed, she was gone. Frozen to death saving me, and I was cast adrift on *a strange new river*" (42, emphasis added). This image of the "strange new river" alludes to the white man's unfamiliar world and to the residential school system that Saul is about to be thrown in. Taken to *St. Jerome's Indian Residential School*, Saul reveals that he "saw kids die of tuberculosis, influenza, pneumonia and *broken hearts*" (55, emphasis added).

The plot of Tara June Winch's *Swallow the Air* is constructed around twenty interrelated stories. The novel opens with a flashback: May recalls discovering that her mother is "head sick", alluding to the presence of a mental health issue such as depression (Winch 3). She describes her mother as a woman who wears "worry on her *wrists*", with "sad emerald eyes [that] bled through her black canvas and tortured willow hair" (3, emphasis added). This description foreshadows the mother's imminent suicide, which takes place only a few pages later when May, together with her half-brother Billy, return from fishing to their Aunty's house (as their mom had instructed them to do) to the news that "Your mum—she gone. She gone away for a long time, kids. Me sista, she had to leave us" (8–9). Here, particular attention must be paid to Winch's choice of diction: to capture the pain that May's mother endures, the author metaphorises it, endowing it with the constraining effect of shackles, as if to suggest that the mother is on death row and is about to be executed. Moreover, the author seems to suggest that the mother has no agency over the decision to commit suicide; it is as if her death is a fatality in and of itself. When Aunty informs May and Billy of the mother's death, she affirms that "she *had* to leave us" (9, emphasis added). Earlier, while fishing with Billy, May finds a dead stingray on the beach; she "had cut it open, but only blood made dying real. No longer whole and helpless, the stingray was spilling at the sides—it was free" (7). Imagining the scene of her mother's death, May states that she "thought about Mum's pain being freed from her *wrists*, leaving her body, or what was left" (9, emphasis added). There is a parallel here between the blood that leaves the stingray's body and the blood that leaves the slit wrists of May's mother, which not only reinforces the metaphor of the shackles that constrained her wrists, but also suggests that, in the environment in which they live, death is often liberating. Through this act of

suicide by slitting her wrists open, the mother is thereby freed from a pain that used to shackle her.

May speaks of how her mother, on the day of her suicide, had made make-shift bike helmets for her and her half-brother by tying "the remaining piece of elastic to the base of the old ice-cream container", for fear that "magpies would swoop down and peck out the tops of our heads" (3). Although short, this scene carries heavy symbolic and literal meaning when read alongside another passage that is explored thereafter. On the one hand, this line speaks volumes about the economic precariousness in which this Aboriginal family lives: the mother has no other way than to use containers of ice cream to make bike helmets for her children. These helmets, which are supposed to protect her children, are not that secure. On the other hand, when this scene is juxtaposed with another that takes place a few pages after, it takes on a much deeper and symbolic meaning. Here, Winch, through May, informs readers of the Aboriginal Dreamtime story of Mungi; she writes:

> Mungi was his name, the first turtle ever. They said he was a tribesman who was speared in the neck while protecting himself under a hollowed-out tree. But the ancestor spirit was watching and decided to let him live by reincarnation *or something*. 'Anyway, using the empty tree trunk as his shell, he was allowed to live peacefully forever as a turtle.' *Or so Mum would say*. (4, emphases added)

Although Winch does not draw an explicit parallel between these two scenes, they exhibit substantial thematic similarities when they are read in juxtaposition. Both the bike helmets and Mungi's shell offers a sense of security that is conventionally associated with the "home;" yet, while the turtle's shell is solid and resistant—having been made by an Ancestral Spirit—the children's make-shift helmets are made of a fragile material, one that is susceptible to piercing and damage. Nevertheless, May's choice of words when recounting the story of Mungi ("*They said* he was a tribesman"; "reincarnation *or something*") and her final statement, "[o]r so Mum would say", conveys the sense of fragmentation of this story itself and raises suspicion as to its veracity (4, emphases added). This echoes an internalisation of the imperial discourse about the primitivism and

backwardness of Indigenous worldviews and cultures. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith explains that the disorder caused by colonialism and imperialism disconnected colonised peoples from their histories, their lands, their ways of knowing, "their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world" (71). As such, she writes: "Fragmentation is not a phenomenon of postmodernism as many might claim. For indigenous peoples fragmentation has been the consequence of imperialism" (71). In fact, the opening story of the novel, titled "Swallow the Air", establishes the background atmosphere of the entire novel, portraying May Gibson's already traumatic environment that, as readers soon find, ultimately pushes her towards physical, psychological, and cultural exile.

3. Traumatised Skins, Traumatised Tongues

As explained in the introduction to this chapter, the dehumanisation of Indigenous peoples was at the heart of the colonial and imperial discourse that was used to justify the colonial act itself and the subsequent oppressive colonial policies of genocide and assimilation. In the settler-colonial states of Canada and Australia, the forced removal of Indigenous children from their parents is one of the coercive policies these states used to reinforce and maintain their structures, access Indigenous lands, and normalise their existence. This is part of what Smith calls the mechanisms of "Disciplining the Colonised" that were endured by Indigenous communities; the most brutal and violent forms of these disciplining doctrines was the forced removal of Aboriginal children in Australia, and the residential school system in Canada through which Indigenous children were systematically placed as a way of erasing their cultures and languages (133–4).

In *Indian Horse*, Wagamese's suggestive portrayal of the violence and racism in the Canadian residential schools underlines the cumulative nature of Saul's trauma. Throughout the novel, the author highlights how Saul is repeatedly made aware of his "savage Indianness" by the sisters of the residential school. One way this is achieved is through the violent image of the skin being removed; Saul declares: "The soap was harsh. They rubbed us nearly raw. It felt they were trying to remove more than grime or odour. It felt as though they were to *remove our skin*" (Wagamese 44, emphasis added). This is made even more explicit

when the nuns say: “we work to remove the Indian from our children”, and that “[w]e were sent to *cleave* the savage from them” (46–7, 96, emphasis added). Here, there is a literal and figurative removal of the skin—that very marker used by the settler-state and society to determine their “other.” Indeed, this scene recalls Fanon’s comments about colour prejudice. He writes that “[f[or several years certain laboratories have been trying to produce a serum for ‘denegrification’” that can make it possible for “miserable Negro” to “whiten himself and thus to throw off the burden of that corporeal malediction” (*Black Skin, White Masks* 84). There is a clear parallel here between ideas of “denegrification” and the nuns’ violent attempt at removing the skin of children in the novel in that they both suggest that the skin colour of the “other” itself constitutes a curse or a mark of inferiority that the white man must strive to erase, and for which Indigenous peoples should be grateful. Indeed, this perspective of “kill the Indian/save the man” extends even further than the physical body and incorporates equally the erasure of Native languages. In *Indian Horse*, Wagamese underlines how speaking Native languages is forbidden and is, in fact, harshly punishable in the boarding school: “Speaking a word of that language [Ojibway] could get you bitten or banished to the box in the basement the older ones had come to call Iron Sister”, Saul states, adding that “[A] boy named Curtis White Fox had his mouth washed out with lye soap for speaking Ojibway. He choked on it and died right there in the classroom” (48). Here, this overt erasure of the languages of Native Americans is painted both literarily and figuratively. Using soap to harshly wash their mouths suggests that even their language and, by extension, their culture is unclean and impure. As noted by Fanon: “To speak means being to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture” (*Black Skin, White Masks* 8). Hence, by erasing the language, residential schools attempt to annihilate the very culture that it vehicles.

This image of the removal of the skin conveys a literal and symbolic meaning, for it expresses the repeated and violent denial of Saul’s subjectivity and status as a human being which lies at the heart of the traumatic impact of racism. As demonstrated above, Wagamese initially deploys the aesthetics of phantasmagoria to capture the traumatic impact of the residential school system. In the following passages, however, he opts instead for the metaphorisation of

concepts that belong to the disciplines of Astronomy and Atomic Physics: 'I [Saul] read once that there are holes in the universe that swallow all the lights, all bodies. *St. Jerome's took all the light from my world*" (Wagamese 43, emphasis added). By referring to astronomical black holes, Wagamese endows *St. Jerome's* and, by extension, the whole institution of the Canadian residential school system with a cosmic power that has the ability to devour the whole of existence or, in this case, the very being of Saul. Like black holes that can strip the universe of all celestial bodies and all light, the school strips Saul of his innocence, humanity, culture, and self-worth. In a later passage, Saul once again alludes to this image of being stripped of himself; he declares: "When your innocence is *stripped* from you, when your people are pronounced backwards, primitive, savage, you come to see yourself as less than human. That is hell on earth, *that sense of unworthiness*" (80, emphasis added). Indeed, Saul is repeatedly deprived of his agency and stripped from his subjectivity. As a result, he is reduced to "a mote, a speck, an indifferent atom in its own orbit" (49). Saul's words echo Fanon's own declaration that one day, "completely dislocated […] I took myself far from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself as an object" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 85). Racism and its traumatic impact, thus, succeed in reducing the colonised peoples to the state of an unworthy and inconsequential object—to "a mote, a speck", as Wagamese puts it. By employing this glossary of Atomic Physics, Wagamese reveals that Saul's subjectivity is annihilated, even on the most microcosmic and microscopic level (as indicated by the sequestered "atom" that exists in its own orbit).

In *Swallow the Air*, Tara June Winch similarly does not fail to remind the readers of the trauma of child removal among Aboriginal peoples. From the end of the nineteenth century and up until the 1970s, various Australian policies such as "The Aboriginal Protection Board" regulated the lives of the Indigenous Australians, issuing what was known as "Half-Caste Acts" that allowed the authorities to forcibly remove "mixed-race" children from their parents' homes. These destructive policies resulted in what is known today as the Stolen Generations.[19] Although she is not directly affected by these policies—as in the

[19] The policies of child removal in Australia continued until the 1970s. In 2008, the Australian Parliament, under Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, presented an official apology to Indigenous peoples affected by these colonial policies.

case of Saul in Wagamese's *Indian Horse*—Winch's young protagonist, May, is nonetheless aware of their lingering traumatic effects through the memories of her mother who, in 1967, was the only child not removed from her own family. She states: "All my brothers and sisters had been put into missions by then, except Fred who went and lived with my mother's sister. And me, I was with my mother, probably cos my skin's real dark, see", adding that women in her neighbourhood "were messed up, climbing those walls, trying to forget. It wasn't a good time for the women, losing their children" (Winch 23–24). The reference to the Stolen Generations appears once again towards the end of the novel when, during her own quest for her identity, May finally arrives at her family's homeland, located in Euabalong, New South Wales. There, she encounters an Aboriginal elder called Graham who reveals the extent to which these child removal policies impacted that place. He states:

> 'You know some of our people, they been taken into the church and them priests have their way, ya know bad spirit in them, and they took it out on the little fellas. Who's gunna speak up for em little fellas? Other people don't understand, when *that bad spirit* happens to family, it stays in the family, when we born we got all our past people's pain too. It doesn't just go away like they think it does. […] This country, this government and them bad churches, they all one evil, ya know, they all workin with each other. (170–1, emphasis added)

The use of straightforward vocabulary here captures the inherited and intergenerational aspects of the pain and trauma engendered by the Australian colonial child removal policies. Yet, aesthetically, it offers itself as an epitome of subversion. The above passages demonstrate that Winch and Wagamese agree that the literary representation of these colonial policies of child removal in both Australia and Canada cannot be achieved simply through a straightforward, realist style. Instead, just as Wagamese does in *Indian Horse*, Winch also resorts to the Gothic[20] in order to register the traumatic impact of child removal in Australia. In fact, the Aboriginal elder Graham refers to these child removal policies as a

[20] Chapter Four of the thesis presents a thorough exploration of the mobilisation of the Gothic in Aboriginal literatures.

“bad spirit” whose pain clings to the history of any family it befalls. In *Darkness Subverted* (2010), Katrin Athlans explains that in Aboriginal literatures, “the subversive and transgressive qualities of the European Gothic are unearthed and turned against the most notorious Gothic perpetrator, the white invader” (29). Indeed, in the above passage, the church and the priests—who are conventionally considered as ramparts against such evil spirits—are paradoxically presented as being themselves the bearers of these spirits and the evil which they entail.

Eager to help May locate her mother’s family, Graham directs her to Betty who, he believes, may have information about the Gibson family members. Betty informs May that there are indeed some Gibsons living in “Lake Cargelligo” and suggests that her daughter, Joe, drives her there. Here, the novel transitions to its next chapter, titled “Country,” where May meets Percy Gibson—her mother’s cousin—and asks him if he could give her information about the family. May says: “my mom, she told me loads of stories”, to which Percy responds, “Stories, ha! What do you want to know? Where ya get ya skin from, ya tribal name, ya totem, ya star chart, the meaning of the world?” (Winch 180). While at first glance Percy appears to be mocking May’s almost romantic quest to find a sense of identity, his mockery may instead be read as a cover behind which hides the profound grief he feels over the fragmented history of the Gibson family that May is trying to reconstruct. Indeed, Percy declares:

> The thing is, we weren’t allowed to be what you’re looking for, and we weren’t told what was right, we weren’t taught by anyone. There is a big missing hole between this place and the place you’re looking for. That place, that people, that something you’re looking for. It’s gone. It was taken away. We weren’t told, love; we weren’t *allowed* to be Aboriginal. (180–1, emphasis added)

Commenting on this passage in “An Interview with Tara June Winch” (2007), the author explains that what Percy means here is that “they weren’t told that they had a history, had an identity that had any worth at all. They weren’t told they were allowed to remember that they’d belonged” (131). Indeed, what is most striking in this passage is Percy’s use of the word “holes” to describe the impact of

these assimilation policies on Aboriginal children in the mission schools where they had been confined. Just as Saul in Wagamese's *Indian Horse* compares the traumatic impact of residential schools in Canada that strip Indigenous children of their culture and identity to the consuming force of black holes, Percy, in Winch's *Swallow the Air*, also reveals that the mission dug holes between them and their sense of belonging to their land, their identity, and their culture.

4. Traumatic Intrusions, Traumatic Exclusions

While it is true that *Swallow the Air* and *Indian Horse* emanate from different Indigenous contexts and explore distinct colonial experiences, both novels offer a representation of the psychological impact of colonialism that echoes Fanon's investigation of the psycho-affective dimension of colonial oppression in *Black Skin, White Masks*. This psycho-affective dimension, Fanon demonstrates, operates through the non-recognition of colonised peoples and their unconscious internalisation of racist forms of recognition imposed by the colonial rule, resulting in the traumatic annihilation of their subjectivity and leading to their self-objectification. In the fifth chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, titled "The Fact of Blackness," Fanon describes the experience of being exposed to a racist gaze as a moment of traumatic intrusion that causes his "body schema" to collapse and be replaced instead by a "historical-racial schema" such that his consciousness of his own body is "solely negating. It's an image in the third person" (90–91). Being "overdetermined" and "*fixed*" from the outside by the racist gaze, Fanon begins to perceive his identity as a source of "shame and self-contempt" (95–96). In "The Emperor's 'New' Materialisms" (2020), Brendan Hokowhitu explains that in the aforementioned chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon posits racism as being in material its logic, for it is based on skin pigmentation but also material and discursive in "one's 'corporeal schema'" such that when they are forcibly made self-conscious of this schema, it becomes materially and discursively "replaced by 'racial epidermal schema'" (138). Indeed, he argues that "self-consciousness, as an effect of being classified as an epidermal object, subjugates the body's agency. In turn, this process of disorientation causes a profound physiological affect" (138). As such, putting Fanon's insights on racism within trauma theory, as argued by Rosanne Kennedy in "Mortgaged Futures" (2008), "it could be said that the 'deceptive psychological

structure' of colonialism makes it difficult for the colonised to witness their own oppression" (91). In addition to providing an account of what it means to live in an already traumatic settler-colonial environment where Indigeneity, with all that it entails, is deemed backward and inhuman, *Indian Horse* and *Swallow the Air* both offer a representation of the psychological dimension of colonial traumas that operate through the internalisation of the cumulative exposure to social, cultural, and institutional racism by Indigenous peoples within the settler-colonial states that encase them.

Aside from the structural violence and racial oppression depicted in *Indian Horse*, Saul is also repeatedly confronted by a myriad of racist incidents before and after leaving *St. Jerome's*. Indeed, racism follows Saul to the world of hockey, within which he initially believes that he has found a community that could provide him with a sense of belonging and "a shelter and a haven from everything ugly in this world" (Wagamese 90). This is demonstrated early on in the novel when Saul is invited to play with a non-Indigenous team, for which he scores fourteen points in ten games. Saul, however, soon finds himself excluded from the team because "The parents of other players want their own kids to play" (91). He asks, "It's because I'm Indian, isn't it?" and Father Leboutilier affirms it, adding that "[t]hey think it's their game" (91–92). Saul's rejection is not demanded by his fellow teammates, who are themselves children, but by their parents, who believe that he constitutes a threat to other white children and, by extension, to the settler-society itself. In this way, Wagamese's novel highlights the prevalent hegemonic discourses of white superiority that manifest through racial segregation and institutional racism. As Rothberg argues, in *Multidirectional Memory*, "colonial and other racist societies intensively police relations among social groups and seek to produce various kinds of segregation" (15). This is also made apparent in *Indian Horse* when Saul declares that people never use his name but instead refer to him using his player number, "13": "'Thirteen's good for an Indian'" (89); "'Thirteen don't talk too much'" (162); "'Thirteen never smiles'" (163). This refusal to refer to him by his name is also a refusal to address him as a subject. Conventionally, in collective sports games such as Hockey, player numbers can carry certain meanings, especially if they are related to a prominent player, and often, wearing the same number as this player can offer a sense of honour. Here, however, this entire model is turned on its head, and the use of the number is

instead endowed with derogatory connotations. Indeed, the number “13” begins to sound like the identification of a prisoner in a jail or a camp detainee. Moreover, the crowds at the hockey games verbally insult Saul, calling him “Indian Whores, Horse Piss, Stolen Pony” and “Indian hearse” (138, 164). Wagamese’s novel underlines that Native names are mocked because, as Gerald Vizenor (2009) states, they “create a sense of presence” against “simulations of absence and cultural dominance” (*Native Liberty* 5). In fact, names carry within them the subjectivity of those who bear them. Native names, thus, contain the very sense of subjectivity that colonial racism strives to annihilate.

In a prominent and violent scene, Wagamese depicts how the protagonist experiences a traumatic exclusion that is both literal and symbolic. This is demonstrated when Saul is adopted by Fred Kelly, who himself attended *St Jerome’s* residential school. Saul joins Fred’s hockey team, the Moose, and plays in tournaments against other Indigenous teams. Nevertheless, when the Moose win against one of the all-white teams in the town, Saul and his teammates are called out by a group of white townsmen in a local café, one of whom tells them: “‘you win a hockey tournament and then you think you got the right to come in here and eat like white people,’” adding that they “‘don’t eat with Indians’” (Wagamese 133). After beating and then urinating on his teammates, the townsman tells Saul, “remember your place. Next time, somewhere else, you might not get so lucky” (135). This scene underlines the traumatic exclusion of the protagonist that occurs first from the physical land, then from society, and finally from the category of the “human” altogether. Commenting on the traumatic impact of racism in the introduction to *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning* (2004), Sam Durrant asserts that the racialisation of the colonised other is traumatic insofar as it negates their humanity and constitutes “an act of *exclusion* that has ‘pathological’ consequences precisely because it introduces an internal exception into the category of the human” (5, emphasis added). Moreover, he emphasises that the dehumanisation of the colonised other and the denial of their subjectivity is a prerequisite for the “European to retain a sense of his own subjectivity” (5). Durrant’s assertion correlates with Smith’s argument that the dehumanisation of the colonised peoples is based on a comparison between the western subject with “‘something/someone else’ which exists on the outside” of the west such as “the oriental, the ‘Negro’, the ‘Jew’, the ‘Indian’, the

‘Aborigine’” (77). In the above passage, Saul is not addressed as a human but rather as a racialised object.

In addition, Saul’s literal and symbolic exclusion in the above scene informs what Durrant refers to as the ambivalence of colonial racism, and which, he argues, approaches the subjectivity of colonised peoples with simultaneous invisibility and “supervisibility” (17). On the one hand, there exists a denial of the subjectivity of the colonised other that, as stated above, constitutes a prerequisite for the coloniser “to retain a sense of his own subjectivity” and which, as Durrant further notes, is reminiscent of the colonial doctrine of *terra nullius* (5, 17). Indeed, admitting any “human” presence on the colonised lands jeopardises the very justification of the act of colonisation. In a similar manner, the recognition of the colonised peoples as subjects, and by extension, as humans jeopardise the colonisers’ so-called “superiority”. On the other hand, the “supervisibility” of the colonised and racialised other is based on “the racially marked ‘subject’ haunt[ing] the white imagination as a spectre that is all too visible, as if the denial of the racially marked’s subjectivity causes the other to return as an irresistible body, as an all too physical threat or temptation” (7). Indeed, when Saul asks one of his teammates about the reasons behind their mistreatment by the white townsmen, his teammate declares: “‘We crossed a line. Their line. They figure they got *the right* to make us pay for that’” (Wagamese 136, emphasis added). This is a right that Saul’s teammate believes is legitimate, for when Saul questions if they really have the right to do that, the teammate’s answer is simply: “‘I don’t know,’ […] ‘Sometimes I think so’” (136). In these passages, the racist reminder that Saul and his teammates receive from the townsman regarding their place reflects the processes of invisibility and supervisibility that characterise the racialisation of the colonised other. Nevertheless, in the context of the novel, the racialisation of the Indigenous characters cannot be reduced to being motivated by the settlers’ desire to affirm a certain “racial” superiority. Instead, what is unsettling for the settlers in the bar, is the hypervisibility of an Indigenous presence that poses a threat in a space they claimed as their own while being aware of it being built on stolen Indigenous lands. Therefore, these passages provide a microcosmic perspective of the particularity of the racialisation of Indigenous peoples by settler-colonial states and societies which, as noted above, is characterised by an endeavour to curtail Indigenous peoples’ sovereignty over their lands.

While playing with Fred's hockey team, Saul is approached by a scout who offers him an opportunity to play for a minor league team called the Toronto Marlboros. At first, Saul declines the offer and declares: "'White ice, white players,' I said. 'You gonna tell me that isn't the case everywhere? That they don't think it's their game wherever a guy goes'" to which the scout replies that "'[i]t's not a perfect country' […]. 'But it is a perfect game'" (149–50). Saul accepts the offer after his teammates convince him that he will "'be good *enough*'" (154, emphasis added). Nevertheless, upon joining the team, Saul is once again disillusioned, as he realises that even though he plays brilliantly, he cannot be recognised as "just a hockey player. [He] always had to be the Indian" (164). In fact, with the Toronto Marlboros, Saul repeatedly faces racism, not only from the opponents but also from the crowds, the press, and even from his own teammates. The local media depict his performance as a hockey player through the racist discourse of the "ig/noble savage" describing him as "counting coup," as a "stoic Indian," and "as bright-eyed as a painted warrior bearing down on a wagon train" (163). Newspapers call him "the Rampaging Redskin" and portray him "in a hockey helmet festooned with eagle feathers, holding a war lance instead of a hockey stick" (164–5). Furthermore, the crowd demonstrates verbal and physical racial hatred towards him: they threw garbage at him and then "pissed and shat in [his] dressing room" (131). At other games, the crowd "broke into a ridiculous war chant" and threw "plastic Indian dolls" at him (164). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon reveals how he feels battered down by racial stereotypes of "cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, [and] racial defects" (84–85). Both Fanon and Saul are "battered down" by stereotypes attached to their "racial" belonging. Yet, while it is figurative for the former, it is both literal and figurative for the latter, which renders it even more traumatic. Indeed, this rhetoric demonstrates how colonial racism operates in the social and the cultural sphere through the objectification of colonised peoples by a myriad of stereotypes that promote images of "backwardness," "savagery," and "uncivility." Growing up as an Indigenous child that had been placed in a residential school, Saul's exposure to physical, psychological, and racial violence is an everyday experience; the cumulative exposure to the social, institutional, and cultural racism that he has been subject to in his career as a hockey player adds a further layer to Saul's already traumatised self.

Commenting on intersubjectivity in colonial contexts, Coulthard refers to Fanon's phenomenological investigation of intersubjective recognition in *Black Skin, White Masks* which, as Fanon emphasises, is both objectifying and alienating for the colonised populations, for it is "played out in contexts structured by racial or cultural inequality" (Coulthard 139). Coulthard sheds light on the adjectives used by Fanon in his text to describe the negative nature of colonial recognition that is far from being "emancipatory" and "self-confirming" for the colonised, but it is rather fixating and dehumanising (139). Consequently, Coulthard notes, the colonised peoples "collapse into *self-objectification*" (139, emphasis added). Indeed, Fanon writes: "The white world […] expected that a man behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man […] They would see, then! I had warned them […] I had incisors to test. I was sure they were strong" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 86–87). In *Indian Horse*, Saul's internalisation of this longstanding exposure to racism drives him to this self-objectification; he grows violent and ultimately inhabits the very stereotypes that the others have used to belittle him and make him "ashamed of [his] skin" (164). Like Fanon in the lines above, Saul declares: "If they wanted me to be a *savage*, that's what I would give them" (Wagamese 164, emphasis added). Both Fanon and Saul are doomed to be "overdetermined" from the outside, as Fanon terms it—indeed, they are doomed to inhabit an assigned racist recognition and stereotype imposed by the settler-state and society.

In *Swallow the Air*, Winch demonstrates the ways in which the Australian policies of child removal have historically impacted the construction of Aboriginality. Based on biological criteria, these policies introduced what Anita Heiss, in *Am I Black Enough for You?* (2012), calls "a caste system defined by blood quantum (half-caste, quarter-caste, full-blood, quadroon) […] [that is] used as a means of watering down and eliminating Aboriginal peoples in Australia" (123). As such, these policies not only reinforced the racism of the settler-society against Aboriginal peoples, but also insidiously established layers of racial divisions among Aboriginal peoples themselves, creating what Fanon, in the context of the Antilles, calls "that little gulf that exists among the almost-white, the mulatto, and the nigger" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 83). This manifests early in the novel; when May and her half-brother Billy go to the beach, she declares: "We carried our bikes to the taps and washed our feet. Billy's feet were so much darker

than mine; he'd sometimes tease me and call me a 'halfie' and 'coconut'. We'd be laughing and chasing each other around the yard being racist and not even knowing it" (Winch 7–8). Although naively and unconsciously uttered by these two children, these lines show how Aboriginal communities also internalise this racist discourse which is prominently present in the settler-society.

Indeed, as delineated in the introduction to this chapter, Coulthard explains how, in Fanon's analysis of the subjective dimension of colonial recognition, he demonstrates the ways in which colonised populations not only internalise racist and derogatory representations created and imposed on them by the colonial rule, but also, overtime, accept, endure, and normalise these representations "along with the structural relations with which they are entwined" (Coulthard 32). In *Swallow the Air*, the internalisation of this colonial recognition—with both its structural and subjective facets—is made apparent when May describes the oppressive and marginalised housing project in which she lives, ironically called "Paradise Parade" (33). This housing project, May states, is "built over the old Paradise Abattoir", bearing "two long rows of housing commission flats, […] and echoes of broken dreams, all crammed into our own special section of Woonona Beach" (33). It is not difficult to discern a form of dehumanisation because this Aboriginal community is placed in a housing project that was once an animal slaughterhouse. May describes their "special section" as "a little slice of scum" that is situated on "the wrong side of the creek" where "[t]he cycleway was the only thing that bound [them] to the estate property" (33). In this way, their community lives constantly under the threat of eviction so that the government may build more estate properties for middle-class Australians in a process of "gentrification." Indeed, May considers "savouring the last crumbs of beachfront property" a privilege that will soon be taken away (33). She declares: "Soon they'd demolished all the fibro and move us mob out to the western suburbs. For now we were to be satisfied with the elitist postcodes and our anonymity" (33). While this anonymity does suggest the wider silencing of the Aboriginal peoples, here it seems to be depicted as something positive, for it protects their "privilege" of living on the beachfront, which is not commonplace for Aboriginal communities. In this way, Winch's novel reflects the internalisation and normalisation of these asymmetrical structures that govern the relations between Aboriginal peoples and the settler-society of Australia.

As discussed above, Wagamese's *Indian Horse* depicts, through a violent racial encounter, the traumatic exclusion of the protagonist that is both literal and symbolic. Winch's *Swallow the Air* captures a similar traumatic exclusion of its protagonist; here, however, this exclusion is equally preceded by a traumatic intrusion that is material, psychological and, above all, physical. This is demonstrated when May begins to notice changes around "Woonona Beach" with the advent of new, white-settler inhabitants. First, Winch presents this intrusion as material, for there is a literal act of encroachment by the white middle-class inhabitants that, for May, signals their impending eviction from "Paradise Parade." Indeed, in his exploration of racial trauma, Carter explains that scholarship on the association between racism and trauma suggests that "race-related stressors" are facilitated by social and structural factors "such as poverty and residential segregation" (85–86). Second, the intrusion is also psychological because it imposes a racist social order of which May soon becomes aware. Describing the cycleway that separates their fibro house from the estate properties, May states that she and her half-brother "once knew the cycleway well […] as we got older we began to feel like we didn't *belong* on that side of the creek either" (Winch 34, emphasis added). Indeed, May notices graffiti that says: "'*Mull up lads…fuck off coons*'" (35). Her response is to conceal her presence, declaring: "I began to hide *my skin* from the other beach, from this stretch of cycleway. There were bends all through this part, I remembered. They wouldn't see me, I thought" (35, emphasis added). This desire to be invisible is almost a facsimile of Fanon's own desire to hide from the racist gaze of the white man; he writes: "I slip into corners; I remain silent, I strive for anonymity, for invisibility. all I want is to be anonymous, to be forgotten. Look, I will accept the lot, as long as no one notices me!" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 88). May's endeavour to hide her skin colour stems from her internalisation of a racist discourse that designates her as the "other" and an awareness that she is always susceptible to racial oppression because of this difference.

Unlike Fanon, however, May also has to hide her female body, for she is aware of herself as a woman of colour who, within this racialised environment, is subject to racially-motivated sexual violence. Yet, May's endeavour to hide is doomed to failure, and this scene culminates in her assault and rape by one of

the white inhabitants who spots her on the cycleway. Through this violent scene, Winch inscribes the physical aspect of this traumatic intrusion:

> The panting of terror drew behind me as my shirt gave way and dumped over me, heavy kneecaps, hands and sand tormenting. We're down, we're stopped, and a blade caresses my cheek like a sympathetic breeze. 'This gunna show ya where ya don't belong dumb black bitch.' […] He ends it mutely and clips back his buttons: pop…pop…pop. I forget to feel the blade swim through my palm, shallow seeping blood. I do not nourish, I do not even turn over, not even when he leaves, this be my death, where I quietly finger the softness of my tongue. (36–37)

Here, Winch's novel reveals the gender limitations of Fanon's exploration of the traumatic impact of racism, which focuses exclusively on the male subject position. If for Fanon racism is experienced as a traumatic intrusion with profound psychological repercussions, May, by virtue of being a woman, experiences this traumatic intrusion in its psychological and physical dimensions. In addition, if, as David Lloyd (2000) states, "trauma entails violent intrusion and a sense of utter objectification that annihilates the person as subject or agent" and, indeed, that this traumatic intrusion "is no less apt as a description of the effects and mechanisms of colonisation" ("Colonial Trauma" 214), then it could be argued that the act of rape in the above scene corporealises this conception of trauma. While this intrusion targets May's body, her subjectivity, and her agency—made evident when she says, "this be my death" (Winch 37)—May's rape also symbolically alludes to the act of colonial penetration. Furthermore, the above passage portrays a traumatic exclusion, articulated when the rapist tells May, "'This gunna show ya where ya don't belong dumb black bitch'" (36). By this declaration, Mays is racially excluded from the category of the human as she is addressed as a racialised object. Yet, much like Saul and his teammates, her violent exclusion from the beach's cycleway reflects the settler-colonial's racialisation of Indigenous peoples that is geared towards territoriality

In a chapter titled "Painted Dreaming," May finds herself living with a group of homeless friends in an abandoned building that they decorate with graffiti using spray paint. Even in this precarious situation, however, the authorities constantly

harass them to make them leave. May ironically declares: “Living, making camp, was no right of ours” (127). The fragility of the fibro walls of the house she used to live in and the precariousness of the abandoned building she now squats in are contrasted with the solidity of the roof of the prison cell where she is eventually placed after her eviction. May declares: “the watch-house roof fell on me like a marble domino. […] Symmetrical bars framed the dark place where train tracks met. I drew the government-issue, cactus blanket over my face and dreamt of places, away from winter and walls” (128). While they are being evicted, May’s friends spray paint in the policemen’s face; she states: “They shot paint into the officer’s face, *his eyes bleeding his blindness*. *Savages*” (127, emphasis added). This short sentence speaks volumes about the institutional racism that Aboriginal peoples endure and can, in fact, be read as a form of resistance to racism which, in its simplest form, is based on a difference in skin colour. Symbolically, by dyeing the officer’s face with paint, they not only strip him of the superiority which, he believes, his skin colour entails, but also, subversively, they racially mark his body and his skin with a different colour which, within this context of a white, racist society, constitutes a marker and a justification for oppression and marginalisation. In the same vein, the hyperreal image of the officer’s eyes “bleeding his blindness” as he is splattered with paint is equally subversive and may be examined from two different angles. First, it suggests a materialisation of the trauma associated with the fact of being racialised, and which Fanon concretely compares to being amputed, causing “hemorrhage” that “splattered […] [his] whole body with black blood” (*Black Skin, White Masks* 85). Second, the blinding of the officer also evokes the taking away of the racist gaze that determines and defines May and her friends as the inferior “other.” Yet, paradoxically, the fact that the agent’s eyes are bleeding “*blindness*” also gestures towards an attempt to destroy the invisibility and the non-recognition that colonialism imposes on colonised peoples.

As delineated above, May and Saul are not only born in environments that are already traumatic, but they also endure a cumulative exposure to racism from the settler-state and society which, consequently, results in a structural annihilation of their subjectivity and agency. This internalisation of racism leads both May and Saul down a path of absence and withdrawal, such that they eventually succumb to substance abuse as a way of distancing themselves from

their pain. Indeed, in *Red Skins, White Masks*, Coulthard contends that issues such as mental illnesses, alcoholism, substance abuse, and "violent behaviors directed both inward against the self and outward toward others" are deeply related to the subjective dimension of colonial domination on Indigenous peoples (42). In "Re-Storying the Colonial Landscape" (2013), Jack Robinson explains that, in *Indian Horse*, Saul's constant exposure to racism within the field of professional hockey "has replaced [his] vision with rage, and alcohol has deepened his isolation" (99). In fact, after leaving the Toronto Marlboros, Saul pursues a path of absence in order to withdraw from his suffering. Amidst his pain, Saul declares: "I am not sure when I began to drink myself. I only knew that when I did the roaring in my belly calmed. In alcohol I found an antidote to exile" (Wagamese 180–1). Here again, the author moves away from a realist style and opts instead for a subversive adoption of western gothic and spectral tropes. As explained earlier, Burnham clarifies that Indigenous authors adopt and subvert conventional elements of the western Gothic to reflect on the haunting and destructive mechanism of colonialism and imperialism (228). By depicting Saul's pain as a monstrous presence that haunts him, Wagamese inscribes the protagonist's trauma as a symptom of colonial oppression. Moreover, he suggests that Saul's desire for absence from himself and the world surrounding him is self-induced, for Saul declares: "I began to drink myself" (Wagamese 180). Indeed, in alcohol, Saul finds a temporary remedy for his pain, calling it "an antidote to exile" (181). He becomes a chemist, concocting new mixes and playing with dosages to find the right amount required to appease his pain. Saul states, "[y]ou can live for years like that. You experiment to find out how much you need to swallow to get you past certain chunk hours, how much you need to walk steadily, without your hands shaking. I was an alchemist, mixing solutions. […] It was a dim world. Things glimmered, never shone" (181). Through this image of a "dim world" that "glimmered" and yet "never shone", the novel suggests that alcohol functions as a veil over Saul's eyes that is used to escape from seeing the clarity of the world and the unbearable pain that it inflicts on him.

Wagamese's novel also seems to suggest that Saul's inability to communicate with the outside world is a result of his lack of comprehension of his own pain. Towards the end of the novel, Saul meets Ervin Sift at a bar in Ontario, who offers him his friendships and helps him get back on his feet. Ervin

physically nurses Saul's hangover, sitting "at [his] bedside with a wet cloth to wipe [his] brow or a cup of soup he'd hold while [he] sipped it" (183). He offers Saul emotional support, talking to him when he gets "scared", taking him out "to the porch for fresh air", but "[a]ll through it, he never asked a question" (183–4). Saul stresses this fact that Ervin never asks about what haunts him; for Saul, this silence offers comfort from attempting to explain what he remains unable to articulate. Yet, Saul once again falls prey to the "things swimming around in" him that he "could neither hold on to long enough to comprehend or learn to live with" (186). He confesses that "[w]hen those times came, I couldn't talk. There was no language for it. I suppose when you can't understand something yourself it's impossible to let anybody else in even if you're motivated to. I wasn't. The bleakness and me were old companions by then, and the only thing I knew how to do about it was to drink" (186). As noted earlier, from the beginning of the novel Saul appears uninterested in communicating his story. The nucleus of this disinterest can be seen here, in this absence of motivation. However, this disinterest also stems from the nature of the pain itself: Saul's trauma is cumulative, such that it becomes almost commonplace, possessing at this point of the novel no communicative quality. The only possible response to his trauma is to drink. Leaving Ervin, Saul resumes his journey of exile, heading towards Winnipeg "with another bottle in [his] coat and the taste of another dried-up dream in [his] throat" (188). In Winnipeg, Saul ultimately suffers the physical repercussions of his alcoholism. He collapses "on a sidewalk in Winnipeg" and is strapped down "because the withdrawal terrors got real bad" (190). Saul finds himself "reduced to an *incoherent babble* and thrashing about" (190, emphasis added); this is the final stage of inarticulation. Here, Saul finally resorts to joining the New Dawn Centre for rehabilitation. This is the point at which Saul ceases writing his story, indicating a shift in the narrative structure from recollections and flashbacks to the present time, for as Saul admits, "[t]here wasn't much to write about after that, though" (190).

In *Swallow the Air*, following the suicide of their mother, May and her half-brother go live with their Aunty, who soon falls prey to alcohol and gambling, and suffers from the domestic violence of her boyfriend, Craig, who is himself an alcoholic. Indeed, living under these conditions, May describes her Aunty's house not as a "home" at all but as "a place of grog [alcohol] and fists" (Winch 53). In an

important scene following Billy's eighteenth birthday (on which his Aunty gifts him a flask of alcohol), the siblings return to find Aunty's boyfriend attempting to place her head on the stove. Billy tries to interfere, but Craig punches him in the chest. In a fit of furry, Billy stands up and "charged to the fibro wall, kicking his foot through the chalky plasterboard as we all looked on disbelieving" (58). In "Rites/Rights/Writes of Passage" (2013) Jeanine Leane argues that the "the anger, substance abuse, and crime" depicted in *Swallow the Air* must be read as "a generational response to institutionalised racism and mistreatment, rather than innate dysfunctional behavior on the part of Aboriginals, as has been suggested in the discourses of health and education recently" (117). Running away from her Aunty's home, May ultimately finds herself in a squat which the novel depicts as the epitome of marginalisation; this is a place characterised by homelessness and substance abuse, and so captures the extent to which Aboriginal youths exist on the fringes of the settler-society.

May calls the squat a "drug house" and describes those who live there as "anxious *nobodies*" (Winch 65, emphasis added). Through this description, Winch's novel reflects on the ways in which, within colonial environments, colonised peoples are othered to the point of complete nonexistence and, by extension, become devoid of subjectivity and agency. In addition, this state of nonexistence is exacerbated further by a self-inflicted numbing—through substance abuse—which offers colonised peoples a way of distancing themselves from their suffering. Indeed, when May is offered drugs for the first time, Sheepa, one of her fellow squatters, tells her that "[i]t'll take the hurt out of your *eyes*" (67, emphasis added). Yet, when she eventually succumbs to addiction, May declares: "The drug does not *recognise* me anymore, does not recognise that I even exist under its hold" (69, emphasis added). Here, May anthropomorphises drugs, endowing them with an ability to see and recognise; but while she is under the hold of these drugs, this recognition appears to fail. In this way, these lines echo the non-recognition imposed on colonised peoples by the colonial environment itself. Moreover, throughout the novel, Winch pays particular attention to the recurring image of the "eyes"; in fact, she associates drug use with a kind of necessary blindness or, indeed, as one form of evasion by which the characters are spared from continuously witnessing their ongoing trauma and suffering. This finds its best expression when May discovers a girl

dead in the squat from a drug overdose. Describing this scene, May traumatically repeats three times that the girl "had *no eyes*. […] She had *no eyes*. She did not wake. […] She had *no eyes*. She did not wake" (73–74, emphases added). As stated above, Winch's novel suggests that drugs are a provisional way of inhibiting the eyes from witnessing the suffering—indeed, they are one way of achieving a kind of desired hollowness. This is made explicit in May's depiction of her half-brother Billy who carries the girl's body out of the house while he is himself under drugs. Looking astutely at Billy's face, May notes that he, too, "was *vacant*. He had eyes. He did not wake" (74, emphasis added). Unlike the face of the dead girl, Billy does have eyes, and yet, their apparent vacancy captures the state of temporary evasion from reality that many of the squatters willingly confine themselves to. Building on this argument, the girl's death from a drug overdose thus becomes the final act of deliverance from this suffering, as the complete absence of her eyes is literal, figurative, and, most of all, *permanent*. May, on the other hand, "ha[s] eyes, no mouth" (74). Unlike the other squatters, she still retains the ability to see and to witness; yet, being deeply traumatic, this scene prevents her from uttering a single word, even as Billy and Sheepa place the body on a train that carries the physical "evidence" of what May has just witnessed "away from the empty platform" (74). Here, the absence of May's mouth is symbolic of an even more significant absence of agency and speech that are annihilated by this traumatic context.

5. Traumatic Betrayals, Discursive Failures

In *Indian Horse* and *Swallow the Air*, Wagamese and Winch both demonstrate that Saul and May's traumas are not only a consequence of cumulative exposure to racism but also due to other forms of structural traumas which, unlike those related to racism, are not recorded straightforwardly but are only revealed after the protagonists revisit, in one way or another, the original sites of those traumas. In *Indian Hose*, while Saul succeeds in overcoming his alcoholism at the centre, he nevertheless feels "as though nothing has changed" (Wagamese 191), for alcoholism is not the cause of his trauma; rather, it is just one of its consequences. He takes long walks and explores the territory behind the New Dawn Centre, for, he declares, "[o]nly the land offered [him] any kind of solace" (190). On one of his walks, he is compelled to spend the night in the woods when he finds it too late

to return to the Centre. Laying down and watching the stars, Saul experiences a kind of waking dream where he is visited by his great-grandfather, Shaboogeesick, and other family members, including his father, mother, brother, and grandmother. Upon opening his eyes, he cries and decides to leave the New Dawn Centre, stating: “I knew exactly where I was going” (192). At this moment, Saul realises that he must return to *St Jerome’s*; but when Moses asks him for a reason, he responds: “I don’t know why I have to go. I just know I do” (194). At *St. Jerome’s*, Saul stands by the ice rink where he first learned to play hockey. He cries and suddenly remembers that during his time at *St Jerome’s,* Father Leboutilier used to rape him. Saul declares:

> “You are a glory Saul”. That’s what he always told me. […] what he said to me those nights he snuck into the dormitory and put his head beneath the cover. The words he used in the back of the barn when he slipped my trousers down. That was the phrase that began the groping, the tugging, the pulling and the sucking. […] he’d given me the job of cleaning the ice to buy my silence, to guard his secret. He’d told me I could play when I was big enough. I loved the idea so much that I kept quiet. I loved the idea of being loved so much that I did what he asked. When I felt myself liking it, I felt dirty and sick. (199)

These concealed memories of his rape as a child are what hinder Saul’s progress while at The New Dawn Centre. Because these memories had been obscured from him, Saul could not write them down. At *St. Jerome’s*, Saul finally recollects the memory—that “truth of the abuse and the rape of [his] innocence” (200). He understands that it was because of this horror that he had first used hockey as a means to stop himself from remembering. He states: “I had run to the game. Run to it and embraced it. [...] to get to the avenue of escape” (199). Hockey, therefore, becomes the shield that protects Saul from the reality of the rape; when hockey is taken away from him, it is subsequently replaced by anger, physical violence, and, finally, alcohol. Having remembered now, Saul says: “It was a very long walk back to town, and I knew where I had to go from there” (200). He returns to Gods Lake “where everything started and everything ended” (206), and then again to The New Dawn Center one final time. He declares, “I hadn’t planned anything. The only thing I had known for certain was that I had to backtrack, to revisit vital

places form my early life. […] I needed to go to the school just as I needed to return to Gods Lake" (207). After visiting these "vital places", Saul returns to the centre "to talk […] [,] to share the truth of what [he has] discovered locked deep inside [him]. […] [and] to learn how to live with it without drinking" (207).

In *Swallow the Air*, while living at her Aunty's house, May receives a postcard from her white father apologising for having left her and her Mom. He informs her that he is in Darwin "picking mangoes" (Winch 45). Seeing this card, May begins to recollect brief memories of her father. She remembers how they used to eat "powdery watermelon spitting black pips with a mouthful of giggles" (46). She remembers how, when she was six years old, her dad used to teach her and Billy how to fish and wonders why she had forgotten all about him. She declares: "He might as well have never left. I wondered how I could ever have thought he did, how I could've allowed the memory of my father to pass me, to *cease existing*" (47, emphasis added). This question is answered when May witnesses a street prize-fight where, among the people frenzying about the spilling blood and cracking bones, she spots her father: "I'll never ever forget that day, at the rodeo fights, […] I found my father. […] There he was, watching the men bleed faces. […] He was the monster [she] tried to hide" (86). Indeed, in this moment of seeing her father in the context of violence and blood, she understands why she had allowed his memory "to cease existing" (47). Now, she recalls the violent father who mistreated and beat her mother. Just like Saul could not remember his rape until he returns to the residential school, May, too, cannot recall her father's violence until she sees his "anger face" once again (86). Once more, May repeats this statement about her father's memory having vanished from existence, stating that "when that anger face became his always face […] the world *ceased to be real*, to be able to be understood" (86, emphasis added).

At first glance, the juxtaposition of these two passages from *Indian Horse* and *Swallow the Air* may be inaccurate, for they articulate two different forms of trauma. It would also be understandable if Saul's trauma of rape is, at first glance, expected to be read alongside May's own trauma of rape rather than that of witnessing domestic violence. Yet, what brings together the nature of these two forms of trauma and their literary representations in these two texts is more important than what separates them. Indeed, it should be noted here that both, in the case of Saul and May, the perpetrators of these traumas are people with

whom they have a connection and a bond of trust. Father Leboutilier is Saul's mentor at *St. Jerome's* and the one who introduces him to hockey, thus providing him with an opportunity to leave the school earlier than expected. In May's case, even if the violence is not perpetrated directly on her, she nevertheless witnesses the cumulative effect of domestic violence by a white father against her Aboriginal mother. However, May unconsciously dissociates herself from her memories to save this bond of trust, which explains her initial desire to find her father, as demonstrated at the beginning of the novel. Thus, the nature and mechanisms of these forms of structural trauma and the dissociation they entail for both Saul and May can be read as a form of "betrayal traumas." In their article "Intergenerational Associations between Trauma and Dissociation" (2011), Annmarie C. Hulette et al. explain that "Betrayal Trauma Theory posits that dissociation is most likely to occur when a trauma is perpetrated by someone with whom the victim has a close relationship" (217).

Moreover, as discussed above, Saul's rape in Wagamese's novel is not recorded in the first part of the novel and is only revealed when he revisits the site of the original trauma. It is there that he finally remembers, transforming these events into memories and, by extension, into words. Similarly, Winch's novel articulates how trauma annihilates May's power of remembering and experiencing. May declares that she "couldn't remember the endings of the memories of [her father]" (Winch 86). In "Symptoms of Discursivity: Experience, Memory, and Trauma" (1999), Ernst van Alphen argues that what creates trauma is *not* the fact of experiencing particular traumatic events that return belatedly to haunt the victim, as argued by Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996). Instead, he asserts that trauma itself makes it impossible to construct experience because it cannot be discursively articulated and recorded as memory. Van Alphen writes that "[e]xperience depends on discourse to come about; forms of experience do not just depend on the event or history that is being experienced, but also on the discourse in which the event is expressed/thought/conceptualised" (24). Indeed, for van Alphen, experience, and the subjectivity that it constitutes, are discursively constructed. He states that "subjects are the effect of the discursive processing of their experiences" (25). Therefore, forms of structural trauma stem from a discursive failure of experience, subjectivity, and, by extension, memorialisation. Indeed, as long as it is not discursively transformed into an experience, trauma

remains unarticulated and inaccessible for the traumatised individual. In *Indian Horse*, Saul is able to communicate this specific trauma only *after* he gains that discursive power that van Alphen deems necessary. Thus, through this very discursive power, Saul transforms his trauma into memory and, by extension, into *experience*. Similarly, by stressing the possibility of memories ceasing to exist, Winch's *Swallow the Air*, suggests that, as a result of the trauma of witnessing her mother's abuse at the hands of her father, May's ability to record memories of him fails, and her discursive capacity to create an experience is in turn interrupted. In fact, May's language, alluding specifically to her forgetting of the "endings" of these memories, captures that very interruption which, as van Alphen argues, is the direct cause of trauma.

6. Conclusion

This chapter delved into a trans-Indigenous reading of the representation of the psychological/subjective dimension of colonial trauma in a First Nations Ojibway novel, *Indian Horse* and an Aboriginal Wiradjuri novel, *Swallow the Air*. It explored the narrative registers and aesthetic techniques employed by the authors in order to register the traumatic impact of racism endured by the protagonists of their novels. First positing the theoretical framework, the chapter demonstrated how the traumatic impact of racism is not taken into account by PTSD models in the field of psychology and, by extension, in orthodox trauma theory in literary studies, as it does not respond adequately to the event-based model of trauma in which trauma is a belated response to a single, recognisable, and violent event that occurs outside the norms of human experiences. In psychology, the concept of "racial trauma" offers a critical vocabulary through which the traumatic impact of racism can be adequately diagnosed. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, approaching racial trauma as a critical discourse by drawing on the anticolonial works of Fanon would allow for the placing of its psychological concepts within broader colonial power structures. Similarly, in decolonising trauma studies, scholars working on the representation of (post-)colonial traumas in non-western texts and contexts conceive the trauma of racism as insidious and cumulative, for the experience of racism can be a quotidian reality for those who are targeted. Here again, these scholars rely heavily on Fanon's works, particularly *Black Skin, White Masks*, where he critically analyses the psychological impacts of colonial

oppression and dehumanisation on colonised peoples. Since the Indigenous novels approached in this chapter address settler-colonial experiences, the particularity of Indigenous peoples' histories of racialisation in settler-colonial contexts is thoroughly delineated in the introduction, for such histories are inherent to the settler-colonial logic of elimination whose purpose is Indigenous lands rather than their labour. Nevertheless, being different from other forms of othering, the racialisation of Indigenous peoples entails psychological and subjective problems that need to be addressed in their own terms.

The first important aspect that is present in both the novels of Richard Wagamese and Tara June Winch, is the insistence on the lingering trauma of child removal in what is known today as "Canada" and "Australia." While Saul in *Indian Horse* is a direct survivor of the Canadian residential school system, in *Swallow the Air*, May becomes cognisant of the traumatic impact of child removal in Australia through the memories of her mother and her uncle. Nevertheless, both novels register the traumatic impact of these colonial policies through a subversive appropriation of the western Gothic. Moreover, *Indian Horse* and *Swallow the Air* capture the traumatic impact of the dehumanisation and non-recognition of colonised peoples, as well as their internalisation of racist forms of recognition imposed on them by settler-states and societies. In fact, the authors articulate the ways in which growing up in an already racialised and traumatic environment—and the subsequent cumulative exposure and the internalisation of social, cultural, and institutional racism—is traumatic for May and Saul insofar as it excludes them from the category of the human with all that it entails, thus annihilating their subjectivity and agency. Yet in both novels, the traumatic exclusions of the protagonists by the settlers reflects the colonial racialisation of Indigenous peoples which, as argued throughout the chapter, aims to gradually reduce the Indigenous presence on their own lands. In fact, in both *Indian Horse* and *Swallow the Air*, the racist exclusions of Saul and May are first and foremost caused by their hypervisibility in spaces on which settler-states and societies claim a sovereignty that is premised on the Indigenous absence. Furthermore, the authors account for another facade of the protagonists' traumas, one which is more structural and which, considering the relationship of trust that Saul and May have with the perpetrators, thereby creates an acute dissociation that makes it impossible for the protagonists to articulate their traumas discursively or to

transform them into memories until they revisit, in one way or another, the original sites of these specific traumas. It is only then that they gain the discursive power they need to transform these traumas into memories and, by extension, into experiences that may then be included in their respective narratives.

While this chapter has primarily explored the representation of trauma in *Indian Horse* and *Swallow the Air*, both novels also offer a strong sense of healing and renewal. At the culmination of Wagamese's novel, Saul leaves the rehab centre and returns to live with his foster parents, Fred and Martha Kelly, who are themselves survivors of the Canadian residential school system. Saul declares: "I wanted to learn to live with it without drinking. […] I needed a solid start on a new road and I knew it would be hard. […] and when I felt strong, confident, secure with my feelings and my new set of skills, I returned to knock on the door that I hadn't knocked on in a long, long time. It was just after the first *thaw*" (Wagamese 206, emphasis added). Saul understands this return to his adoptive family as the first moment of "thaw" in his journey of healing. Indeed, he finally expresses a desire to put an end to his exile and to reconnect with the people who have granted him a feeling of belonging and a sense of "home" in its most literal and figurative sense—a feeling that he believed never to be able to experience after his removal from his real family. By the same token, in the closing chapter of Winch's *Swallow the Air*, aptly titled "Home," May realises that where she truly belongs is with her Aunty and her half-bother Billy. Ultimately, she declares: "My mother knows that I am home, at the water I am always home. Aunty and my brother, we are of the Wiradjuri nation, *hard water*. […] this place still owns us, still owns our history, my brother's and my own, Aunty's too. Mum's. They are part of this place; I know I need to find them" (Winch 194).

CHAPTER III

Apocalyptic Revelations, (Post-)Apocalyptic Survivance: Articulating Indigenous Sovereignties

1. Introduction: Settler-colonialism and the Myth of Indigenous Disappearance

This chapter offers a trans-Indigenous reading of *Killer of Enemies* by Joseph Bruchac and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* by Ambelin Kwaymullina. It investigates how the authors, through their futuristic narratives, provide various decolonial readings which resist and repudiate colonial narratives of modernity that relegate Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems to backwardness and primitivism. While in "Trauma in Non-Western Contexts," Irene Visser explains that scholars working on trauma in non-western texts and contexts highlight the cultural dimension of colonial traumas (126), there is a paucity of scholarly works which examine this dimension within the project of decolonising trauma studies. However, one such examination can be found in David Lloyd's "Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery?" where he investigates the impact and mechanisms of colonial traumas on colonised peoples on the psychological, cultural, and socio-political levels. Lloyds argues that it might be possible to draw a parallel between the psychological and the cultural effects of colonial traumas since "the after-effects of colonization for a culture could be held to be identical with those for the traumatized individual" (214). He explains this extrapolation through the fact that the coercive apparatus of colonialism works to control the means of making sense of traumatising events that "perpetually reproduces the symptoms of traumatisation" by denying the traumatised subject the ability to think outside the colonial hegemonic discourse and the narrative that justifies it (214–5). Within Indigenous contexts, Linda Tuhiwai Smith offers in *Decolonizing Methodologies* a comprehensive analysis in which she dissects colonial attitudes towards Indigenous peoples, as well as their cultures and knowledge systems, from a historical, theoretical, and academic point of view. Among the intersecting concepts investigated in this work are colonialism, imperialism, history, theory, knowledge, and writing. Smith states that the concepts of imperialism, history, theory, and writing ground the way in which "indigenous peoples are articulated"

(58). She explains that these concepts are loaded with emotion. They constituted the basis on which "indigenous languages, knowledges and cultures have been silenced or misrepresented, ridiculed or condemned in academic and popular discourses" (58). As such, Smith argues that the project of decolonisation implies an engagement "with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels" (58). She asserts that imperialism and "its specific expression of colonialism" are part of "the indigenous experience. It is part of [their] story, [their] version of modernity" (57). Indeed, besides genocides, dispossession, and land removal, the settler-colonial logic of elimination also manifests through the termination of Indigenous cultures, worldviews, and knowledge systems through various policies of assimilation and non/misrepresentation in academic and popular narratives.

Smith explains that one of the definitions of imperialism situates it within a complex set of ideologies and transformations in the economic, political, and cultural life during the European Age of Enlightenment (61). She writes: "In this wider Enlightenment context, imperialism becomes an integral part of the development of the modern state, of science, of ideas and of the 'modern' human person" (61). In fact, Smith highlights that imperialism, as it is currently confronted by Indigenous peoples, resulted from the European Enlightenment, which is also referred to as the modern era because it led to the developments of the industrial revolution and capitalism, as well as the emergence of new forms of knowledge such as the "philosophy of liberalism" and the appearance of various new scientific disciplines (117). Smith declares: "The development of scientific thought, the exploration and 'discovery' by Europeans of other worlds, the expansion of trade, the establishment of colonies, and the systematic colonization of indigenous peoples in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are all facets of the modernist project" (119). It is within this modernist project that the western definition of "history" emerged and which, according to Smith, developed hand in hand within imperial and colonial discourses of the "Other" (74). This western construction of history is that of a singular chronology defined by a linear development and progress of societies that, through time, become less primitive, more objective, "more civilized, more rational, and their social structures become more complex and bureaucratic" (75). According to this view, Smith explains, history must have a point of beginning and "some criteria" that are generally determined by the concepts of "discovery" and "development" of literacy and

social organisations (76). Moreover, the western conception of history, she argues, posits the emergence of the "the modern industrial state" as what separates between the pre-modern and the modern era; thus, history's point of departure is grounded in ideas of "the emergence of the rational individual and the modern industrialized society" (78). Anything that is not connected to the "modern industrial state", Smith notes, was not considered "worthy of history" and was therefore "designated as prehistorical, belonging to the realm of myths and traditions" (78, 76). Indeed, she states that Indigenous peoples possess oral stories of the ways in which their history is negated and ignored, "or rendered as the lunatic ravings of drunken old people" (73). She writes: "The negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly 'primitive' and 'incorrect' and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization" (73). Within the western imperial imagination, Indigenous peoples had no histories before colonisation. Their socio-political and economic organisations were dismissed and considered primitive and pre-historical, as they do not meet the western standards that have defined history and civilisation.

From a similar perspective, Smith claims, western imperialism considered itself the sole holder of valid knowledge systems, higher culture, and rational worldviews and visions that explain reality, the world, and life. She adds that when western visions and perspectives of reality meet other forms of worldviews, the former are always represented as being of "a higher order" because they are perceived as rational and thus less "prone to the dogma, witchcraft and immediacy of people and societies which were so 'primitive'" (102). These judgments, she adds, are based on a set of western ideological constructions such as "literacy, democracy and the development of complex social structures" that are considered "a universal truth and a necessary criterion of civilized society" (102). Smith explains that there are stark differences between Indigenous worldviews and western perspectives of time and space, along with "different systems of language for making space and time 'real' underpin notions of past and present, of place and of relationships to the land" (113). For the imperial west, however, Indigenous knowledge systems that existed prior to colonisation were considered primitive and prehistoric and therefore ceased to exist when they "came into contact with 'modern' societies, that is the West"

(113). As such, imperialism posits western knowledge systems as the only rational, valid, and empirical ways of understanding the world, life, and reality. In this way, colonialism is legitimised as a "desire to bring progress into the lives of indigenous peoples—spiritually, intellectually, socially and economically" (114). Smith explains that colonial education, whether through missionary and religious (residential) schools or secular education, played a crucial role in imposing the superiority of western knowledge, languages, and culture on many Indigenous peoples (126). She writes: "Numerous accounts across nations now attest to the critical role played by schools in assimilating colonized peoples, and in the systematic, frequently brutal, forms of denial of indigenous languages, knowledges and cultures" (126–7). Yet, Smith explains that these forms of "'disciplining the colonised'" as she calls them, were legitimised by racist policies and legislations and were, in turn, accepted by white societies as being necessary to assimilate Indigenous peoples to become "citizens (of their own lands)" (134). The traumatic impacts of these colonial policies, she asserts, were not only physical and emotional but also linguistic and cultural, as they were designed to destroy Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous collective identities and memories (134). Indeed, one could think of the American Indian boarding schools (seventeenth century-early-twentieth century) in the USA, the Canadian Indian residential school system (1894–1997) in Canada, and the removal of Indigenous children in Australia under the so-called "Aboriginal Protection Board" (1910–1970).

It is important to note that these brutal forms of assimilation were clothed in philanthropic narratives that claimed they were "saving" Indigenous peoples from fatal extinction, as their ways of life were considered asynchronous with "modernity." Indeed, in the USA and Australia, this is particularly reflected in anthropological discourses through the rhetoric of "the last member of a particular tribe" or the "dying and vanishing race." In *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*, Patrick Wolfe explains that this is precisely how the settler-colonial endeavour to eliminate the Indigenous presence is articulated at the level of ideology, calling it the "romance of extinction" that, while not being homicidal, was no less consistent with the [settler] logic of elimination (2, 29). In "'The Last Indian' Syndrome Revisited" (2006), Cristina Stanciu explains that nineteenth-century United States removal policies that targeted what the state

considered as “unassimilable Indians” were reinforced by a “pseudohumanitarian note” that consisted of “telling the Indians they would die if they remained where they were” (29). This gave birth to the myth of the “vanishing indian” in the nineteenth and twentieth-century US anthropology and art, where white anthropologists and artists proudly strived to record in their different disciplines the last living members of specific tribes (28–29). In a similar way, the Australian “Aboriginal Protection Boards” inaugurated by the 1909 Aborigines Protection Act were a concretisation of the late-nineteenth-century pseudo-philanthropic discourse of “Smooth the Dying Pillow.” In “Assimilating the Natives in the US and Australia” (2000), Gary Foley explains that “Smooth the Dying Pillow” discourse was premised on the inevitable disappearance of “full-blood” Aboriginal people, thus the plan was to “save” mixed-race Aboriginal people through gradual biological assimilation into mainstream white society (6). While they varied in terms of the modes, duration, and geopolitical and historical contexts within which they are implemented, the policies of assimilation and confinement of Indigenous peoples in the United States and Australia are inherent to settler-colonialism as a structure of dispossession. Indeed, these strategies are primarily geared towards the elimination of Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems that bind Indigenous peoples to their lands.

Nevertheless, the colonial endeavour to destroy Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems can be noted in two other dimensions: the non/misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in colonial narratives and the appropriation and commodification of Indigenous cultural and spiritual elements. In “Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science” (2011), Jessica Langer explains that the colonial intervention in Indigenous cultures starts by fetishising and objectifying them as “curiosities to be observed”, which constitutes a disrespect towards Indigenous cultures as it entails a colonial arrogance and entitlement to encroach upon them (133). Moreover, Langer adds, this colonial intervention on Indigenous cultures does not conclude with a simple objectification, as aspects of these cultures are then appropriated, commodified, and reduced to “simplified replications of an actual culture” (133). This process of cultural commodification and replication, Langer argues, constitutes an “overt and covert attack from colonialists and missionaries” (133). As such, she states, the destruction of Indigenous cultures happens simultaneously as inauthentic copies of their aspects are disseminated

as genuine representations of these cultures that were annihilated "as much by the greed of the colonial gaze as by colonial guns" (133). In mainstream popular culture, Indigenous peoples and cultures are also represented as obsolete and irrelevant vis-à-vis a western hegemonic perspective on modernity. They are either relegated to a pathology of backwardness and underdevelopment or filtered in a way that certain cultural elements are appropriated, exploited, and commodified. In *Native Liberty,* Gerald Vizenor terms these tendencies as a discourse of "cultural dominance" that places Indigenous cultures outside modernity and its "rational, cosmopolitan consciousness" (194). Such a discourse, Vizenor adds, promotes a "native" absence in history "represented by images of traditions, [and] simulations of the other in the past" (194). Thus, he points out that "the presence of natives" in colonial narratives was only that of "tragic" victims and was reinforced by "the notions of savagism and the emotive images of *a vanishing race*" (194, emphasis added). Indeed, this is present in literature and later in cinema through various blockbusters such as the film adaptation of James Fenimore Cooper's (1826) *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) in the USA and Tom Haydon's documentary film aptly titled *The Last Tasmanian* in Australia.

It is important to note that misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples and cultures are also present in mainstream western fantasy and science fiction. Within the Australian context, Brian Attebery explains in "Aboriginality in Science Fiction" (2005) that in science fiction works produced by white Anglo-Australian authors, this tendency emerges from the history and the settler-colonial policies of what is known today as "Australia" and in its treatment of Indigenous peoples as it echoes "the longstanding legal principle of *terra nullius*, by which the Australian continent was treated as if it had no ownership before white settlement" (387). Indeed, he argues that this is particularly expressed in the period that he terms "the Bad Old Days" and that expands from the 1890s to the 1970s when Aboriginal peoples were represented in Australian fantasy and science fiction "as subhuman and Aboriginal beliefs and traditions compare unfavorably with European-derived science and social organization" (404). In this "Bad Old Days" catalogue of settler fantasy and science fiction, Attebery includes Austyn Granville's *The Fallen Race* (1894), G. Firth Scott's *The Last Lemurian* (1898), Erle Cox's *Out of the Silence* (1925), J.M. Walsh's *Vandals of the Void* (1931), and Ron Smith's "Strong Attraction" (1968). A similar observation is made by Chippewa scholar

Danika Medak-Saltzman concerning the representation, or better yet, the misrepresentation of Indigenous people in mainstream US science fiction and fantasy works. Indeed in “Coming to You from the Indigenous Future” (2017), she explains that as an Indigenous person, she grew critical of mainstream Euro-American science fiction narratives for their “procolonial, prosupremacy of (certain) humans, proextractive, procapitalist, and promasculinist elements” and their portrayals of the world and some peoples as “needing to be tamed, exploited, civilized, removed, or vanquished” (140). In addition, these narratives, she remarks, approach Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems as belonging to a mythical prehistory, using them as “plot devices, prophets, or pathological killers” (140). In their recent amendments, Medak-Saltzman explains that Hollywood’s representations of Indigenous peoples in science fiction shifted from negative to positive stereotypes that are equally problematic (140–1). This, she states, can be seen through the mainstream media’s blind appropriations of aspects of Indigenous traditional teachings “for their own purposes regardless of historical or cultural accuracy” (141). This appropriation, she argues, is no more than a subterfuge of inclusivity that ends up reinforcing stereotypes about Indigenous peoples, while the only futures imagined by these narratives are those of a hegemonic society that reinforces the colonial narratives of Indigenous absence where “Native characters [are] one-dimensional and locked in the past as either all- knowing or violent” (141). Among the examples Medak-Saltzman provides are Joss Whedon’s *Firefly* (2002), Catherine Hardwicke’s movie adaptation of *Twilight* (2009), and James Cameron’s *Avatar* (2009). According to Medak-Saltzman, the Indigenous misrepresentation and/or absence in mainstream speculative genres is rooted in the politics and laws of the insidious genocidal colonial doctrine of “blood quantum” (145). Strikingly, both Attebery and Medak-Saltzman present Indigenous mis/non-representation in Australian and United States science fiction and fantasy as an echo or a reflection of terra nullius and blood quantum, which, as explained in the introduction to this thesis, are engrained within the settler-logic of elimination and dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands.

2. Indigenous Futurisms as Narratives of Indigenous Survivance

So Long Been Dreaming (2004), edited by Nalo Hopkinson and Uppinder Mehan, is considered one of the first anthologies that brings together different authors from different Indigenous backgrounds that experiment with science fiction in order to reflect on different colonial experiences. In the introduction to this anthology, Nalo Hopkinson explains the reason behind people of colour's reluctance to engage with and produce science fiction: even when they started experimenting with the genre, authors that write from marginalised backgrounds cannot simply appropriate mainstream science fiction as it is. Hopkinson explains that while the most recurrent theme in mainstream science fiction is that of discovery, conquest, and colonisation of foreign lands, "for many of us," she states, "that's not a thrilling adventure story; it's non-fiction, and we are on the wrong side of the strange-looking ship that appears out of nowhere" (7). For Hopkinson, there is always a risk of being suspected of internalising colonisation when people of colour delve into science fiction (7). An important question then arises: What makes Indigenous authors experiment and intervene in the genres of science fiction and speculative fiction, despite their entrenchment in mainstream western narratives which, as Medak-Saltzman explains above, glorify, and glamorise the themes of "discovery", "conquest", and "colonisation" that, for many Indigenous peoples, are experiential rather than speculative realities? Hopkinson provides the answer to this question: when carefully appropriated by people of colour to express historical, cultural, and social realities, science fiction provides creative spaces "where marginalized groups of people can discuss their own marginalization", making it possible for them to take the genre's "meme of colonizing the natives and, from the experience of the colonizee, critique it, pervert it, fuck with it, with irony, with anger, with humour, and also, with love and respect for the genre of science fiction that makes it possible to think about new ways of doing things" (8–9).

In her landmark anthology *Walking the Clouds* (2012), Grace Dillon refers to the works of science fiction produced by Indigenous authors as "Indigenous futurisms", a growing movement that is not only limited to literature, but which also encompasses the domains of comics, fine arts, literature, and even video games (3). As indicated by its name, Indigenous futurisms takes its inspiration from Afrofuturism, defined by scholar Mark Dery (1994) as "speculative fiction

that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture—and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future" (180). Similarly, for Dillon, Indigenous futurisms arise as a subversion of what she calls "reservation realisms" which, she notes, often defines the expectations surrounding Indigenous literatures (*Walking the Clouds* 2). Sometimes combining the Indigenous sciences with the most recent scientific theory, sometimes exposing the limitations of western sciences, this fiction, Dillion states, combines "sf theory and Native intellectualism, Indigenous scientific literacy, and western techno-cultural science, scientific possibilities enmeshed with Skin thinking" (2). As such, one of the characteristics of Indigenous futurisms, Dillon underlines, is to posit Indigenous sciences "not just as complementary to a perceived western enlightenment but indeed integral to a refined twenty-first-century sensibility" (3). In fact, Indigenous interventions in science fiction may be perceived as a decolonising project, or, better yet, as an *Indigenising project*. Commenting on this "Indigenizing processes" within Indigenous research, Smith explains that "Indigenizing" is itself anchored within "a politics of indigenous identity and indigenous cultural action" (245). Quoting M. Annette James, Smith notes that this process of "Indigenizing" is centred on Indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems in order "to counter[] the negative connotations" of "Indiginism" in "Third World countries, where it has become synonymous with the "primitive", or with backwardness among superstitious peopies [sic]" (qtd. in Smith 245). In this way, the process of Indigenising science fiction may be noted in Indigenous futurisms' tactful mobilisation and centralisation of Indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems alongside elements that pertain to mainstream science fiction.

In the introduction to a special issue about Indigenous futurisms that appeared recently in *Extrapolation*, Dillon draws attention to the relevance of Indigenous futurisms which, she asserts, do far more than enumerating the instances of western science fiction works that either call attention to the victimized figure of the noble savage "in order to relive wild-west fantasies, [or] to offer contrition about past injustices" ("Indigenous Futurisms" 1). Instead, she argues, Indigenous futurisms are inherently intertwined with the concept of Indigenous survivance insofar as it exposes and contradicts the biased colonial

assumption that relegates the Indigenous peoples' historical identities to that of helpless victims (2). Dillon writes: "Indigenous Futurisms are not the product of a victimized people's wishful amelioration of their past, but instead a continuation of a spiritual and cultural path that remains unbroken by genocide and war" (2). Nonetheless, Indigenous futurisms are not limited to projecting cultural aspects into futuristic narratives; rather, they are deeply anchored in past and present socio-political, historical, and material conditions of Indigenous peoples. Indeed, anthropologist William Lempert (2014) asserts that it is crucial to approach Indigenous futurist texts as "projects [that] are grounded in material, social, and psychological community realities" ("Decolonizing Encounters" 166). This is further reiterated by Dillon, who explains that, despite the futuristic components of Indigenous futurisms, it would be reductive to conceptualise this genre as being interested exclusively in the future ("Indigenous Futurisms" 3) Indeed, while Indigenous futurisms allow Indigenous artists to imagine and "reclaim possible futures through aesthetic creation" (2), Dillion insists that close attention must be paid to the more pressing and contemporary issues that these works highlight and the social justice they advocate (3). In "Global Indigenous Science Fiction" (2012), Dillon states that in addition to their endeavour to allegorise a longstanding subjection to colonial and historical traumas and promoting social justice, authors of Indigenous science fiction provide storytelling that fulfils a threefold objective: they present narratives of "survivance," they promote "Indigenous self-determination," and they provide Indigenous methodologies of decolonisation (378). It is worth noting here that Indigenous interventions in science fiction is not a recent project. For instance, *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart* (1973) by Anishinaabe writer and scholar Gerald Vizenor, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) by Native Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko, and *Below the Line* (1991) by Aboriginal Australian writer and teacher Eric Paul Wilmot all fall within the genre of science fiction. Nevertheless, the first two decades of the twenty-first century saw a rapid emergence and development in the genre of Indigenous futurisms. Here is a non-comprehensive list that presents some examples of works that pertain to the genre of Indigenous futurism: *The Marrow Thieves* (2017) by Métis writer and Activist Cherie Dimaline (Canada); *Moon of the Crusted Snow* (2018) by Anishinaabe writer and journalist Waubgeshig Rice (Canada); *Robopocalypse* (2011) by Cherokee writer Daniel H. Wilson (USA);

Trail of Lightning (2018) by Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo writer Rebecca Roanhorse (USA); *The Swan Book* (2013) by Waanyi writer and activist Alexis Wright (Australia); *Terra Nullius* (2017) by Wirlomin-Noongar writer and poet Claire G. Coleman (Australia).

The following sections offer a trans-indigenous reading of Bruchac's *Killer of Enemies* and Kwaymullina's *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* and which is centred around three axes of analysis that reflect decolonial readings attributed to the works of Indigenous futurism as narratives of Indigenous survivance. The first part examines the ways in which the two authors ground their respective novels within significant socio-political and historical contexts to draw attention to the historical and contemporary realities of the Indigenous people within the settler-colonial states that encase them and to express the need for historical accountability and social justice from these settler states and societies that are yet to be achieved. The second part reads the authors' ethical and aesthetical engagement with and deployment of aspects that pertain to their respective Indigenous knowledge systems, worldviews, and storytelling traditions in futuristic narratives as forms of resistance to and a repudiation of colonial narratives of modernity that relegate Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems to backwardness and primitivism. This, the chapter argues, reflects the authors' affirmation and celebration of the survival and cultural survivance of Indigenous peoples and the relevance, flexibility, contemporaneity, and futurity of their cultures and knowledge systems. The third part examines how these works of Indigenous futurism offer visons for a pressing question that Daniel Heath Justice raises in his book *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*: "How do we learn to live together?" (157). Dissecting and unravelling the depth of this question that functions as the title of his chapter, Justice explains that the "together" in the title is not to be reduced to a simple binary coexistence between Indigenous peoples and settlers. Importantly, it also encompasses "living with one another as Indigenous peoples, with our human and other-than-human kin, with our ancestors and those beings of worlds beyond our own, including those of the future" (158). Through their (post-)apocalyptic settings, *Killer of Enemies* and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* offer interventions to global discussions on the Anthropocene by positing the dystopic and anthropogenic futures depicted in the novels as consequences of the severing of bonds between humans, other-than-

humans, and the land, a process initiated by colonialism and later exacerbated by extractive capitalism. Nevertheless, these works of Indigenous futurisms do not simply paint an entirely bleak picture of the future. Rather, through their imaginative power they assert the importance of attending to Indigenous knowledges and forms of relationality between humans, other-than-humans, and the land in order to offer visions of a future beyond apocalypse, tragedy, and annihilation.

3. Apocalyptic Revelations: (Re)righting the Past in Futuristic Narratives

Killer of Enemies is the first novel of a trilogy which bears the same name, and which is written by the Native American Abenaki writer and storyteller Joseph Bruchac. The novel was published in 2013 and was subsequently followed by the second and the third novels of the trilogy: *Trail of the Dead* (2015) and *Arrow of Lightning* (2017). For the sake of remaining faithful to the scope and the framework of this research, this chapter will focus solely on the first novel of the trilogy: *Killer of Enemies*. As an Indigenous futurist work, the novel is set in a near future in what is now the USA. In this future characterised by major technological and genetic advances, a new form of governance emerges which is controlled by an authoritarian and repressive nomenclature composed of “upgraded” human beings. This cast, called “the Ones,” has implemented all sorts of techno-genetic implants to their bodies by which they have increased the strength of their senses. However, a global cataclysm soon occurs when a cloud from outer space settles on the planet, making all electronic devices obsolete and plunging the world into a neo-steam age. This “Silver Cloud” as it is referred to in the novel, causes the death of many of “the Ones” due to a failure of their numerous electronic implants. Nevertheless, four members of this previously upper-class cast survive, with facial defects which they hide by wearing masks. Determined to maintain their superior position, these four “Ones” establish a prison/workcamp—ironically called “Haven”—for the lower-class survivors of the cataclysm, and in exchange for their total servitude and obedience, they are provided with rudimentary sustenance and security from the outside world that is now plagued by famine and water scarcity. In addition, these lower-class survivors face the danger of being killed by genetically modified creatures that were created prior to the “Silver Cloud” apocalypse and that now wander freely in this post-apocalyptic world.

Similarly, *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* is also the first novel of a trilogy titled *The Tribe*. Written by the Palyku Aboriginal Australian novelist, illustrator, and scholar Ambelin Kwaymullina and published in 2012, *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* is succeeded by *The Disappearance of Amber Crow* (2013) and *The Foretelling of Georgie Spider* (2015). Just as with the *Killer of Enemies* trilogy by Joseph Bruchac, the chapter is centred on the first novel of *The Tribe* series. *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* is set in a post-apocalyptic future during which the earth is recovering from an ecological cataclysm called "The Reckoning" which resulted from a longstanding environmental crisis due to humanity's excessive pollution and resource extraction. "The Reckoning" has left humanity nearly extinct and has led to the disappearance of separate continents, giving rise to a single, Pangaea-like continent. Eight cities emerge in this new continent, among them Gull city and Vale city which are pivotal in the novel. Each of these cities is autonomically ruled by elected representatives, yet they are all subject to a federal-like governing entity called the "Council of Primes" where each city is represented by a "Prime." This "Council of Primes" is responsible for maintaining the "Balance" through legislative and judiciary decisions. However, the most important change in this post-apocalyptic world is the emergence of a new form of human beings that are endowed with various superpowers: Firestarters, for example, can start fires while Rumblers can cause earthquakes, Menders can heal others, and Runners possess superhuman speed. The key event that contextualises the plot of this novel occurs 258 years earlier, in Vale City, where a young Skychanger girl who can control the weather accidentally causes the flooding of the whole city when she tries to ease the drought. Following this event, which leads to the destruction of Vale City and the death of most of its inhabitants, these superhumans are feared and hated by the rest of the population such that the "Council of Primes" pass Citizenship Accords to distinguish the "normal" human population from what come to be known as the "Illegals." The Citizenship Accords state that each fourteen-year-old child must be tested by a government enforcer in order to determine if they possess any superhuman ability. Citizen tattoos are granted to those who display no superhuman abilities or who have only benign powers that may be exploited for the government's interests. In contrast, children with "dangerous" powers are

forcibly removed from their parents and confined in “Detention Centres” for the sake of general “safety” and maintaining the “Balance.”

In their respective novels, Joseph Bruchac and Ambelin Kwaymullina imagine, in their own way, worlds that are devastated by cataclysms, whether they are of a cosmic origin (as in *Killer of Enemies*) or of a climatic nature (as in *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*). In both instances, these cataclysmic events are the result of a failure of a global system due to humanity’s longstanding abuse of nature and the environment, as well the misuse of technology. At first glance, it could be argued that these novels inscribe themselves in a tradition of mainstream Young Adult dystopian fiction which speculates about future cataclysms and dystopias. Yet, emanating from two Indigenous contexts, Lynette James (2016) argues that these two novels need to be identified as “Indigenous futurism rather than simply as YA dystopia” (153). Thus, she writes, “readers, critics, and scholars” need “to adjust their orientation in ways that may radically alter both their perception and reception of [them]” (153). Indeed, when Indigenous authors build their work on the theme of “the apocalypse,” they are not merely speculating about a possible future to which they have no frame of reference. Rather, Indigenous peoples who have endured western colonisation have already experienced the apocalyptic scenarios described in mainstream science fiction narratives. The Indigenous peoples of what is known today as “America” and “Australia” knew an external coloniser and subsequently endured a myriad of colonial policies of genocide, cultural assimilation, and removal from their traditional lands and their natural environment. Commenting on this aspect within Indigenous American contexts, Dillion asserts that “it is almost commonplace to think that the Native Apocalypse, if contemplated seriously, has already taken place” (*Walking the Clouds* 8). Indeed, in “Indigenizing the (Final) Frontier” (2019) Yvonne N. Tiger reiterates Dillon’s argument, explaining that the Native Apocalypse occurred with the unfolding of American history in the form of “the so-called Indian Wars, the resultant massacres, genocidal marches such as the Trail of Tears and the Long Walk of the Diné and N’de to Bosque Redondo, the creation of reservations, and the forced removal of Indigenous children to residential boarding school” (147–8). By the same token, in “Edges, Centres and Futures” (2014), Ambelin Kwaymullina herself asserts that the apocalypse for many Aboriginal peoples of what is known today as “Australia” is experiential

rather than speculative. She writes: “We understand the tales of ships that come from afar and land on alien shores. Indigenous people have lived those narratives. […] Indigenous people lived through the end of the world, but we did not end. We survived by holding on to our cultures, our kin, and our sense of what was right in a world gone terribly wrong” (29). When the apocalypse is used as a template in Indigenous futurist works, therefore, it is always grounded in significant historical, political, and cultural contexts and goes beyond the western fantasy of a tragic future and the fetishism that surrounds it. Apocalypse for Indigenous authors, as Justice explains, is as real and as ongoing as the traumas of colonialism and settler-colonialism (*WILM* 168). The following sections examine the socio-political and historical dimensions of the two Indigenous futurist novels introduced in this chapter in order to unravel the trauma of colonialism and settler-colonialism and then subsequently investigate the relevance of projecting these traumas within futuristic narratives.

Bruchac’s *Killer of Enemies* is told from the first-person point of view of the main character and protagonist Lozen. This seventeen-year-old girl lives with her family in Haven, the “safe sanctuary” established by “the Ones” and which is located in the Sonoran Desert in what is now called “New America.” In the aftermath of the “Silver Cloud” apocalypse, many lower-class survivors find shelter and safety from the outside world in Haven. Lozen’s family, however, is forcibly removed to this place after some of the Ones’ mercenaries and recruiters find their hidden village and kill her father and uncle. In Haven, Lozen protects her family by accepting to be recruited by the Ones to kill the genetically modified creatures that were once kept in the “pleasure parks of the most powerful Ones” (2). Yet, following the “Silver Cloud,” the electric fences that used to keep away these monsters ceased to work, and so these “Gemod,” as they are called in the novel, “discovered they were on their own when it came to finding sufficient protein on which to survive—such as that of their former owners” (3). As a skilled warrior with a good grasp of handling firearms as well as the ability to sense the danger of the Gemods before they approach Haven, the Ones choose Lozen as their favorite “monster hunter” (11). Nevertheless, Lozen rightly knows that the Ones are vicious and selfish and that they would not hesitate to eliminate her should they find her too dangerous to be controlled. Therefore, Lozen must feign loyalty and carry on doing her job while planning her family’s escape from Haven.

Before analysing the historical and socio-political dimensions that ground Bruchac's *Killer of Enemies*, it is essential to shed light on the tribal affiliations of the protagonist. Lozen is an Apache woman and a member of the Chiricahua nation located in the southwest of what we know today as the "USA". In addition, as Lozen herself asserts, "[t]here is Navajo and Pueblo in [her], too" (52). Her name is based on the historical figure of Lozen, a Chiricahua warrior and prophet who lived during the Apache wars (1849–1924). Indeed, the real Lozen fought alongside other important figures, such as her brother Victorio and later with Geronimo. In the "Author's note" on the novel, Bruchac writes: "Born around 1840, the first Lozen never married and died in 1890 in Alabama where the entire Chiricahua nation had been sent into exile by the United States government" (360). Throughout this Indigenous futurist novel, Lozen explicitly refers to the collective traumas that the Apache peoples endured during the American westward expansion and particularly during and after the Apache Wars. Indeed, commenting on the historicity of Indigenous futurisms in "Miindiwag and Indigenous Diaspora" (2012), Dillon states that Indigenous futurist literatures express a "need to speak out and uncover situated historical moments […] as a means of chronicling real events and of encouraging accountability" (223). In two passages from the novel, Lozen speaks about the enslavement of her people by "Mexicans and New Mexicans" and their forced removal from their lands by the Americans who, "at the end of our wars of resistance, put [them] all on a train and shipped [them] to Florida, then Alabama and then Oklahoma. Hard places of exile" (*Killer of Enemies* 145). In a second passage, Lozen remarks that many men, women, and children of her Chiricahua nation "were loaded into trains and sent off as prisoners of war to Florida at the end of the nineteenth century (226). It is not hard to discern in these two passages that endeavour to present a historical account of a colonial encounter the overused theme of the alien invasion and subjugation of humankind that is recurrent in mainstream science fiction narratives.

Kwaymullina's *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* opens in "Detention Centre 3," located in Gull City. The novel is recounted from the first-person perspective of the protagonist, Ashala Wolf. Prior to her detention in this centre, Ashala was ambushed and arrested in "Cambergull," one of Gull City's towns, by the government's "Enforcers" who are in charge of arresting the "Illegals": the

post-Reckoning apocalypse superhumans with special abilities. Ashala's detention was possible thanks to Connor, one of the Centre's enforcers, who befriended and gained her trust. Ashala, readers soon learn, is one of the children who were able to escape the Citizenship test. Now considered "Illegals" in the eyes of the government, these children formed a group called the "Tribe" (after which Kwaymullina's trilogy is named) and found refuge in a forest called "Firstwood" under the leadership of Ashala. As a result, Ashala is hunted down and imprisoned by Neville Rose, the Chief Administrator of the Centre, to make her divulge information about the Tribe. She declares: "Most Illegals ran away before they were assessed at age fourteen, and anyone who didn't was either put in detention, or given an Exempt tattoo. Or even a Citizenship tattoo, if they were able to fool an assessor. It wasn't like the whole system was completely foolproof—I knew that some adult Illegals must escape detention, or get tired of living as an Exempt" (27). The socio-political and historical dimensions in which *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* is grounded are subtly expressed and implicitly embedded into the text. In the post-apocalyptic world that is depicted in the novel, what is known today as "Australia" no longer exists. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to discern parallels between this apocalyptic world and the historical and contemporary realities of the Indigenous peoples of what would become "Australia" after the invasion and colonisation. Indeed, in "Generative Hope in the Postapocalyptic Present" (2018), Lempert argues that "[d]espite its Christian connotations, the concept of apocalypse serves a critical role in theorizing Indigenous futurity, uniquely capturing the world-altering histories of colonial brutality" (202). In the novel, "The Citizenship Accords" which grant the government the power to assess children and subsequently remove and detain them in detention centres should they show evidence of any superpowers is reminiscent of the dark colonial and settler-colonial history of Australia and its treatment of Indigenous peoples. These accords echo the "Aborigine Protection Act" of 1909 by which the Australian government forcibly removed Aboriginal children from their families under the subterfuge of "neglect" by their Aboriginal parents. Instead, children were placed under "the protection" of the government and were given for adoption to white families. These policies of child removal in Australia lasted from the beginning of the twentieth century up until the 1970s, engendering what is known today as the collective trauma of the Stolen

Generations. Indeed, Neville Rose, the Chief Administrator of Detention Centre 3 where Ashala is held, even refers to the historical figure of Auber Octavius Neville, a British-Australian public servant under the title of "Chief Protector of Aborigines." A. O. Neville notably led the policies of child removal in Australia and was a strong advocator of the government's "breed out the colour" plan which aimed to progressively erase the Aboriginal presence in Australia through biological absorption. In addition, in Kwaymullina's novel, the "Exempt" tattoos given to children whose powers are judged inoffensive or who can be exploited by the government also recalls the Western Australian Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act of 1944 that was revoked in 1971. The Act stipulated that it is possible for an Aboriginal person to apply for a citizenship certificate if they are judged "civilised" and "fit" enough to live within mainstream white Australian society.

Whether implicitly or explicitly expressed, *Killer of Enemies* and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* both employ the theme of the apocalypse as a medium by which the two authors revisit historical traumas that the Indigenous peoples, in what is known today as the "USA" and "Australia", endured under western colonisation. The use of apocalypse in both novels is far from being the "stuff of doomsday religionists or science fiction", as Justice puts it; rather, it is built on "historical memory and lived experience" (*WILM* 168). As explained above, Indigenous peoples have already lived and survived the apocalypse of colonialism. Quoting Uppinder Mehan, James explains that the narrators of these novels are "'survivors—or the descendants of survivors' not just of broken dystopian worlds or post-cataclysmic events but of the real historical legacies of slavery, conquest, and oppression" (qtd. in James 157). In this respect, the apocalypse in *Killer of Enemies* and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* is to be understood in its proper etymological sense, which comes from the Ancient Greek word "apokálypsis;" the act of uncovering the truth and unveiling a hidden knowledge. In "Smudged, Distorted and Hidden" (2010), Roslyn Weaver explains that the apocalypse in Indigenous speculative fiction embraces a paradigm of revelation by which the history of colonisation is unravelled (100). As such, the historical components that *Killer of Enemies* and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* need to be read as what Smith considers a "*re*writing and *re*righting" of Indigenous people's "position in history", which she considers a crucial aspect of decolonisation pedagogy because "[t]o hold alternative histories is to hold alternative

knowledges" that makes it possible to "form the basis of alternative ways of doing things" (72, 81). Indigenous peoples, Smith contends, "want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes" (72). In *Killer of Enemies,* the unravelling aspect of the apocalypse is used as a stage through which Bruchac revisits the late-nineteenth-century forced removal and relocation of the Apache tribes, thus presenting a counternarrative to those Eurocentric historical accounts that portray colonisation as a benign civilising act or a heroic story of adventure and discovery. By the same token, in *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, Kwaymullina employs the template of the apocalypse to conjure up the traumatic legacies of the Stolen Generations and to project the colonial policies of child removal in Australia into a futuristic narrative, thereby addressing Australia's historical amnesia towards its colonial past and its treatment of Indigenous peoples.

In addition to its revelatory aspect, the apocalypse in *Killer of Enemies* is used as a technique that aims to engage non-Indigenous audiences in the story, creating what Dillon calls a storytelling tradition of "ironic Native giveaway" that positions readers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, within the "diasporic condition of Native peoples" (*Walking the Clouds* 6). In *Killer of Enemies*, the author projects these stories of contact, invasion, and subjugation into a narrative of futurity in which the planet is visited by the Silver Cloud that makes all technology obsolete and leads to the emergence of authoritarian and oppressive elites that subjugate and enslave any human being that does not pertain to their casts. Lozen explains that, after the Silver Cloud, some of the "planetary elite" called the Ones survived and "the more basic weapons held by what was left of their armies still worked. That was when they began to bring 'order' out of the ensuing chaos. Order meaning the establishment of little dictatorships like the one we have at Haven" (*Killer of Enemies* 22). Prior to the Silver Cloud apocalypse, the world, Lozen explains, was ruled by "three great corporate nation-states of New America, Euro-Russia, and Afro-Asia" (21). In this extreme version of globalisation, planetary elites control the world thanks to technological enhancements that make it possible for them to "live forever as cyborgs. Part human, part machine, they were able to see everything, to kill with a glance, to wave a hand and bring thunder. Gods, it seemed" (42). Yet, being more machines than humans, many of them died with the arrival of the Silver Cloud except for

some, like the Ones, who "were only in the lower tier of the wealthy and powerful. They hadn't yet risen to the level where they could afford the microscopic nanobots that flowed through the blood streams of the very, very few who controlled the entire planet" (42). Throughout the novel, there is an intersection between the concepts of power, technology or knowledge, and humanity such that after the Silver Cloud apocalypse, as Lozen explains, cults like the "Know Nots" emerged, "believe[ing] that knowledge was the cause of humanity's downfall and went around burning libraries and every form of printed matter they could find" (19). Nevertheless, Bruchac's novel conveys that it is not technology itself that is inherently destructive; rather, it is the use of technology for the purposes of power and control over humanity, nature, and the environment that is destructive, such that these planetary elites gradually lose their own humanity. Reflecting on the nature of the Ones, Lozen asks if there is "any real humanity left in any of them? When I look at the Ones who rule us, I feel as if I am just looking at beings as *alien* from the rest of us as if they came from another planet (229, emphasis added). Interestingly, while the Ones, who are humans, are described as aliens due to their cruel ways, the Silver Cloud—which is truly alien—is described by Lozen's father as "a blessing" for the environment for "the forests will come back" (9). Commenting on the theme of "contact" in works of Indigenous futurisms, Lempert argues that such works may embody "multiple subversive elements" that disrupt the paradigm of invasion (Aliens invading humans or vice versa) in western science fiction ("Decolonizing Encounters" 166). Indeed, *Killer of Enemies* subverts the theme of the alien invasion insofar as the alien characteristic is attributed to the Ones, not because they come from another planet but because they are devoid of any human traits in their relationships with other humans and with the environment.

From the beginning of *Killer of Enemies*, Lozen states that what is now called Haven was, in fact, "formerly known as Southwestern Penitentiary" (1). Yet, Lozen notes that this name change hardly alters the initial vocation of this place, which is to fulfil "its steady old role as a prison" (2). Indeed, this idea is reiterated several times in the novel to the point that Lozen even describes Haven's residents as her "fellow prisoners" (40). The coercive and traumatic character of Haven is also registered when Lozen speaks about the workers in Haven. She states: "Metal workers and smiths are among those constantly being

sought out (hunted down, more like) by the Ones as they build their various fiefdoms. Such skilled people have the knowledge and manual skills to manufacture things that the Ones desire" (*Killer of Enemies* 19). If we speak today of modern slavery as the dark underside of world capitalism, Bruchac imagines a post-apocalyptic future where the perennity and the worsening of this system lead back to an even more archaic form of slavery. Moreover, because of the scarcity of water in this post-apocalypse future, Haven is portrayed as a sanctuary for the Ones and a mere prison camp for the downtrodden ordinaries. Lozen declares: "Aside from the air we breathe, nothing is more precious—or used to be more taken for granted—than water. It's not taken for granted now" (63). Water and food in Haven are rationed and distributed unevenly depending on the rank one occupies within the pyramidal organisation established by the Ones, with them on top. Indeed, Lozen states that only the rulers are exempt from the very rules that they enforce, such that they allow themselves to use water "to fill a swimming pool they have installed in their secure enclave in the heart of Haven, while we only get enough water for the barest essentials" (115). Thus, Haven is depicted as a microcosm of a global system where commodities flow unevenly between a rich, powerful, and controlling core, and a poor, oppressed, and marginalised periphery. It can be argued, then, that Bruchac is reflecting on a constellation of contemporary issues that emanate from global capitalism: from environmental destruction through pollution and executive extraction of natural resources, to armed conflicts and wars which cause entire countries to collapse, and which lead to several refugee crises, to the poverty that results from an uneven flux of commodities within the world capitalist-system.

In *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, Kwaymullina succeeds in implicating the non-Indigenous audience in the story by abstaining from making any explicit reference to the historical and contemporary realities of what is now Australia. The story of the novel creates a "déjà vu" effect with which Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences are prompted to identify. Indeed, in "Non-Linear Modes of Narrative in the Disruption of Time and Genre" (2019), Annika Herb writes of Kwaymullina's *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*: "The reader is invited to become an active participant in coding meaning by applying their own understandings of the context and connections, creating an inter-subjective dialogue between reader and text, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowing" (para. 2). At the

beginning of the novel Neville Rose, the Chief Administrator of Detention Centre 3, tries to convince Ashala to collaborate and provide him with information about the Tribe. To do this, he pleads for the necessity and importance of the Accords passed by the Council of Primes, notably, the Citizenship Accord. Neville Rose explains that following the Reckoning apocalypse and the emergence of eight cities "as sophisticated as anything in the old world," a new system is established to maintain the "Balance" and avoid "the pollution, the overcrowding, and the terrible disparity between rich and poor" that characterised the "old world" and led to the Reckoning (*The Interrogation* 29). Within the combined system that rules the seven cities of this "utopic" Pangaea-like continent, the Citizenship Accords constitute a "legal" pathway by which the "Illegals" can be detained and segregated from the "normal" population as well as to "ensure that human existence never again puts the Earth in jeopardy" (33). The very existence of the "Illegals" in this post-apocalyptic world is considered a threat to the Balance; hence, detaining them is deemed necessary to avoid yet another apocalypse. Reflecting on Neville's thoughts, Ashala declares: "There was an unmistakable ring of truth in his voice. He truly thought I was some kind of unnatural thing, and it hurt, more than I'd expected it to" (18–19). Closer examination reveals a correlation between the dehumanisation and detention of children with superpowers in this fictional world and the dehumanisation of Indigenous peoples by colonialism and imperialism based on the principle of "race." Smith explains that in the nineteenth century, the European colonial powers set up a matrix of rules and social regulations that would be used to govern their "interaction with the indigenous peoples being colonized" (67). One of the principles that shaped these regulations, Smith adds, is the principle of "humanity" (67–68). She writes: "To consider indigenous peoples as not fully human, or not human at all, enabled distance to be maintained and justified various policies of either extermination or domestication" (68). Smith explains that the Indigenous peoples who were considered "not human" were simply exterminated, while those who were considered "partially-human" were confined in reserves to be domesticated and exploited (68). If, in Kwaymullina's novel, children with special abilities are dehumanised and taken away from their parents in order to protect the "normal" population, the children of Indigenous peoples of what is known today as "Australia" were also dehumanised and institutionally removed from their parents within a longstanding policy of assimilation

and a progressive absorption of the Aboriginal presence into mainstream society in order to protect the purity and perennity of the white Anglo-Australian society, while simultaneously sustaining the principle of *Terra Nullius* upon which this settler-colonial state was founded.

Reflecting on "the old world," Ashala states that, before the appearance of the "Illegals," "there were different peoples, different 'races'" where her dark skin colour "used to mean something. After the end of the old world, when there were so few humans left, everyone stopped worrying about things like that" (*The Interrogation* 120–1). However, this rhetoric of the skin has not disappeared entirely in this post-apocalyptic world. Indeed, even if the right to citizenship depends on possession or lack of special abilities, the demarcation manifests itself with a tattoo of citizenship on the skin. As explained earlier, children with abilities deemed harmless and beneficial to the government are given "exemptions" to the Citizenship Accords. This, for example, is the case of the doctor who treats Ashala's injuries in Detention Centre 3. Ashala declares: "She was a Mender, […] Wentworth had a tattoo on the inside of her wrist: the regular Gull City Citizenship mark of a seagull in a circle, but with a line through the middle. Wentworth still wasn't quite a Citizen, but she wasn't technically an Illegal any more either" (8). As her name suggests, "Wentworth," in the eyes of the government, is worth not being detained, for her healing abilities can be exploited. Yet, she is not worth enough to be granted a regular citizenship tattoo, as her "Exemption" tattoo still marks her as not being "human." In her novel, Kwaymullina revisits the long-standing colonial policies of dehumanisation endured by the Indigenous peoples of Australia and the collective traumas of the Stolen Generations, which constitute, in themselves, forms of dystopias that these Indigenous peoples lived, survived, and continue to survive. In an online article that appeared on *ABC News* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation), the Noongar futurist writer Claire G. Coleman explains that "[n]ovels about the history of Australia are post-apocalyptic, because all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people alive today are the descendants of people who survived an apocalypse" (para. 7). Moreover, by projecting these traumas into a futuristic narrative where racial differences no longer exist, the novel also engages with non-Indigenous audiences in a way that gives them a glimpse of what it means to be an Indigenous person living in a settler-colonial state. Indeed, in "Walking Many Worlds" (2014), Kwaymullina explains

that Indigenous futurist writers "clothe [their stories] in forms which non-Indigenous hearts and minds will recognise so that they might understand us" (para. 4). Similarly, in *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, the new world system that Kwaymullina depicts replicates the marginal and repressive colonial systems of post-invasion Australia. While the old system is ruled by racial differences, the new world system depicted in the novel is characterised by a novel dynamic of oppression in which all children with special abilities, regardless of "race," are dehumanised, hounded, and detained.

4. Apocalyptic Survivance: Represencing Indigenous Cultures and Knowledges

As explained in the introduction to this chapter, the settler-colonial endeavour to terminate Indigenous cultures, spiritualities, and knowledge systems is intrinsically related to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their land. Within this enterprise, policies of assimilation and confinement played a significant role. They were justified through philanthropic rhetoric that implied "saving" Indigenous peoples from the presumed backwardness and primitivism of Indigenous modes of life and ways of knowing that are obsolete in relation to the western perspective of modernity. The genre of Indigenous futurisms presents counternarratives to these colonial discourses as they not only celebrate the survival and the ongoing resistance of Indigenous peoples in the face of centuries of settler-colonial strategies of elimination, but it also asserts the relevance, flexibility, contemporaneity, and futurity of their cultures and knowledge systems. As argued by Medak-Saltzman, Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems, governance structures, and social engagements "have always incorporated elements of futurity, prophecy, and responsibility—rooted strategies for bringing forth better futures" (139–40). Thus, Indigenous futurisms offer a representation of Indigenous peoples, cultures, and knowledge systems not as mere cultural nostalgia and the survival of a precolonial past; instead, they present themselves as narratives of Indigenous survivance, which, as Vizenor puts it, is more than mere survival, for it "confront[s] the tragic closure of culture" and resists the stereotypical western representation of Indigenous people in commercial fiction that is galvanised with the usual stereotypes of "Native tragedy, Native suffering and the complication of the loss of traditions and

cultures" ("American Indian Art and Literature Today" 44–46). Asserting and celebrating Indigenous survivance is a crucial aspect of articulating an Indigenous research agenda. Smith asserts that the project of celebrating Indigenous survivance presents a counternarrative to the colonial predictions of "the demise and cultural assimilation of indigenous peoples" (243). She explains that cultural survivance that entails survival and resistance accounts for the ways in which Indigenous peoples "retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity in resisting colonialism" (243). Indigenous futurist novels project Indigenous presence and survivance into the future by framing their narratives within specific Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. Indeed, in ""Beam Us Up, Bgwethnėnė!" Indigenizing Science (Fiction)" (2020), Blaire Topash-Caldwell explains that Indigenous futurisms bring to the forefront specific Indigenous knowledge systems to reflect on the futures of societies and technologies in order to assert the presence of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous agency (83). Moreover, she adds that Indigenous futurisms reject and correct the colonial narratives that claim western technological and scientific superiority and relegate Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems to primitivism and backwardness (83). The following sections, therefore, examine *Killer of Enemies* and the *Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* as narratives of Indigenous survivance in which the authors mobilise narrative registers which combine elements that pertain to their respective Indigenous knowledge systems, spiritualities, and storytelling along with narrative registers that are inscribed in science fiction experimental techniques and elements of technoculture. By projecting their narratives into alternative futures, these Indigenous authors not only relinquish colonial narratives that claim the superiority of western epistemologies at the expense of Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems which they relegate to fantasy and primitivism, but they also confront the colonial fantasies of an Indigenous progressive disappearance by inscribing their presence as fundamentally tied to the present and future of humanity's fate.

In their novels, Bruchac and Kwaymullina inform and anchor much of the survival and resistance of their protagonists in their respective Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. In *Killer of Enemies* Lozen works for the Ones to kill the genetically modified monsters conceived before the Silver Cloud and kept in electrically fenced parks for the pleasure of the planetary elite. Now that

all technology has ceased to work, these monsters roam freely and attack the Ones' servants outside Haven. In addition to her ability to handle guns, Lozen owes much of her survival skills to her Apache background. She explains that her "(pre-cloud) anachronistically useless pursuits [such] as hand-to-hand combat, marksmanship, tracking, and wilderness survival [...] can be blamed on or credited to my family, especially my uncle and my dad—stubborn descendants of a nation that had been targeted for destruction in more than one century yet still survived" (*Killer of Enemies* 21–22). Nevertheless, throughout the many dangerous missions that Lozen undertakes, it is the Apache storytelling that allows her to carry them out without getting killed. In the novel, Apache storytelling is present and tactfully embedded within the narrative. Lozen states that before the Silver Cloud apocalypse, her family was poor, yet "we were rich with stories" (65). Indeed, one of the many characteristics of Indigenous futurism is the resurgence of specific storytelling traditions. As Tiger puts it, Indigenous futurisms strive to "reshape Indigenous futures through story-(re)telling to reflect a world of survivance, of balance, wherein Indigenous Peoples have the autonomy to reclaim their ancient history and its teachings" ("Indigenizing the (Final) Frontier" 148). During one of her missions, Lozen is sent to kill a genetically modified monster bird which she compares to "the Monster Birds that were wiped out in the time of [her] First People by Killer of Enemies and his brother Child of Water" (48). Among the creation stories of the Apache and Navajo nations, there is a shared story (with some differences) of Changing Woman or White Painted Woman and her twin children Killer of Enemies and Child of Water. In the "Author's note" of *Killer of Enemies*, Bruchac writes: "My Lozen is also a sort of reincarnation of another important being in Tinneh traditions, one whose mission in life–back in the beginning of times–was to kill the monsters that threatened human life. Called Killer of Enemies or Child of Water among the Apache nations" (360). One of the monsters that Killer of Enemies and Child of Water killed is a giant eagle. In the novel, Lozen summons the memory of her father, who tells her how Child of Water kills a pair of giant eagles by dissimulating his body with the intestines of deer filled with its blood (65). Seeing the bloody intestines, the eagle believes that Child of Water is dead, so he carries him into his nest to feed him to his eaglets (65). Child of Water gets rid of the intestines and, with the help of a stone club, kills the eagles and uses "*their feathers to make good eagles and*

other birds" (66). In this mission, Lozen re-enacts this creation story in detail, but rather than a stone club, she uses her weapons to kill the giant birds and a parachute to escape from their nest, which is perched on a high cliff. In another mission, Lozen is sent to retrieve a mirror from a mansion on a private property where a giant genetically modified snake lives. Thinking of the best approach to kill it before it devours her, Lozen recalls one of her mother's stories about the creation of a hill called Swallowing Hill. In this story, Swallowing Hill is a monster that eats humans and animals and who is killed by the trickster figure of Coyote, who gets inside its body and stabs its heart, turning it "into a real hill and it is still there to this day" (175–7). Lozen declares: "So, is that my brilliant plan? Get that giant snake to swallow me? Then pull out my Bowie knife and kill it from inside its belly?" (177). Indeed, even though this plan is far from being applicable, Lozen adopts Coyote's approach from the creation story by dissimulating grenades inside a bag made of coyote skin and throwing it to the snake who then swallows it and dies from the explosion. It is worth noting here that the presence of Apache storytelling in the novel exceeds its initial role as a medium through which Indigenous cultures and worldviews are (re)claimed, (re)told, and transmitted. Instead, Lozen keeps the essence of these traditional stories while at the same time incorporating technological elements such as firearms, grenades, and a parachute to make them relevant to her situation.

In the same way that the historical and socio-political contexts are not explicitly delineated in *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, the cultural context that informs the protagonist's identity and cultural heritage is also not explicit. Kwaymullina subtly and tactfully integrates epistemologies and knowledge systems of Aboriginal peoples into the text that the protagonist (re)visits simultaneously as the readers are introduced to them. This, according to Herb, reflects the author's endeavour to centre Indigenous "knowledge in its own right, rather than in direct opposition to Western epistemologies" (para 15). In the novel, Ashala is detained in Detention Centre 3 not only because she is—in the eyes of the government—an illegal with superhuman ability but also because she is the leader of the Tribe: the rebellion group composed of children with abilities who fled the Citizenship Assessment and who live away from the city in a forest called "the Firstwood." While the abilities exhibited by these children are, for the most part, similar, Lozen stands out for her power is, as she herself affirms, "a rare

talent—I'd certainly never heard of anyone else who could do it" (*The Interrogation* 43). Ashala calls her ability "Sleepwalking" and describes it as a "power that occasionally let [her] do the things [she] was dreaming about" (27). Yet, while being detained, Ashala has a rhodonite collar around her neck, making it impossible for her to use this power. She remarks that if she could Sleepwalk, she could move "through the world in an unconscious state, seeing everything as part of a super-intense dream" (69). In this way, Sleepwalking in the novel is presented as a state by which Ashala moves into an alternate reality where she can defy and even alter the spatio-temporality of the material world. Indeed, at one point, Ashala puts her ability into practice to get two of her friends out of the city and bring them to the Firstwood. She declares: "I tried to make a protective bubble around us, a magic bubble that would turn whatever was inside it invisible. But I couldn't get it to form. I concentrated harder, fighting to rise above my fear. *This is MY dream, and I can do ANYTHING I want!* With terrifying slowness, the bubble shimmered into existence" (244). Without attending to the cultural specificities of the novel, Ashalas's ability to sleepwalk could be read as a fantastic trope such as those which are prevalent in many works of science fiction. Nevertheless, as a work of Indigenous futurisms, Sleepwalking in Kwaymullina's novel reflects a unique Indigenous perspective on reality and existence, which is registered in the text through what Dillon calls "Native slipstream", and which she defines as a trope that "infuse stories" with concepts of "alternate realities and multiverses" (*Walking the Clouds* 3).

Dillon argues that Native slipstream appeals to authors of Indigenous futurisms because it "conveys the very real psychological experience of slipping into various levels of awareness and consciousness" (16–17). Ashala's ability to materialise actions into reality while in a deep dream state echoes an important aspect of Aboriginal Spirituality and cosmogony. In *Aboriginal Spirituality* (2009), Vicki Grieves explains that there is a common core philosophy in which all creation is related to "the time when powerful creator spirits or spirit ancestors made sense out of chaos and produced the life forms and landscapes" (3). She explains that there is no equivalent English word for this philosophy, yet the term "Dreaming" is used to refer to it (3). Grieves states that this body of knowledge that some Aboriginal elders call "*Law*" contains creation stories that differ from one region to another across what is known today as "Australia", yet that share

many basic concepts (3). First, she explains that Spirit Ancestors are responsible for all creation, animate and inanimate, including "the land and the entire natural world, including the species and plant life" (3). Second, Grieves adds, the creative activity of these Creator Spirits was "formative" such that all of their creation "continues to be imbued with their life force" (3). Finally, although these acts of creation unfolded within a timeframe, "the creator spirits pre-existed this work and continue to live an animate all life in their now non-visible forms" (3). It is, therefore, not difficult to discern a connection between Ashala's Sleepwalking ability and the Aboriginal spiritual and cosmogonical philosophy of Dreaming. Kwaymullina explains that within the stories that speak about Dreaming, creative Ancestors shaped the world "through their songs, dances and travels" ("Author's Note," *The Interrogation*). In addition to the semantic correlation between Sleepwalking and Dreaming, what connects them is also the agency and the power of creation. Just as the Ancestor Spirits create life from a primordial chaos and continue to breathe life into their creations, Ashala, through her power of Sleepwalking, can transcend the material reality and succeed in shaping events that she conceives while being in her vivid dreams.

5. Beyond the End: Indigenising the Future

In mainstream science fiction, the future of climate and the environment is often depicted through anthropogenic, dystopian scenarios. The Anthropocene refers to the current geological epoch characterised by ecosystem degradations resulting from human impact on the environment through pollution and extractive capitalism. This results in anthropogenic changes that are gradually altering Earth's strata, and which are seen, inter alia, in the extinction of animal and plant species and the alarming rise of ocean levels due to global warming. Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, in "On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene" (2017), call for a re-evaluation of the start date of the Anthropocene by linking it to western colonisation and approaching it not as a distinct phase that begins in the twentieth century, but rather as a continuation and accumulation of colonial dispossessions, genocides, and ecocides (761). Davis and Todd contend that relating the Anthropocene to the beginning of colonialism allows it to be set as a critical project through which it is possible to consider today's "ecocidal logics"

not as something inevitable or inherent to "'human nature,'" but rather as the outcome of a constellation of attitudes that "have their origins and reverberations in colonization" (763). By linking the Anthropocene to colonialism, they demonstrate how the emergence of an ecological disaster is inherently tied to a western ideology that not only separates between but also places the human above "geology and biota" (769). Indeed, Davis and Todd argue that colonialism and settler-colonialism "[were] always about changing the land, transforming the earth itself, including the creatures, the plants, the soil composition and the atmosphere. It was about moving and unearthing rocks and minerals. All of these acts were intimately tied to the project of erasure that is the imperative of settler colonialism" (770). The logic of the Anthropocene, they assert, resides in colonialism and contemporary petrocapitalism's severing of the bonds between "humans and the soil, between plants and animals, between minerals and our bones" (770). In this way, Davis and Todd give the concept of the Anthropocene a concrete grounding in the current ecological and environmental crisis.

Killer of Enemies provides several examples that depict the anthropogenic character of the future described in the novel. Lozen talks about how "[b]ack in the mid-twenty-first century [...] rivers had been poisoned by gold mining. [And] the great forests of giant trees had been clear cut", and how "anyone annoying our nation was blown up with unmanned drones and guided missiles" (168, 114). Yet, perhaps the most poignant anthropogenic example in the novel is the extinction of horses that, as Lozen puts it, "had their own apocalypse" before the Silver Cloud (111). What decimated horses is a disease called "equine pneumonia" that resulted from a biologically engineered "symbiotic microbe" inhaled by horses to make them stronger and faster on racetracks (110). She declares: "the symbiote mutated. It got faster. A year or two turned into a week. The infected lungs filled with blood, yellow mucus poured out of the horses' nostrils. And they died" (110–1). The disease becomes a pandemic spreading all around the world and "mov[ing] into other hooved domestic animals as well. Cows, sheep, even the semiwild private herds of buffalos that still existed" (111). However, the advanced technological level reached by humanity in this futuristic world cannot explain the Silver Cloud. During one of her missions, where the Ones send her to kill a monster, Lozen encounters what she describes as an ancient being "who lives in the stories of not just my people but those of Indians

all over the continent" (155). She declares: "All of our Native people have stories about him or his relatives. They've called him by many different names. Big Elder Brother, Sasquatch, Bigfoot. To us he was just Tall Hairy Man" (155). It is during another encounter with this being that Lozen now calls Hally that she finds answers about the origin of the Silver Cloud. Hally explains that his people walked the Earth long before humanity and, like humans, advanced in knowledge and technology. He declares, "***We, too, became powerful. We could fly. We could shape the courses of the rivers with the work of our thoughts, dig into the roots of the mountains, raise great structures up to the sky***" (304). This feeling of might made Hally's people believe they were more worthy than other life forms, that they would even "***dream a way to rise up beyond the Life Giver***" (304). Yet, he adds, "***the Maker sent us a message. It came, a big light streaking across the sky. And there was a great explosion***" (304). Hally remarks that the cycle is repeating now, as humans "***were behaving as we did long ago. Your leaders believed they were wiser and stronger than Creation. They were crushing all other life on Earth beneath their weight***" (305). Excessive use of technology, he adds, creates an "***attractive field,***" drawing things from outer space (307). In the same way, this attracted the "***meteor***" that destroyed nearly all of Hally's people before humans inhabited the Earth, it now attracted the "***Silver Cloud***" (307). As such, the apocalypse in Bruchac's novel responds to the ways in which humanity, specifically the planetary elites, use technology to control other life forms, fostering a dynamic of oppression on the land, the environment, and on the human and other-than-human condition.

In *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, the apocalypse named the "Reckoning" is a consequence of humanity's longstanding abuse of the environment, making "'the life-sustaining systems of the Earth collapse'" (12). As indicated earlier, a single Pangaea-like continent emerged after this catastrophe, and the human survivors founded eight cities ruled by the Council of Primes, who passed Accords that, as Neville Rose explains it, are meant to maintain the "'Balance between all life'"; indeed, he adds that "'the only way to preserve it is to live in harmony with ourselves, with each other, and with the earth'" (28). Ashala, born long after the Reckoning, has no clear idea of humanity's relationship with the land and environment in the old world; she soon gets a glimpse, however, when she arrives at the Firstwood. After fleeing her house, Ashala, along with her friend

Georgy, takes refuge in the Firstwood since government enforcers avoid it for fear of dangerous giant lizards, called the saurs, that emerged after the Reckoning. On their way, they are stopped by a saur and discover that they can communicate with humans. The saur informs Ashala that the trees of the Firstwood "**grew from seeds that survived the great chaos. They carry within them the memories of their ancestors […]. They do not forget what humans have done**" (187). As such, if Ashala wants to live in the Firstwood, she must seek permission from the trees, and "**whatever bargain you make with them, the saurs will ensure you keep it. And if the forest decides you must go, then we [saurs] will finish you**" (188–9). Ashala speaks directly to the trees, promising that if they can live among them, they "won't eat any of the animals, or cut down any tree" (192). It is here that the trees share memories of the old world with Ashala: "Images poured into my mind, nightmarish pictures of things I'd never seen before. Strange vehicles with metal jaws, weird saws with teeth that roared, and humans, always more humans, cutting and hacking and slashing and killing" (193). While Ashala is unfamiliar with the images the trees share, readers can identify these as characteristics of today's extractive capitalism. Therefore, the Reckoning is a direct consequence of the exacerbation of the utilitarian relationship that humanity has with nature and the environment.

The dystopic futures in both novels result from what Davis and Todd call the severed bonds between humans, other-than-humans, and the land, caused by colonialism and later exacerbated by extractive capitalism. Indeed, by tackling issues related to the destructive modernity of global capitalism, such as climate change, excessive resource extraction, and the misuse of technology, works of Indigenous futurisms appeal are, as Lempert puts it, are not only vital" for Indigenous peoples; instead, "they also provide valuable insight into global challenges" ("Generative Hope" 202). However, it is important to note that when the Anthropocene is explored in works of Indigenous futurisms, it exceeds mere speculation. Potawatomi scholar Kyle P. Whyte (2018) explains that what constitute non-Indigenous peoples' speculations about dystopic futures of climate crisis are, most of the time, a reality that Indigenous peoples endured and continue to endure in the form of a myriad of colonial practices and policies (226). He writes: "Different forms of colonialism, of course, whether through environmental destruction, land dispossession or forced relocation, have ended

Indigenous peoples' local relationships to thousands of plants, animals, insects, and entire ecosystems" (226). Davis's and Todd's parallel between the start of the Anthropocene and the beginning of western colonialism highlights the different perspectives that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples tend to have about climate and environmental crises and suggest that Indigenous peoples are well acquainted with the Anthropocene and its repercussions. In fact, Davis and Todd conceptualise colonisation and its history as the shock felt of a seismic wave that "kept rolling like a slinky compact[ing] and speed[ing] up time, laying waste to legal orders, languages, place-story in quick succession," adding that "[t]he fleshy, violent loss of 50 million Indigenous peoples in the Americas is something we read as a 'quickening' of space-time in a seismic sense" (771–2) As such, they assert that "the Anthropocene or at least all of the anxiety produced around these realities for those in Euro-Western contexts—is really the arrival of the reverberations of that seismic shockwave [of colonisation] into the nations who introduced colonial, capitalist processes across the globe in the first half-millennium in the first place" (774).

While Indigenous peoples did face countless anthropogenic scenarios that unfolded alongside colonisation, Davis and Todd assert that they "contended with the end of their worlds, and continue to work to foster and tend to strong relationships to humans, other-than-humans, and land today" (773). Rather than conceiving of human liberation and salvation from the anthropogenic horrors of climate change within science and technology, they "call here for a tending once again to relations, to kin, to life, longing, and care" (775). Davis and Todd write: "This commitment to tenderness and relationships is one necessary and lasting refraction of the violent and unjust worlds set in motion by the imperialist white supremacist capitalist [hetero]patriarchy (hooks, nd) at the beginning of the colonial moment" (775). This is what works of Indigenous futurisms advocate, offering artistic and activist interventions to the current anthropogenic realities. Indeed, Topash-Caldwell explains that, since Indigenous peoples have already endured traumas related to the aftermath of the Anthropocene, they are not trapped in "psychologically working through this Anthropocene-induced anxiety" (85). Similarly, in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter,* Justice explains that, though works of Indigenous futurism present violence, cruelty, and suffering that ravage a world destroyed or on the verge of destruction by "settler colonialism's

limited sense of kinship and personhood," it endeavours to expose the destructive racial logic of the state which affects both the human and other-than-human world (168–9). He argues that when the state's "[b]lood rhetorics" appear to be the cause of catastrophe in these works, an Indigenous vision of "reciprocal kinship becomes, if not a full solution, part of the return to wholeness. The broken world may be overturned, but another world awaits—or at least, its potential lies at the ready" (169). Indeed, the two novels do not simply paint a bleak picture of the future. Instead, through their imaginative power and assertion of Indigenous perspectives and views of personhood and kinship, they offer visions of a future beyond apocalypse, tragedy, and annihilation.

In *Killer of Enemies*, Lozen learns from an early age that human beings are but a small part of a greater creation and that human life is not the only one that must be respected and protected. In *Our Stories Remember* (2003), Bruchac asserts that "all created things are regarded as being of equal importance. All things—not only humans and animals and plants, but even the winds, the waters, fire, and the stones—are living and sentient" (11). Speaking of her fear of snakes, Lozen recalls her father saying that there is no need to be afraid as "[t]he God of Life made [them], too. [They have] as much right to live as we humans" (130). This vision of personhood that extends beyond the human also applies to kinship. Lozen asserts the strong bond between her people and dogs, remembering her mom saying that "'[o]ur dogs made us more human,'" calling them "four-legged allies" (emphasis added, 225–6). Here, dogs are not described just as pets that Lozen's people own; rather, they are considered living beings and allies with their own agency and subjectivity. Similarly, *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* reflects this vision of personhood and kinship with other-than-human beings. In "A Land of Many Countries" (2008), Kwaymullina explains that when colonisers arrived in what is known today as "Australia," they did not understand "that life in all its shapes watched them anxiously from the ground, the water; the sky; and there was not a single grain of sand beneath their feet that was not part of a thinking, breathing, loving land" (11). She states that the colonisers considered land an object, "not as grandmother, grandfather, mother, father, sister, brother and family" (11). In the novel, the Firstwood becomes a stronghold for Ashala and her companions. The trees allow her to live there because the two recognise in each other the violence they are subjected to. Upon receiving the trees' memories,

Ashala declares: "'there is no reason. Do you hear me? There's no reason good enough to hurt my sister, or to kill a forest'" (194). Indeed, Ashala asserts that the Firstwood "'count as much as [her],'" adding that "'if anyone ever comes for you with machines or saws or axes or anything, they'll have to get through me first'" (194). Here, Ashala affirms the personhood of the Firstwood, pledging to respect and protect it at the expense of her own life. Commenting on personhood and kinship with the other-than-human, which is central to many Indigenous knowledge systems, Justice argues that in various Indigenous traditions being human is a learnt process achieved through respectful and meaningful affiliation to the land and kinship with the other-than-human (*WILM* 76). He writes: "The earth speaks in a multitude of voices, only some of which are human. […] these plants, animals, stones, and other presences are our seen and unseen relatives, our neighbours, our friends or companions" (86). In the two novels, it is this broad perspective on personhood, kinship, and life that leads both Lozen and Ashala to realise that their role in their respective worlds cannot be limited to protecting themselves, their families, and friends. Instead, they must devote their abilities to preserving all forms of life.

In *Killer of Enemies*, after hearing Hally's explanation of the origin of the Silver Cloud, Lozen corroborates it with stories that her mother used to recount, where many worlds before hers were destroyed "because of the misdeeds of humans or of Coyote, who is a sort of embodiment of all the craziest, most powerful and irrational aspects of humanity" (306). Lozen comes to understand the Silver Cloud as retribution for the imbalance caused by humanity's oppressions and destruction of other forms of life. She decares: "What we need to do is to find the balance again to make it right" (306, emphasis added). While Lozen escapes from Haven with her family, she states that she must return and fight the Ones because "if they have their way, they and others like them will claw their way back to control the whole world" (293). Approaching Haven, Lozen finds herself on a mountain: the "Place Where Birds Flew. Just one ridge away from Haven" (315). Seeking a way down the mountain to avoid one of the Ones posted on the path to Haven, Lozen states that "[t]here's another, more precarious way" (328). Aware of the difficulty of this task, owing to the heavy weight of her backpack, she remembers her uncle advising her to not just "see the "'mountain,'" rather "[b]e the mountain'" (331). Far from being metaphorical or romantic, these words find

concrete manifestation when Lozen starts descending the cliff: “I’m part of it,” she states (331). The stones of the mountain, Lozen affirms, are as warm as “the skin of a living being” that as she touches, the feeling of weight disappears giving place “to immeasurable lightness” (331). She realises that this is “this mountain’s spirit” that, as she holds, she begins “to know some of what it knows, feel the life that shimmers all over it, every plant, every insect and small animal. […] And with the mountain’s spirit helping [her], [she] take[s] a deep breath and move[s]” (331). Lozen acknowledges the sentience of the land, regarding it as alive from a physical and moral perspective. Reflecting on the land’s ability to exert influence on human and the other-than-human beings in “Indigenous Place-thought & Agency amongst Humans and Non-humans” (2013), Mohawk and Anishinaabe Bear Clan scholar Vanessa Watts writes: “Our truth, not only Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee people but in a majority of Indigenous societies, conceives that we (humans) are made from the land; our flesh is literally an extension of soil” (27). This conceptualisation, which Watts calls “Place-Thought,” is “based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts” (21). In *Killer of Enemies,* Lozen illustrates this concept of “Place-Thought” in the way her body becomes an extension of the mountain, whose spirit shares its thoughts and knowledge with her, strengthening her agency as she moves down the cliff with ease.

In *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf,* the Firstwood responds to Ashala’s plea and manifests its consent in its own way. Ashala states that, after uttering her words, “something started growing in the emptiness”, making all forms of life within the Firstwood grow and flourish (195). The Firstwood reflects on an important Aboriginal concept that defines Aboriginal peoples' relationships to the land. In the “Author’s Note” to the novel, Kwaymullina explains that Aboriginal peoples call their homelands “Countries,” and while “Australia” does not exist anymore in Ashala’s world, Kwaymullina states that “every landscape in *The Tribe* Series is inspired by one of the many biodiverse regions of Australia” (“Author’s Note,” *The Interrogation*). In the novel, the Firstwood’s biodiversity is based on one of these Countries, for as the author puts it, “there are really towering tuarts: they grow in the Country of the Nyoongah people, in the south-west of Western Australia” (“Author’s Note,” *The Interrogation*). The significance

of the concept of Country to Aboriginal peoples, however, exceeds the physical; Kwaymullina writes, “Country is not simply a geographical space. It is the whole of reality, a living story that forms and informs all existence. Country is alive, and more than alive—it is life itself” (“A Land” 12). Indeed, Ashala states that “beneath and within and between” the blooming life in the Firstwood “was a shining shape that was somehow the beginning and the end of everything. The glowing thing flowed around me, and my whole body hummed with life. I found myself shouting out, giving words to the joy and defiance of the Firstwood. ‘*I live! We live! We survive!*’” (195, emphasis added). Not only is the Firstwood sentient, but it also infuses life into everything that lives within it, including Ashala herself. Her words to the Firstwood convey the imperative of an interrelated and relational existence. For Aboriginal peoples, Kwaymullina explains, the world as it is created by the Ancestor spirits consists of a “web of relationships” between all forms of life (“A Land” 13). She writes: “it is by maintaining and renewing the connections linking life together, that country—and so all of reality—is *balanced and sustained*. This is why, to Aboriginal people, our relationships with all shapes of life are of vital importance” (13, emphasis added).

The Balance is indeed the driving force behind the events of *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*. There is a confrontation between two worldviews that understand the Balance differently. The government that rules this post-apocalyptic world considers children with superhuman abilities not only as being outside the Balance but also as a threat to it. Yet Chief Administrator Neville Rose pushes this fascist ideology to its paroxysm. His willingness to destroy Ashala and the Tribe makes him break the “Benign Technology Accords” by developing a computer that functions as an interrogation machine. The purpose of this machine is to interrogate detainees in order to get information about Ashala and the Tribe. Upon receiving this information, Ashala states: “It seemed impossible. I mean, everyone knew the dangers of advanced tech. It had isolated the people of the old world from nature, shielding them from the consequences of imbalance. [...] That was one of the reasons why we *had* Benign Technology Accords, to stop us from making the same mistakes” (288). Ashala realises that it is not only herself and the Tribe that are in jeopardy but also the Firstwood and all that lives within it. This, for her, constitutes the Balance. She declares: “‘I’d always heard about the Balance before that. But that was the first time I actually felt it. That was

when I knew that there was something greater than all of us. Those trees, and the Tribe, and even the saurs—*that's the heart of me. The essence of who I am*'" (303, emphasis added). The Firstwood is Country for Ashala, defining her identity and giving meaning to her existence. She understands the Balance as that where all forms of life, human and other-than-human, are intimately bound and of equal importance. As such, her detention by the enforcers of Detention Centre 3 is intentional. Offering herself to the enforcers as bait, she succeeds in stopping Neville Rose's plan, freeing the detainees, and protecting the Firstwood.

6. Conclusion: Indigenous Futurisms and the Articulation of Embodied Sovereignties

The sections of this chapter offered a trans-Indigenous reading of *Killer of Enemies* and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolfe* centred around three analytical axes that unravelled the different decolonial readings that are inherent to the works of Indigenous futurisms as narratives of Indigenous survivance. As in the first section, Bruchac and Kwaymullina ground their novels upon significant socio-political and historical contexts to unravel the different colonial traumas that Indigenous peoples endured and continue to endure in the settler-colonial states that encase them. In doing so, both authors present decolonial counter-narratives that expose settle-colonial tendencies of historical amnesia toward the histories of oppression and dispossession against Indigenous peoples. As Smith puts it, "*Coming to know the past* has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization" (34). The projection of these traumas in futuristic narratives reflects a two-fold objective. On the one hand, it draws attention to the historical and contemporary realities of the Indigenous people living in these settler-colonial countries and expresses the need for historical accountability and social justice from the states and settler-societies that are yet to be achieved. On the other hand, when Indigenous authors speak of the apocalypse, they do it knowingly since their peoples endured all forms of colonial policies of extermination and termination during the era of the first colonial intrusions, as well as the ongoing colonial and neo-colonial oppressive policies. By imagining apocalyptic scenarios that are akin to those that Indigenous peoples lived, survived, and continue to survive, the novels address non-Indigenous audiences in a way that makes them engage with and

understand the different colonial apocalypses and dystopias that Indigenous peoples continue to survive and resist.

The second section explored the creative ways by which Bruchac and Kwaymullina weave aspects of Indigenous knowledge systems and worldviews into the plot of their novels. This reflects a multi-dimensional objective that is related to Indigenous cultural survivance, which, as Dillon puts it, is a "*sine qua non*" concept within Indigenous futurisms ("Indigenous Futurisms" 2). Indeed, she asserts that within works of Indigenous futurisms, "[s]urvivance rejects the notion that Indigenous peoples ought to remain content that they survived colonization; self-determination compels Indigenous peoples to define their own identities and to regain lost sovereignties" ("Global Indigenous Science Fiction" 378). Indigenous cultural survivance is manifested in the novels through the authors' ethical and aesthetic deployment of Indigenous knowledge systems, worldviews, and storytelling in works of science fiction to empower their Indigenous protagonists. Apart from translating a cultural assertion and revitalisation, the projection of Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing into futuristic narratives provides an acute critique of and a counternarrative to colonial discourses that either proclaim the myth of vanishing Indigenous peoples and cultures or place them as anachronistic to western culture and epistemologies. Indeed, the creative mobilisation of Indigenous worldviews and storytelling in the novels exceeds mere cultural survival since the authors adapt them tactfully to their futuristic worlds. In *Killer of Enemies*, Bruchac's aesthetics of cultural survivance is reflected in the way he projects Apache storytelling into a futuristic narrative while simultaneously adapting the content of these stories to the plot of the novel. By the same token, in *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf,* Kwaymullian imagines a world where "races", countries, and continents no longer exist; yet, it is a world in which Aboriginal worldviews not only continue to prevail but also define the very essence and strength of the protagonist. In addition to conveying a sense of an ongoing and dynamic change that characterises Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing, these novels are sites of healing and of asserting Indigenous sovereignties and agencies, wherein these artists are actively participating in the creation of opportunities for Indigenous self-determination and self-representation, and so correcting the stereotypes and misconceptions about Indigenous peoples that populate mainstream western culture.

The third section of the chapter explored the novels' aesthetic reflections of the Indigenous perspectives on subjectivity and agency that exceed the category of the human, encompassing the other-than-human and the land. The novels thus articulate visions of Indigenous sovereignty based not on ownership and domination but on relationality, reciprocity, and coexistence. In doing so, the novels aesthetically embody anticolonial rejections of settler-states' "circumscribed mode[s] of recognition" that, as Glen Coulthard puts it, work to "structurally ensure[] continued access to Indigenous peoples' lands and resources by producing neocolonial subjectivities that coopt Indigenous people into becoming instruments of their own dispossession" (156). Indeed, in "The Place Where We All Live and Work Together" (2015), Mississauga Nishnaabeg writer and scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson asserts that sovereignty for Indigenous peoples is understood as epistemologically and ontologically embodied, as it "includes our bodies, […] our minds and our knowledge system. […] Our ways of thinking come from the land; our intellectual sovereignty is rooted in place" (21). Similarly, in the introduction to *Sovereign Subjects* (2007), Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson asserts that sovereignty for Aboriginal peoples is epistemological and ontological, for it is grounded in a complex network of relationships between "ancestral beings, humans and land" (2). She states: "our sovereignty is carried by the body and differs from Western constructions of sovereignty, which are predicated on the social contract model, the idea of a unified supreme authority, territorial integrity and individual rights" (2). Indeed, these perspectives on Indigenous sovereignties ground the novels of Bruchac and Kwaymullian insofar as their realisations become the denouement of the plots.

In *Killer of Enemies*, Lozen's source of survival and agency is, for the most part, tied to and informed by the long history of her ancestors' resistance, who contended with their own apocalypse through their knowledge of the land and the environment that they regard as alive and sentient. In *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, Ashala and the Firstwood live in a harmony defined by mutual respect, care, and protection. Indeed, Ashala understands that these bonds and relations are what defines the Balance. Therefore, the novels posit what Dillon calls "Indigenous scientific literacies" and which she defines as "sustainable practices used by Indigenous peoples over thousands of years to reenergize the natural environment while improving the interconnected relationships among all persons

(animal, human, spirit, and even machine)" (*Walking the Clouds* 7). The novels' assertion of Indigenous scientific literacies and their projection into futuristic narratives register a twofold objective that reflects the healing and decolonising processes of Indigenous futurisms. On the one hand, they offer Indigenous representations of Indigenous knowledge systems away from western misconceptions that either consider these forms of knowledges primitive and inferior to Western epistemology and knowledge or romanticise them as pure fantasy and fabrication. In both novels, these Indigenous scientific literacies are not only relevant but serve to define the identities and strengths of the protagonists. In addition, the projection of these knowledge systems into futuristic narratives reflects the authors' endeavours to inscribe the presence of Indigenous peoples and their knowledges in humanity's future. In "Coming to You from the Indigenous Future," Danika Medak-Saltzman argues that Indigenous futuristic works offer an imaginative potential which asserts the relevance and indispensability of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems to humanity's future, strengthening Indigenous communities as they "work to negotiate within and beyond settler colonial realities" (143). On the other hand, these novels contribute to discussions about the Anthropocene and the current global environmental challenges. They call for the importance of attending to Indigenous knowledge systems and environmental practices that, as Davis and Todd put it, constitute "a necessary political corrective, alongside the self-determination of other communities and societies violently impacted by the white supremacist, colonial, and capitalist logics instantiated in the origins of the Anthropocene" (763). *Killer of Enemies* and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* are two such works of Indigenous futurisms that endeavour to imagine balanced futures beyond present dystopias and beyond the Indigenous-settler dichotomies, futures where "living together"—humans and other-than-humans—is a possibility, if not an imperative, for collective survival.

CHAPTER IV

Coeval Worlds, Alter/Native Words: Healing and Survivance in Indigenous Wonderworks

1. Introduction: Survivance as Existence in Resistance

This chapter explores the literary representation of trauma healing from a psychological/subjective perspective. It offers a trans-Indigenous reading of two Indigenous novels: *Catching Teller Crow* Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina and *Split Tooth* by Tanya Tagaq. As explained in the introduction to this thesis, the anti-therapeutic and therapeutic trends within trauma studies in its event-based model are inadequate and even problematic when approaching non-western and Indigenous texts and contexts that address traumas related to colonisation. These trends either promote victimisation or present healing as a passive survival based on the recovery of a healthy subjectivity that existed before a given traumatic event. This chapter explores the ways in which these Indigenous novels read against both the anti-therapeutic and therapeutic perspectives, insofar as they articulate perspectives of healing where healing is understood as an ongoing process of survival and resistance against pathologisation and victimisation, thus presenting themselves as stories of survivance. In *Native Liberty*, Gerald Vizenor asserts that "[s]urvivance is greater than" mere survival, because stories of survivance assert "renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry" (85). Indeed, the rhetoric of survivance in *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth* is aesthetically and stylistically registered through the anchoring of the protagonists' processes of healing within their specific Indigenous worldviews and perspectives on life, existence, and reality. Within studies on historical trauma as a critical discourse, practising survivance is conceived as an anticolonial prescription. In fact, in "American Indian Historical Trauma", William E. Hartmann et al. explain that scholars that engage with historical trauma as a critical discourse critique the pathologising and victimising aspects of the over-psychologisation of trauma among Indigenous peoples and challenge the colonial undersides of psychology and health in settler-colonial contexts as they go counter Indigenous sovereignties and self-determination (12). Indeed, the authors state that scholars

working within this trend conceptualise colonisation not as a past event, but rather as an ongoing condition under which Indigenous peoples are continuously struggling against the settler state's endeavour at normalising its existence (12). As such, they advocate an anticolonial practice of survivance based on "a genre of creative action asserting continued Native presence and vitality" in order to oppose the social narratives and discourses that promote the victimisation of Indigenous peoples and posit their existence as mere survivors of a precolonial and colonial past (7). Within this anticolonial perspective, Hartmann et al. explain, wellness is conceived as "a localized cultural construction" that has individual, collective, and political dimensions and that requires shifting attention away from narrow discourses of health and psychology and towards the examination of "systems and structures" that either facilitate or prevent Indigenous peoples from "create[ing] healthy, meaningful lives in culturally vibrant nations" (12). As such, practising survivance promotes an anticolonial perspective of healing that not only de-victimises and de-pathologises Indigeneity as an identity, but also posits it as a political and cultural claim for Indigenous sovereignty.

One example that engages with trauma in Indigenous contexts as a critical discourse—wherein healing is conceived as a practice of survivance—can be found in a recent article published by Valerie N. Wieskamp and Cortney Smith titled "'What to do when you're raped'" (2020). In this article, the authors conduct a rhetorical analysis of Lucy M. Bonner's illustrated handbook *What to Do When You are Raped* (2016), in which they explore the potential of the "rhetoric of survivance" in expanding the discussion about trauma and sexual violence within Indigenous women and girls (73). Wieskamp and Smith begin with a critique of the Euro-American discourses of trauma and sexual violence that they deem incompatible with the experiences of women of colour (73). In addition to their racial and gendered tendencies, the authors explain, Euro-American discourses of trauma follow a linear "traumatological timeline" which assumes a stable subject position prior to traumatisation; as such, traumatised individuals are seen as capable "of being forever cured of that trauma, even if they cannot regain their initial subject position" (76). This understanding, the authors contend, victimises those who fail to detach themselves from their trauma (76). Moreover, Wieskamp and Smith state that Euro-American conceptions of trauma and healing are highly individualistic, such that the accountability of the state's structural oppression is

hidden through psychology and individual well-being (73). Working against the Euro-American understandings of trauma and healing that are based respectively on a linear traumatological timeline and the restoration of stable subjectivities, survivance, they argue, “advances an enduring sense of renewal” through the assertion of “Native presence and empowerment” of the Indigenous women and girls who experience sexual violence wherein healing is conceived as “a continuous process” of “constant renewal” (73, 76). Moreover, the authors contend that the rhetoric of Indigenous survivance challenges the Euro-American tendencies to individualise and over-psychologise trauma and healing (74). First, it posits trauma and sexual violence against Indigenous women and girls as “a public crisis” that requires a critique of the colonial systems and structures that facilitate them; second, by promoting the empowering virtues of collective agency, survivance also creates “a rhetorical space” of healing that is informed by “collective coping methods” (74). As such, the rhetoric of survivance in Indigenous works that address the traumas of colonialism offers aesthetic registers that are two-fold: on the one hand, they expose and critique the pathologising and victimising tendencies of the western discourse on trauma and healing that aim to individualise them such that the responsibility and structures of settler-colonialism are exonerated; on the other hand, they posit healing as an ongoing process of survival, presence, and resistance informed by culture, knowledge systems, and collective agencies.

2. Indigenous Wonderworks as Narratives of Indigenous Survivance

In the wake of what has been discussed above, this chapter will explore the representation of healing as survivance in *Catching Teller Crow* by the Playku siblings and writers Ambeline and Ezekiel Kwaymullina. and *Split Tooth* (2018) by the Inuk throat singer and writer Tanya Tagaq. Before delving into the analysis of these two Indigenous novels, a discussion about the genre they pertain to is essential in order to delineate their relevance to the exploration of healing as survivance in this chapter. *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth* stand out notably for their plasticity in terms of form, style, narrative registers, and aesthetic techniques. On the one hand, *Catching Teller Crow* draws together the genres of detective/crime fiction, gothic/horror fiction, and narrative registers that are informed by Aboriginal epistemologies, ontologies, and worldviews. On the other

hand, in terms of form and style, the novel repeatedly shifts from prose into a story-telling technique in the form of free-verse poetry. Commenting on their novel in the afterword, the authors state that their storytelling is informed by two kinds of stories that shaped the reality and the existence of Aboriginal peoples. They write: “The first set are the stories of our homelands, families, cultures […]. The second set are the tales that entered our world with colonization; stories of the violence that was terrifyingly chaotic or even terrifyingly organized on a systemic scale” (“Afterward,” *Catching Teller Crow* 191). By the same token, Tagaq’s *Split Tooth* brings together prose, poetry, illustrations, and narrative registers anchored in Inuit ontologies, epistemologies, and worldviews, along with Tagaq’s memoir. In an online article titled “The surprising sounds and sides of Tanya Tagaq” (2018) by Mike Doherty, Tagaq describes her novel as “non-fiction, embellished non-fiction and pure fiction” (qtd in Doherty para. 2). Notably, there is no indication in the novel of when the fiction ends and the non-fiction memoir begins (or vice-versa); this, Laura Beard (2019) notes in her review of the novel, “ underscores the inability of those binaries of Euro-defined disciplines to categorize, embrace, or discipline the exciting work of Indigenous artists and scholars” (317). What brings together *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth*, therefore, is their nonconformity neither to those rigid western literary genres of realism, nor to the experimental literary categories of magical realism, speculative fiction, or science fiction; instead, the two novels present themselves as what Cherokee scholar and writer Daniel Heath Justice terms “Indigenous Wonderworks.”

In his landmark study of Indigenous literatures, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, Daniel Heath Justice opens with an introduction titled “Stories That Wound, Stories That Heal”, in which he contextualises his study of Indigenous literatures. He explains that many toxic stories were written about Indigenous peoples, especially from a colonial Eurocentric perspective; yet he declares that the most damaging of them is the story of “*Indigenous deficiency*” (2). According to this narrative, Justice explains, lack—in all its forms—is inherent to Indigenous peoples’ nature, whether that is a lack of “morals, laws, culture […] language […] [or] a lack of responsibility” towards themselves and their families—a lack that this story attributes to the Indigenous biological, intellectual, and psychological deficiency (2). Moreover, Justice states, this story asserts that

lower rates of life expectancy, employment, and education, along with higher rates of homelessness, substance abuse, and suicide, are due to the Indigenous "lack of human decency" rather than being one of the many direct results of longstanding colonial violations of Indigenous people's lives, cultures, and identities (3). Therefore, according to this story, mental health issues related to trauma, depression, and despair find genesis in the Indigenous peoples' "lack of mental fitness," rather than being sustained by ongoing colonial oppressive and racist social structures (3). Justice asserts that this story of "Indigenous deficiency" works as a protective shell, hiding the "settler colonial guilt and shame" while at the same time exonerating settler-colonial society from taking "responsibility for the story's devastating effects" (4). These are, indeed, part of the "Stories That Wound" to which Justice refers in the title of his introduction.

Nevertheless, Justice insists that there are other stories—which he refers to as "Stories That Heal" and which are written from an Indigenous perspective—that bring about spiritual and bodily healing by reminding Indigenous people that they are not "determined by the colonial narrative of deficiency" that they have long internalised and accepted as a fatal truth (5). The author explains that these stories are found in Indigenous literacies, yet they should not be understood simply as "diverse literary forms" nor should they be looked at from a narrow aesthetic prism, for "they perform other kinds of vital functions in their respective cultures, many of them ceremonial, ritual, and spiritual" (23). Justice asserts that Indigenous "speculative" literatures carry within them "Stories That Heal." He states that Indigenous speculative literatures provide "transformative modes" which, through a "complementary and distinctive range of reading and interpretive strategies", make it possible to dismantle the monolithic and fatalist "models of 'the real'" and provide transformative visions of other lives, experiences, and histories" (142). Therefore, Justice asserts that the "ethical import" provided by speculative fiction—whether it is fantasy, horror, or science fiction—demands to be looked at both critically and pedagogically (142). He maintains that within Indigenous speculative fiction, "the fantastic is an extension of the possible, not the impossible; it opens up and expands the range of options for Indigenous characters (and readers); it challenges our assumptions and expectations of 'the real,' thus complicating and undermining the dominant and often domineering functions of the deficit model [of the real]" (149). However,

Justice questions the relevance of the terminology that informs speculative fiction when it is viewed from Indigenous cultural and literary perspectives. He takes issue with terms such as “fantasy fiction” or “speculative/imaginative literature” for, he notes, they are “burdened by dualistic presumptions of real and unreal” and “leave [no] legitimate space for other meaningful ways of experiencing this and other worlds” (152). Even more problematic for Indigenous cultures and literatures, explains Justice, is that the term “fantasy” suggests a kind of fabrication which, if understood from a Freudian psychoanalytical perspective, could imply a pathology of neurosis and delusion (152–3). Instead, he proposes the concept of “wonderworks” that implies a polylithic understanding of the world and of reality (152). Justice explains that “[w]ondrous things are *other* and *otherwise*; they’re outside the bounds of the everyday and mundane […]. They remind us that other worlds exist; other realities abide alongside and within our own” (153). He asserts that Indigenous wonderworks are grounded in Indigenous peoples’ cultural specificities and experiences, allowing for the resurgence and the recovery of Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and politics that have long been dismissed by colonial discourses and narratives (154). Furthermore, Justice states, Indigenous wonderworks subvert the “expectations of rational materialism” that insist on the inevitability and fatality of “the oppressive structures and conditions” as inherent to Indigenous experiences (154–5).

The following sections of this chapter will examine the literary devices and aesthetic techniques used in *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth* to capture and register the protagonists’ individual traumatic histories that are anchored in the broader history of colonialism and its traumatic aftermath on their respective Indigenous communities. In addition, they will investigate the ways in which these novels read against the expectations of both the anti-therapeutic and therapeutic trends within trauma studies in their western entrenchment. On the one hand, the protagonists of these two novels are not trapped in a traumatic compulsion associated with the anti-therapeutic trend. On the other hand, they do not accept the status of passive survivors of their traumas associated with the therapeutic trend in which healing is, as Deborah L. Madsen points out, equated with a therapeutic re-assimilation or reintegration of the fragmented self that aims to bring the patient “to a condition of cultural productivity” and in which “the concept of psychic integration or assimilation” is imperatively conflated with social

assimilation (“On Subjectivity and Survivance” 64). In *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth*, the protagonists resist and reject pathologisation and victimisation while simultaneously asserting their self-determination through their historical consciousness, political agency, and cultural affirmation. As Indigenous wonderworks, *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth* not only reflect Indigenous perspectives on the world, reality, and existence, they also offer a decolonising reading of healing that is articulated as an ongoing process of survivance, and which is captured in both novels through the protagonists’ impactful engagement with their specific histories, cultural heritage, Indigenous worldviews, and elements that pertain to the Sacred.

3. Baring the Core, Unravelling the Periphery

The plot of Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina’s novel *Catching Teller Crow* begins by introducing one of the protagonists, Beth Teller, who is a ghost. Beth Teller died in a car accident a few months prior to the start of the narrative. However, because her father, Michael Teller, is still grieving her death, she exists in a spectral form that only her father can see and hear. Michael Teller is a police detective. Along with the ghost of his daughter, he goes to a remote Australian town to investigate a fire at a children’s home and examine an unidentified body found in the ashes. The events behind this fire inform much of the novel’s plot, and, as the story unravels, the town’s dark secret begins to emerge. Parts of the novel are told from the perspective of Beth’s ghost, who, ironically, starts to sense an ominous aura that is enveloping the town. Indeed, throughout the novel, the authors aesthetically capture the town’s menacing aura by registering it as a peripherality informed by uneven race-relations. This is, for instance, demonstrated early in the novel when Beth narrates the way in which her father describes the town. She declares: “His voice was raspy. He drew in a deep breath and added in a more even tone, ‘it reminds me of where your mum and I grew up.’ His mouth twisted as if he’d tasted bad. ‘Local police officers can have a lot of power in places like this’” (*Catching Teller Crow* 5). In fact, Beth’s father speaks knowingly, as his own father “had been a cop for thirty years and he wasn’t a good guy” (6). At this point, we learn that Beth’s deceased mother was Aboriginal while her father, Michael, is a white Australian. This information is significant because it contextualises the parallel drawn by the father between the two towns and explains

why Beth refers to her grandfather as a bad person. Indeed, Beth states that her grandparents had disowned their son for seeing her Aboriginal mother and that "they'd never wanted anything to do with [her], their Aboriginal granddaughter" (6). As a police officer, her grandfather "thought the law was there to protect some people and punish others. And Aboriginal people were the 'others'" (6). These statements demonstrate the extent and the persistence of institutional racism in twenty-first century Australia, in which the law is characterised by an unevenness that, while functioning as a protective apparatus for the white population, is a punitive one for the "othered' Aboriginal population.

Moreover, the peripheral aspect of the town is inscribed into its very architecture. In a chapter titled "The Witness," Beth and her father decide to go and interview a witness to the fire who is admitted to the local hospital. Describing the hospital building from the outside, Beth declares: "It was a jumbled weatherboard building that sprawled out in all directions, as if additions had just been tacked on wherever was most convenient as the years went by. The exterior was painted a cheery bright blue, and crows perched on the rooftop, lining the top of the big sign that said HOSPITAL" (19–20). Mobilising a gothic register to describe the hospital would be considered rather conventional for a novel whose narrative registers include mystery or horror. However, this novel is first and foremost an Aboriginal Australian novel that engages with the legacies of colonialism, and its use of a gothic tradition would be, as Katrin Althans argues in "White Shadows" (2013), subject to a controversial debate mainly because of "the European origin and colonial legacies of the Gothic (139). As such, Althans states that Aboriginal Australian writers that appropriate the gothic find themselves trapped in an ideological struggle in which they "want to free themselves from aesthetic constraints imposed upon them by European literature—paradoxically with the aid of one of the most disabling discourses of colonial history, the Gothic" (144). In *Catching Teller Crow*, however, beyond achieving a formal and stylistic purpose, the authors' use of the gothic tropology in the above passage could be considered a registration of the economic unevenness that characterises this peripheral Australian town. As argued in Chapter One of the thesis, the WReC contributors consider the presence of the "gothic and fantasy" as one of the narrative registers that reflects the reality of a combined and uneven development in the (semi-)peripheries of core capitalist

zones (57). Indeed, while hospitals are conventionally considered spaces of care, the hospital building described in this passage inspires decay, for it is depicted as having an almost Frankensteinian allure, with "additions [that] had just been tacked on wherever was most convenient" (*Catching Teller Crow* 19). This macabre description is strengthened by the presence of crows on the hospital rooftop, such that it would appear perhaps more appropriate if the sign reads "Cemetery" rather than "Hospital." By the same token, if, as the WReC contributors contend, modernity in an economic logic of a combined and uneven development "is coded into the fabric of built space[s]," then the hospital with its weatherboard walls becomes an epitome of economic unevenness inscribed in and reflected by the architectural aspects of this Australian peripheral town (148).

Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth* is similarly set in a small, peripheral town located in the Arctic region of Nunavut, which is situated in the northern territories of what is known today as Canada. The peripherality of the town is not only limited to its geographical location in relation to the core-capitalist metropoles of this settler-colonial state. Instead, through a myriad of narrative registers, such as non-human agencies, Inuit narrative registers and storytelling, free-verse poetry, and scientific terminologies that pertain to the domain of geology, the author formally and aesthetically registers the town's peripherality in a logic of an uneven and traumatic modernity produced by the expansion of Canadian colonial capitalism. The plot of *Split Tooth* is told entirely from the first-person point of view of an unnamed adolescent girl and is centred on her life in a coming-of-age narrative through which she confronts the trauma of longstanding sexual abuse. From the first page of the novel, this unnamed narrator provides an overview of the economic precariousness that haunts this peripheral Arctic town. In the midst of this harsh Arctic environment, she notes that the house she lives in is made of "*[f]ake-wood* panel walls" (1). Although short as a description of the house's building materials, it is possible to discern the critique that lies behind it. The fragility of the house walls speaks volumes about the uneven modernity produced in the logic of colonial and neo-colonial capitalism in Canada. As explained above, the WReC contributors contend that modernity in an economic logic of a combined and uneven development "is coded into the fabric of built space[s]" (148). In the novel, the fallacious character of the house's walls being made of "fake-wood panels" instead of real wood, which, as a natural resource, would

hardly be lacking in a country like Canada, provides a glimpse into the uneven distribution of wealth and resources, and the nature of development that a racially inscribed capitalism entails in the peripheries of core-capitalistic settler-colonial countries.

Tagaq's critique of colonial capitalist modernity and its destructive "development" which the Inuit of "Canada" endure takes on other, more enormous proportions when she addresses the ecological disasters provoked by exploitive resource extraction and global warming that are brought about by global capitalism and Canadian capitalist expansionism in the Arctic region. Addressing such issues in their work, the WReC contributors argue that in literary works that register ecological failures induced by violent resource extractions, there is often a self-conscious recourse to and appropriation of "catachrestic narrative devices", fantastic tropes, and aesthetics of speculative fiction in order to "visualise spectral economies of oil and energy, hyper-commodity fetishism" and "to register the violent impact of petroleum extraction and reorganisation of socio-ecological relations" (97–98). As explained in the introduction to this chapter, *Split Tooth* fits within Justice's articulation of an Indigenous wonderwork, capturing the violence and the ecological impact of oil extraction in Nunavut through a mixture of phantasmagoria and anthropomorphism, as well as through non-human agencies that pertain to Inuit worldviews. Early in the novel, the narrator anthropomorphises "[g]lobal warming" itself through her use of active verbs, asserting that global warming "will release the deeper smells" and "coax stories out of the permafrost" (Tagaq 6). In an ominous and phantasmagorical tone, she wonders "what memories lie deep in the ice? Who knows what curses?" (6). In other passages that touch upon the same theme, the narrator chooses to address the land directly. Yet, unlike "global warming", which is anthropomorphised, the land is approached as a character *per se* through a conferred agency that is reflected in the novel's typography. In an interlude, the narrator enters into a direct conversation with the land as their gazes meet, "[b]lack eye on black eye" (64). She addresses the land as a human being with human organs using the second-person pronoun "you" when she says: "[y]our mouth opens and emits a toothless scream" and "[y]our hair falls out" (65). This embodiment of the land reaches an apotheosis when the narrator corporealises the suffering it endures while being stripped of its oil re-

sources. First, she compares the extraction process to bleeding and haemorrhaging when she describes the way in which "[o]il begins to seep from all of [the land's] orifices" (65). Afterwards, she equates the process of well-drilling with the skinning of a caribou: "This is happening to you with invisible hands, and then the skin reattaches itself so you can feel that same thing again and again" (65). Finally, the narrator considers the land as a traumatised body to which "[d]eath" would be "a thousand times more desirable than this", and for which she "will always bear witness" (65). These graphic passages register the stark differences that exist between Indigenous worldviews and western conceptions and visions of space and the natural environment. Indeed, in *Decolonizing Methodologies,* Smith argues that, for the west, space is regarded "as being static or divorced from time. This view generates ways of making sense of the world as a 'realm of stasis', well-defined, fixed and without politics" (109). As such, she states, "[l]and, for example, was viewed as something to be tamed and brought under control" (106).

As discussed above, the WReC contributors read the mobilisation of fantastic tropes and speculative fiction aesthetics as a deliberate and purposeful technique in literary works that endeavour to register the shock and the violence entailed by "petro-modernity's blind dependence on oil and its unrelenting drive to expansion" (109). Nevertheless, in the case of Indigenous wonderworks, the speculative and the fantastic is, as Justice puts it, "an extension of the possible, not the impossible" and, by extension, the real, not the unreal (149). Justice argues that such works depict "experiential realities" found in "most traditional Indigenous systems" that "don't always fit smoothly into the assumptions of Eurowestern materialism" (141–2). As an Indigenous wonderwork, it would therefore be inaccurate to read the land's sentience in Tagaq's *Split Tooth* as mere fantasy and fabrication since concepts of other-than-human personhood and agencies are inherent to those "experiential realities" of many Indigenous knowledge systems (Justice, *WILM*, 141). The non-human agency with which the earth is endowed in the novel is a deliberate technique through which the author asserts an Inuit perspective on the land and the environment—a perspective in which both are considered as living beings with agency. In this way, Tagaq's novel presents an acute critique of western colonisation's commodification of Indigenous space through the highly exploitive oil industry that is itself a symptom

of the destructive modernity lived by the Inuit as a direct result of the Canadian colonial and expansionist capitalism.

4. Poetic Narrativisations, Gothic Subversions

In *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth*, the protagonists' trauma narratives are predominantly conveyed through free-verse poetry in terms of form and the mobilisation of Gothic topology in terms of style and aesthetic techniques. Commenting on the use of poetry in *Catching Teller Crow* in a review that appeared in *Diversifying YA and Children's Literature* (2020), David Kern states that the authors' use of free-verse poetry offers a vivid portrayal of "the fracture and shock caused by pain and abuse, achieving a visual language which is able to express and narrativize violence without resort to 'sensationalism'" while simultaneously expressing the "autonomy and display of sovereign agency" of Isobel Catching, the second protagonist and narrator of the novel (77). In addition, Catching's narrative poetry brings together the present and the past in such a way that they provide context and meaning to each other. Indeed, before she begins to narrate her story to the detective, Catching declares that the tale will "'take too long'" as it "'didn't even start with the fire" at the children's home'" (*Catching Teller Crow* 23–24). Strikingly, the protagonist's narrative of trauma in *Split Tooth* is also predominantly conveyed in the form of episodic free-verse poems that, most of the time, do not follow the novel's overall linearity and scheme. Indeed, from the very beginning of the novel, Tagaq depicts the tormented life of an Inuit child whose community continues to be plagued by the longstanding colonial and neo-colonial traumas and their far-reaching psychological, social, and economic repercussions. However, the novel focuses more on the traumatic impacts of the Canadian residential school policies among Inuit communities, shedding light on the social ills of alcoholism, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and suicide among the youth. Indeed, Tagaq dedicates her novel to "*the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and survivors of residential schools*" (Tagaq VII). As such, the mobilisation of free-verse poetry in the two novels goes beyond a simple aesthetic choice; rather, it is used as a storytelling technique that reflects a rhetoric of survivance. In "'What to do when you're raped.'" (2020) Wieskamp and Smith emphasise storytelling as a strategy of survivance in narrating and addressing trauma and sexual

violence; in this way, they reject dominant Euro-American scepticism and dismissal of trauma narration (82). Such narratives of survivance, they argue, create a space of healing that is informed by cultural traditions and community (83). Moreover, they assert that the capacity of storytelling "to connect individual experiences to the larger whole also enables another characteristic of survivance—that of establishing collective agency" (84). The subsequent sections of this chapter will explore the ways in which the protagonists' healing and survivance are heavily anchored in and informed not only by the stories of their ancestors' resistance against colonialism but also by their cultural heritage and worldviews.

In *Catching Teller Crow*, Catching situates her story of abduction and abuse in an alternate reality, which she refers to as "the other-place," and speaks about non-human and supernatural entities that pertain to some aspects of the western Gothic. Exploring the mobilisation of the genre of the Gothic in Aboriginal Australian literature in *Darkness Subverted*, Katrin Althans explains that Aboriginal gothic emerged from a negotiation between the European gothic and an Aboriginal cultural matrix that reflects an alternative reality that is specific to Indigenous Australians (28). She states that this alternative reality finds an echo in what the Black Australian scholar and novelist Mudrooroo (Colin Johnson) calls "maban reality" (28). As an ontological framework that is akin to magical realism, Althans declares that "[i]f this maban reality then permeates the European Gothic, a uniquely Aboriginal Gothic arises" (28). In his article "Maban Reality and Shape-shifting the Past" (1996), Mudrooroo explains that maban reality is a unique Aboriginal reality opposed to the white natural and scientific reality imposed on Indigenous peoples around Australia through colonial and imperial dominance (1–2). He writes: "'Truth' was positioned only in natural sciences, and 'untruth' in maban reality. When maban reality was acknowledged at all, it was considered only an impediment to be destroyed by the colonial scientific reality" (2). As a counter-discourse and reality opposed to the rational worldviews demanded by the European scientific realism, maban reality is "characterised by a firm grounding in the reality of the earth, or country, together with an acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality" (9). However, the concept of maban reality advanced by Mudrooroo is problematic in the context of this study for various reasons. Notably, Mudrooroo's Aboriginal identity was questioned in

1996 when his sister publicly declared that her family has no relation to Aboriginal Australians and is instead of Irish and African American descent. Although Mudrooroo's Aboriginality was defended by certain scholars such as John Barnes in "Mudrooroo – An Australian View" (1999), others, as Maureen Clark argues in her book, *Mudrooroo: A Likely Story* (2007), insist that Mudrooroo's adoption of an Aboriginal identity stemmed from his own "conscious act of complicity" (240). In addition, Mudrooroo's conceptualisation of maban reality is presented with a kind of mystification and primitivism. In *Writing from the Fringe* (1990), he declares that "even today, scratch many an Indigenous person and beneath his or her contemporary skin, or the persona he or she shows to the white world, you will still find *the old hunter or gatherer*" (39, emphasis added). What begins as an attempt to advocate for Aboriginal alternative understandings of reality ultimately ends up reproducing and re-asserting the colonial discourses and narratives that have long relegated Aboriginal cultures and epistemologies to primitivism and backwardness.

In *Catching Teller Crow*, however, the genre of the Gothic is not blended harmoniously with Aboriginal cultural complexities. Instead, the gothic tropology is mobilised only for the novel's subversive purposes. For example, Catching describes her abductors as monsters, a description that could be ascribed to the evil entities found in the western Gothic tradition. Yet, each of these monsters described has its human embodiment in the detective's reality. First, she informs the detective that she is kidnapped by "the Fetchers," whom she describes as humanoid, winged monsters wearing long robes and who refer to themselves as "First" and "Second" (*Catching Teller Crow* 42). Catching notes that "[t]hey've got wings. *Leathery*. Grey. / [...] Their faces are covered by white masks with human features. But they can't be human" (41, emphasis added). The Fetchers' physical description as hybrid creatures—in-between human and bat with their "leathery' wings—could very well refer to the figures of demons often found in western imagery. However, these monsters wear "white masks" on which "human features," are drawn, alluding to their "human" embodiment in the detective's reality. Indeed, in her narrative poetry, Catching provides a hint about the identity of one of the Fetchers. She declares: "Second speaks to First: 'We must tell him we have fetched.'/ 'I will tell him. You will fix her.'/ […] 'You are good at fixing,' First says. 'You will make her shiny and new'" (46). Here, the second Fetcher is

presented as having some form of a healing faculty, which is indicated by the word “fixing.” By the end of the novel, and as this mystery unfolds, the “Fetchers” turn out to be the director of the children’s home and the nurse who, as the detective comes to realise, “‘were being paid off. For their silence […] And their cooperation’”, confirming that “[s]ome of the victims could have been from the home’” (176).

Second, Catching’s narrative offers another form of humanoid entities, “The Feed,” for which the Fetchers work. After being drugged by the second Fetcher (who is, ultimately, the nurse), Catching is taken to the Feed. She declares: “The Feed is large. White. Thin. / He has legs like broomsticks and arms that reach to his feet” (106). As its name suggests, “the Feed” is presented as a monster akin to vampires feeding on humans.[21] Yet, while vampires feed on human blood, “the Feed” feeds on the colours that live inside the spirit of his prey (103). Catching declares:

> His fingers press below my belly button.
> My flesh tears into two
> […]
> He holds up his hand. Colours drip from his fingers
> As if I’m bleeding rainbows
> *He eats what’s inside our insides.*
> The Feed swallows down a strip of green. (106–7)

It should be noted that the recurrence of “colours” in the novel is not to be limited to a mere literary trope; subsequent sections in this chapter will demonstrate the relevance of colours in the reading of the novel as a narrative of healing and survivance. For the moment, the analysis of the authors’ employment of aspects of western horror and gothic is resumed. Just as she had done previously with details of the Fetchers, Catching now provides the detective with hints as to the

[21] There are vampire-like entities in Aboriginal Australian worldviews such as the “Yara-ma-yha-who,” “Namorroddo,” and the “Garkain.” Yet, none of these entities’ physical and behavioural aspects are close to those of the “Feed” as described in the novel. Hence, it could be assumed that his description is based on any vampire-like monster that is present in popular horror culture which is heavily influenced by the western gothic tradition.

identity of one of the two Feeds for which the Fetchers (the director and the nurse) work. In her narrative poetry, Catching describes the first Feed as having "*mirror-eyes*" that "peer[s] into [her] brain" (106, emphasis added). Then, in a passage in which she describes her escape from "the beneath-place" where she was sequestered, she declares: "His eyes aren't mirrors. / He's lost his *glasses* in the chase. / The Feed is a man" (165, emphasis added). Indeed, by the end of the novel, "the beneath-place" is revealed to be an atomic bunker in which a "pair of glasses, half buried in the dirt" is found (175). This small detail links the Feed to its "human" embodiment, who turns out to be the son of the landowner who had donated the children's home and who owns the atomic bunker. In a photograph, Alexander Sholt is shown wearing a pair of "gold-rimmed glasses", similar to the ones found near the bunker (155). With the help of the director of the children's home and the nurse (the two Fetchers), Alexander Sholt (the first Feed) and the town's head of the police (revealed to be the second Feed) used the Sholt's bunker ("the beneath-place") to sequester and rape Aboriginal girls, among them Isobel Catching. This mobilisation of elements and aspects of the western Gothic as an aesthetic and narrative strategy fulfils a twofold purpose: on the one hand, if, as the WReC contributors demonstrate, certain realities that are inherent to the destructive impacts of colonialism and capitalist expansion in the (semi-)peripheries demand to be captured in a literary representation through "irrealist" narrative registers, then the deployment of a gothic register in the novel could only try to do justice to the horrors of the long-term sequestration and rape of Aboriginal girls (75). On the other hand, Althans contends that the Aboriginal Australian literature uses the Gothic's "subversive and transgressive […] against the most notorious Gothic perpetrator, *the white invader*" (*Darkness Subverted* 29, emphasis added). In this way, *Catching Teller Crow* is a novel faithful to its subversive qualities: by gothicising the perpetrators of the child abductions and rape, the novel makes clear that such a disaster is only possible through the superior position held by these perpetrators in a matrix of uneven race relations that is a direct aftermath of colonial dominance in Australia.

In Tagaq's *Split Tooth*, the unnamed narrator's everyday life is portrayed as a traumatic environment fuelled with alcohol and violence, for as the opening sentence of the novel reads: "Sometimes we would hide in the closet when the drunks came home from the bar. [...] Sometimes there was only thumping,

screaming, moans, laughter" (1). Nevertheless, in addition to being a member of a marginalised Indigenous people for whom trauma, as Stef Craps (2013) puts it, is "a constant presence", the narrator is, from childhood, exposed to persistent molesting and sexual abuse, both in public and domestic spaces (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 33). Describing a routine day at school in the first poem of the novel, the narrator states that "[t]he teacher squirm[s] his fingers under my panties. / […] He looks around and pretends he's not doing it" (Tagaq 4). Then, speaking of the school custodian, she declares: "Watch out for the old walrus. /The old man likes to touch young pussy. / [...] *I wonder why nobody kicks him out*" (4, emphasis added). In this way, the first poem exposes the educational environment that, ordinarily, is supposed to create security and fulfilment for children. Yet, located in a peripheral town of a settler-colonial country infested by uneven-race relations, the school becomes yet another space in which Inuit children encounter institutionally-facilitated oppression and abuse that the above-emphasised rhetorical question illuminates: "*I wonder why nobody kicks him out*" (4, emphasis added). Nonetheless, for the narrator, domestic spaces are even less secure and more oppressive than public spaces, and thus function as the nucleus of the narrator's trauma narrative. This is explicitly articulated when she describes the way in which a bylaw enforcement officer chases the children in the town in order to get them home and away from the stray dogs. Reflecting on the officer's role, the narrator declares: "He wants us to be safe in bed. Are beds safe anyways?" (13). This statement takes on its full sense in a poem titled "Sternum," in which the narrator captures the role of the human sternum in two different ways through a parallel of two verses: "The Human Sternum *is* capable of so many things" and "[t]he Human Sternum *is used* for so many things" (17, emphasis added). In the first part, where the sternum is presented in the active voice, it appears to be a protective shield, a sense which is conveyed through verses such as "Protector of Diaphragm" and "milk feeder of hope" (17). It is worth noting here that, in addition to being described in the active form, the sternum is anthropomorphised and endowed with a sense of subjectivity and agency. Both the sternum as protector and the diaphragm are capitalised, which, as Justice posits, "affirms the status of a subject with agency" (*WILM* 6). Accordingly, it would be relevant to read the description of the sternum in the first part of the poem as being that of the narrator, through which she asserts her agency and subjectivity.

This reading, however, takes on further meaning when it is contrasted with the second part of the poem, in which the sternum is depicted in the passive form, and is described as something constricting, with its "[c]lavicles like handlebars" (Tagaq 17). Yet, it is only at the end of the poem that the logic behind the use of the passive voice and the description of the sternum as an object becomes clear. In a brusque shift from a poetic register into straightforward, descriptive language, the narrator declares that "it [the sternum] smothers a little girl's face. / As the bedsprings squeak" (17). The radical switch in the tone and diction of the last verses, when read alongside the image of clavicles as "handlebars," suggests both violence and resistance—here, these clavicles are grabbed to push away a human sternum while it smothers a small girl's face. Moreover, the acoustic image of the squeaking bedsprings refers back directly to the narrator's rhetorical question: "Are beds safe anyways?" (13). Taken together, these images register one of the novel's most traumatic scenes in which the narrator is confronted by sexual violence and rape. It is worth noting that throughout the passages which describe scenes of sexual abuse, whether it is in the poetic or prosaic parts of the novel, the perpetrator is never referred to by name. Commenting on this namelessness in her review of Tagaq's novel (2019), M. Jacqui Lambert notes that "it could serve as a true function of the reality within the story where the narrator prefers to play it safe, rather than naming her uncle, a parent's friend or another man within the small community" (para. 4). If, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Tagaq's novel does indeed contain portions of her memoir, then Lambert's statement is plausible. However, the task here is to examine the aesthetic value and impact produced by this namelessness, particularly in a second, untitled poem in which the narrator spectralises the perpetrator as a reflection on the haunting effect of living under the constant horror and danger of abuse. She writes:

> Something is lurking […]
> Something imperceptible
> Something unseen
> Something war-driven
> Something obscene. (Tagaq 35)

The narrator depicts the rapist as a malicious presence, a menacing demon or ghost capable of concealing himself to better hunt her down and attack at a propitious moment. The rhythm produced by the anaphoric verses strengthens this phantasmagorical portrayal, such that it textually and aesthetically reproduces and reflects the narrator's constant and anxious anticipation of abuse. Moreover, in a prosaic passage, she declares: "There are evil beings in the room near the ceiling waiting to take over the drunken bodies, Grudges and Frustrations slobbering at the chance to return to human form, to violate, to kill, to fornicate" (106). Here, the narrator spectralises drunkenness itself and compares it to demonic possession. Therefore, as with *Catching Teller Crow*, the mobilisation of western gothic tropes in this Inuit literary text can be read as a subversive strategy. On the one hand, it materialises Tagaq's endeavour to register a reality that cannot be embodied or grasped through a realist narrative register due to its extreme traumatic impact. On the other hand, doing so specifically by appropriating aspects of the western Gothic, Tagaq conceives the narrator's trauma and pain as, in one way or another, an aftermath of western colonialism, as well as the subsequent oppressive policies and the socio-political peripheralisation of the Inuit in the settler-colonial nation of Canada.

Through references to human anatomy, as well as the intimacy of corporeality, Tagaq's *Split Tooth* captures the extent to which the deeply personal spaces of both the body and the home are violently intruded and encroached upon by the trauma of sexual abuse. Indeed, the use of spatiality and, more precisely, corporeal spatiality, is recurrent within the novel. Yet, in an untitled poem that captures another instance of rape, it is rather the *absence* of space that most profoundly registers that violence. The narrator states: "He keeps trying. / Pushing his hard thing./ Into a space that has no space" (22). If at first the poem's language captures that very same intrusion and infringement upon the space of the body evident in the poem "Sternum," the language of this second poem furthers this corporeal violence by presenting rape as an act through which a new, traumatic corporeal space is imposed upon the body. Indeed, the two mentions of the word "space" in this poem are not synonymous. In the first instance, it denotes a corporeal container, a space into which something can enter. In the second instance, however, "space" is both physiological and psychological; to possess "no space" during this moment is a violent and difficult image that

registers not only the act of rape itself but specifically the rape of a child. Furthermore, it is a psychological construction that does not yet possess a referent due to the narrator's age and lack of sexual maturity. The act of infringement here, therefore, far exceeds the corporeal and threatens the "no space" that is, for the narrator, still an unknown space and which is, through this especially traumatic rape, instantaneously created and then destroyed. Capturing the traumatic impact of her longstanding exposure to sexual abuse and violence in another poem, the narrator states: "I only work from the waist up/ Psychological epidural […] I was entered too young" (41). These verses encapsulate the repercussions of the physiological and psychological intrusion and infringement discussed above and echo David Lloyd's definition of trauma as a "violent intrusion and a sense of utter objectification that annihilates the person as subject or agent" ("Colonial Trauma" 214). Indeed, the impact of this traumatic intrusion is simultaneously physiological and psychological, both of which veer towards the annihilation of agency and subjectivity. On the one hand, by describing herself as someone whose lower body does not "work," the narrator suggests a sense of dissociation, a loss of possession of that body part. On the other hand, this physical numbing is projected onto the psyche, conveyed here through the reference to an "epidural," a medical procedure entailing the administration of local anaesthesia in order to achieve a total numbing of the spinal nerves, and which is usually used in childbirth. To use the metaphor of "epidural" here is, therefore, to denote an induced psychological numbness registering the traumatic annihilation of the narrator's psychological agency and subjectivity, and therefore propelling her towards a path of substance abuse and, eventually, a suicide attempt.

5. Relinquishing Colonial Victim-Hoods

In *Catching Teller Crow*, the Aboriginal teenager Isobel Catching is introduced in contrast to the dejecting and dismal atmosphere of the town and the hospital. Catching is the supposed witness to the fire that occurred at the children's home. One might expect Isobel to be portrayed as an incoherent and helpless character since, besides witnessing this fire, the report received by Beth's father states that "'She is not likely to be reliable'" as they believe she was on drugs (*Catching Teller Crow* 17). However, when describing her, Beth declares: "If this was the

witness then they'd succeeded in getting the drugs out of her system, because her gaze was focused" (21). As it is later revealed, Catching is not the supposed witness to the fire, but her story is linked to the children's home in a far more appalling way. Indeed, she is one of the many victims of an organised and long-term series of abductions, rapes, and murders of Aboriginal girls by a racist and corrupt network composed of the director of the children's home, the nurse, the head of the police, and the son of a local rich landowner. As noted above, the description attributed to Catching is far from that of a helpless victim; when the police detective asks her if she could provide information about the fire, "[s]he looked up and down, and sniffed like she wasn't impressed. Then she nodded and vanished into the room behind her" (22). Furthermore, when the detective enquires about her "unusual last name" and, with a tone of surprise, her Aboriginality, she mockingly replies that her last name is a colonial legacy given by the "white boss" to her "Great-great-grandma", adding that it "[w]asn't like she could say no, back then" (22). As for her Aboriginality, Catching responds with derision and revolt. Curling her lip, she states: "What, you think *I'm not brown enough*? You think all Aboriginal people are the same colour?" (23, emphasis added). Catching's declaration is not innocuous, as it speaks volumes about the ways in which the constructions and understandings of Aboriginality and Indigeneity have long been manipulated and modelled by Australia and other settler-colonial countries primarily for political purposes. As pointed out by Anita Heiss in "Writing Aboriginality" (2007), white Australian administrations have long imposed a construction of Aboriginality based on "blood" for assimilation purposes; as such, people who are not ascribed to the "pure Aboriginal" category are labelled "as 'half-caste' or 'part-Aboriginal' […] forcing [them] to question their identity ("How Aboriginal am I then?")" (43–44). Heiss adds that today, being Aboriginal is related to defining, declaring, and proving one's Aboriginality through "a certificate of Aboriginality" delivered by "an incorporated Aboriginal organization" and presented to Federal and State governments mainly to access programs related to education, employment, housing, "and on the odd occasion, equity" (44). Narrow constructions and definitions of Aboriginality created a "hierarchy of pigmentation" even within Aboriginal communities. Commenting on this aspect, Heiss writes: "The issue of skin color is a common one within the Aboriginal community, exemplified in the argument of 'am I black enough for

you?' or having to justify skin color as a degree of Aboriginality" (52). In fact, Heiss later adopts this question as the title of her book, *Am I Black Enough for You?* (2012), in which she explores and deconstructs the myth of "the so-called 'real Aborigine'" (2). In *Catching Teller Crow*, it is specifically that erroneous association of skin colour and pigmentation to Aboriginality and the myth of the "real Aborigine" that Catching reacts against with her sarcastic yet heavily politicised question. Her sarcasm reaches an apotheosis when the detective tries to mitigate this "misunderstanding" by apologising and declaring that "[his] wife was Aboriginal", to which Catching retorts with "a tone dripping with sarcasm: 'Wow, really? Then I guess you and I are going to be best friends'" (*Catching Teller Crow* 23). Nevertheless, beyond conveying the obvious yet relevant political statements on the questions of "race" and "Aboriginality" in Australia, this sequence of sarcastic and mocking sentences can be considered a stylistic strategy that captures the authors' efforts to register Catching's story and, by extension, offers the novel as a narrative of "survivance" against trauma. Indeed, if, as Vizenor contends, survivance is an "active resistance and repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry" and that, rather than being an "ideology" or a fixed "theory," survivance is a practice that is "earned by interpretations, by the critical construal of survivance in creative literature", then the authors, through the political agency conferred on Catching, caution against those pathologising and victimising readings associated with trauma narratives in colonial and Indigenous contexts (*Native Liberty* 88–89).

Tagaq's *Split Tooth* presents itself as a narrative of survivance through the narrator's endowment of a political agency, historical consciousness, and cultural affirmation. From the beginning of the novel, the narrator shows an explicit rejection of passivity and victimhood. This repudiation materialises firmly in a passage in which the narrator describes her Innuinaktun teacher, who is one of the Inuit children who had been sent to a residential school. She declares: "The teacher's dry, brown, papery hands repulse me. […] He smells of victimhood and insecurity. He is small. He is defeated. He disgusts me" (Tagaq 49–50). The revulsion and disgust that the narrator feels toward the teacher do not reside in the fact of his being a victim of the residential school system, but rather in that he attempts to reproduce that very same abuse on his Inuit pupils, for "[h]e usually hunches but becomes taller and throws back his shoulders around subordinates,

around victims" (49). Accordingly, her crude contempt is a reaction against the teacher's epitomisation of the colonial discourse of "Indigenous deficiency" and the victimisation that this narrative entails, which paves the way for the narrator's own narrative of survivance and repudiation of victimhood. Reflecting on the traumatic impact of the Canadian residential school system, she declares: "Residential schools have beaten the Inuktitut out of this town in the name of *progress*, in the name of *decency*" (50, emphasis added). Indeed, as a crucial aspect by which the culture is reflected and transmitted, the Inuinnaqtun language is the primary target of the Canadian child removal policies. Moreover, because of the trauma engendered by the colonial residential school system, the narrator states that her people were compelled to "*move forward*. Move forward with God, with money, with white skin and without the shaman's way" (50, emphasis added). This resonant anaphora is significant in that it underlines the kind of "recovery" and "healing" favoured by a settler-colonialism that regards Indigenous peoples as inherently "deficient," and whose salvation relies solely on their religious, social, cultural, and economic assimilation to the colonial capitalist modernity of the settler-colonial state, which was the primary purpose of the Canadian residential school system. Commenting on these colonial policies, Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that these brutal forms of "disciplining the colonized" in settler-colonial states were legitimised by racist policies and legislation and were accepted by white societies as being necessary to assimilate Indigenous peoples and become "citizens (of their own lands)" (134). The traumatic impacts of these forms of discipline, Smith highlights, were not only physical and emotional but also linguistic and cultural, as they were designed to destroy Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous collective identities and memories in order to make place for a new imposed colonial order (134).

Following the publication of the final report by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (December 2015) and its call for transformative actions for the Canadian residential schools' survivors and their families, Justice remarks that the singular term "reconciliation" became an abbreviated version of what was termed "truth and reconciliation" (158). Here, the omission of "truth" is neither innocent nor innocuous as it serves another colonial agenda. Indeed, Justice states that this must be understood as part of Canada's historical amnesia towards its colonial past and its treatment of Indigenous issues (158). As such,

he asserts, no reconciliation is attainable as long as it serves a *status quo* that ultimately works to protect Canada from taking responsibility and acknowledging accountability which can only be possible through hearing, accepting, and answering to the truth (158). Justice highlights the stark difference that lies at the heart of the way survivors of residential schools, their families, and friends comprehend reconciliation, and that of the Canadian government and Canadians themselves. For the former, Justice explains, reconciliation was "always intended to be an active and ongoing relationship" (158). For the latter, he adds, reconciliation "was a one-time process" sustained by some financial reparations and speeches, "and then moved on to business as usual" (158–9). This meaningless vision of reconciliation not only failed Indigenous peoples, but also proved to be dangerous, as it was instrumentalised by resource extraction companies for business and exploitation of Indigenous peoples' lands, and by "hard-right evangelical churches as the rationale for their renewed vilification of traditional values and traditions" (159). As such, the reconciliation favoured by the settler-colonial states only serves its politico-economic agenda, while simultaneously encroaching further on Indigenous lands, Indigenous cultures, and Indigenous knowledge systems.

6. Alter/Native Wor(l)ds

In *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, Justice asserts that aspects of spirit beings, non-human agencies, alternative and liminal worlds, and kinship with the other-than-human beings are central to Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies (141). He cautions against imposing a western, secular, and post-enlightenment reading on Indigenous wonderworks that engage with these aspects, for such a reading either infantilises these works as tropes of pure fantasy or pathologises them as symptoms of primitivism and backwardness (141). Rather, Justice maintains that such aspects must be comprehended as "experiential realities" shared by several "traditional Indigenous systems" (141). This, for example, is apparent in *Catching Teller Crow* when the protagonist is taken to the "beneath-place" and meets another captive who goes by the name of Crow. Addressing Catching, Crow appears to have a girl's voice; yet, when she comes closer to her, Catching notes that Crow has grey skin and grey hair that "trails to the floor. / Grey dress *made* from her hair. / […] She comes – *hops* –

closer. Her feet turn inwards. Her nails are too long" (*Catching Teller Crow* 102). Indeed, Crow is aptly named, as her physical characteristics appear to be an amalgamation between that of a human and a crow. Crow informs Catching that the Fetchers serve the Feed; she declares: "'He eats what's inside our *insides*. The colours that live in our spirits,'" and asks, "'Do you think I was always a grey girl?'" (103). At this point, Catching understands that "Crow's colours have been taken" by the Feed (103). Being an Indigenous wonderwork, the novel's description of Crow as a hybrid of human and animal aspects should not be read as a fantastic fabrication. Instead, it must be understood as an Aboriginal cultural specificity by which the connections between humans and animals are conceptualised. Indeed, in the "Authors' Note" to the novel, the two authors write that "Aboriginal family connections extend beyond human beings and encompass all life. These connections can also reach past one cycle of existence to shape the next. For example, a person with a particular connection to dingoes may have been a dingo before, and will be one again" (191–2). Following this reasoning, Crow must have been a girl with a special connection to crows, and the way she is presented in the novel must be as her animal reincarnation. By the end of *Catching Teller Crow*, and as the mystery of the novel is unravelled, Crow is revealed to be "Sarah Blue," an Aboriginal girl from the town who disappeared "[*t*]*wenty years, seven months,* [and] *six days*" ago (78). Sarah Blue was killed after being sequestrated and raped in the bunker, or to use Catching's own description, "the beneath-place."

By the same token, *Split Tooth*'s unnamed narrator does not miss an opportunity to remind readers that aspects of the novel relating to the spirit beings, liminal worlds, and realities, as well as alternative forms of existence, are central to Inuit worldviews and knowledge systems. These aspects inform the narrator's understanding of her existence, as well as her path of survivance and healing. In a chapter titled "The First Time it Happened," the narrator declares: "There are other realities that exist besides our own; it is foolish to think otherwise. The universe is conscious. […] The place we go to after we die, the place we were before being conceived. These places hold us for millennia in Universe Time" (Tagaq 30). In this passage, as well as in a number of other passages, the narrator seems to directly address readers in an informative and instructive tone, as if to prepare them for the recurrence of aspects that do not always pertain to

the “anthropomorphic material” reality (Justice, *WILM* 124). Indeed, understanding this conceptualisation of reality and existence in Indigenous wonderworks, Justice argues, requires attending to the specificities and the uniqueness by which Indigenous peoples narrate their realities (124). He explains that, for many Indigenous peoples, reality and existence are not reduced to “the anthropomorphic material world” (124). Rather, he maintains, reality is conceived as encompassing different forms and experiences in which “the boundaries between our reality and the Spirit Worlds are thin and permeable” (124). In this way, the above passage from *Split Tooth* offers some of the dimensions inherent to Inuit ways of knowing. On the one hand, it suggests that life and death are not understood in linear terms; rather, they are conceived as mere phases in a cyclical existence within what the narrator calls “Universe Time” (Tagaq 30). On the other hand, it stipulates that the human material reality is only one of several other coeval realities. The permeability that exists between these coeval realities is captured in *Split Tooth* when, in a kind of a lucid dream, the narrator finds herself near a two-storey house, which is uncommon in the region of Nunavut. Inside the house, she sees her brother cooking in the kitchen; rather than having a human head, she states, he “had a massive raven head. He looked at me and squawked in raven language and I understood him perfectly” (68). This is precisely a passage that, if not read within its cultural and cosmogonic context, may lead to its misinterpretation as simply a fantastic fabrication induced by the narrator’s dream. Indeed, the raven is a primordial figure pertaining to various creation narratives of different Indigenous peoples living in the Arctic. In Inuit worldviews, the raven, or “Tulugaq” in the Inuktitut language, is a creator spirit, a trickster, and a cultural hero. Alexander Zahara and Myra Hird, in “Raven, Dog, Human” (2016), state that “*Tulugaq* made the world and the waters with the beat of his wings” and, as a trickster, is “respected for his resilience, intelligence, and sociability” (178). Therefore, an encounter with this spirit that symbolises resilience within Inuit worldviews signals a transition in the narrative and marks for the narrator the beginning of a path of survivance grounded in Inuit ontologies and epistemologies.

The presence of the figures of the crow and the raven in both *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth* could be read through the lens of Vizenor’s aesthetics of survivance. In *Native Liberty* (2009), Vizenor states that the “totemic union of

animals, birds, humans and others" embody the often "tricky" tropes of the literary aesthetics of survivance (14). He writes: "The presence of animals, birds, and other creatures in native literature is a trace of natural reason, by right, irony, precise syntax, by literary figuration, and by the heartfelt practice of survivance" (89). Moreover, in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith posits "connection" as an Indigenous research project (247). "Connectedness," she explains, implies the assertion of "sets of relationships" that connect individuals "with other people and with the environment" (247). Indeed, Smith states that in many Indigenous knowledge systems, there exists "creation stories [that] link people through genealogy to the land, to stars and other places in the universe, to birds and fish, animals, insects and plants*. To be connected is to be whole*" (248, emphasis added). In a manner closely resembling the figure of the raven in Inuit worldviews, the crow in *Catching Teller Crow* is also presented as a creator spirit and a totem, one whose figure informs various tales across a large number of Aboriginal Australian groups. One such story that exists among the Palyku people, an Indigenous Australian group inhabiting the Pilbara region of Western Australia—and to which the authors of *Catching Teller Crow* belong—is of a crow and a magpie. It is narrated by the Aboriginal elder Gladys Milroy (the authors' grandmother) in "Aboriginal Story System" (2013) and is written by Jill Milroy (the authors' aunt) and Grant Revell. As such, both the crow in *Catching Teller Crow* and the raven in *Split Tooth* register the mobilisation of an aesthetics of survivance that, as argued above, ultimately informs the protagonists' path of healing.

In *Catching Teller Crow*, colours are employed in such a way that they inform Catching's trauma and her psychological path of healing and survivance. When Catching is captured by the Fetchers, one of them exclaims that she has bright colours, to which the second Fetcher agrees, adding that she is "'[b]eautiful. Like a *rainbow*'" (*Catching Teller Crow* 42, emphasis added). When Catching asks about the "beneath-place," the Fetchers reply that "'[t]his is where we bring the colours'" for the Feed (48). As mentioned earlier, Crow informs Catching that she has not always been "a grey girl", and that this is the result of her being stripped from her colours by the Feed (103). Soon, Catching understands what Crow means after she is herself taken to the Feed. Amidst her pain, Catching declares: "I'm a glass thrown against rock. / Shattered. Bits of me everywhere"

(108). Crow informs her that, for the pain to cease and for her to escape, "'[she] must become a dead girl. A not-feeling girl'," adding that, if she is dead, '"[she] won't mind being a *grey* girl*"*' (109, emphasis added). Revolted, Catching tells her that she is not going to become grey; yet, she soon perceives "fingermarks on [her] wrist. Where the Feed first touched [her]. / The marks are *grey*" (109). Attempting to scratch off these marks from her skin, she finds that she "can't claw the horrible from [herself]" (109–10). Crow retorts: "'It doesn't come off'", adding that "'*It is your grey. Like mine, but not. Everyone's grey is their own*'" (110, emphasis added). Crow's words are crucial to understanding the novel's literary representation of trauma. In fact, the colour grey is employed throughout the novel to symbolise not only the traumatic impact of the rape that both Catching and Crow (Sarah Blue) endured in the bunker, but also—as it becomes evident later in the novel—to capture the longstanding traumatic impact of living as a colonised subject in a settler-colonial country that is infested by uneven race-relations, and in which Indigenous peoples are relegated to second-class citizens. Accordingly, if, as Michael Rothberg states, "[t]he dead are not traumatized, they are dead", then it is possible to read the recurrence of the colour grey as a symbol of the pain and the traumatic impact of the rape that, as Crow notes, affects everyone differently, and could only be *not felt* if one is dead and is therefore unable to feel (90).

Feeling dejected and swooning, Catching declares that she does not know "how to stand this" (*Catching Teller Crow* 110). Yet, she soon remembers something important that her mother had taught her about how to control the anger that "lights [her] blood like flames" (27). Catching states, "Mum's taught me the words that control fire. / The names of the Catching women, from my great-great-grandma onwards" (28). This includes: "*Granny Trudy Catching*", "*Nanna Sadie Catching*", and "*Grandma Leslie Catching*", along with Isobel Catching and her mother (28). Catching declares that "[she doesn't] say their names aloud" because "[her] family don't speak the names of *the dead*" (28, emphasis added). Instead, she "say[s] them in [h]er mind" (28). Catching's refusal to speak the names of her ancestors aloud speaks volumes about the way in which Aboriginal peoples of Australia, as well as other Indigenous peoples, conceptualise the relationship between the living and the dead. This refusal can be read as an assertion of the continuing relationship between Catching and her ancestors,

through which the narrative rejects what Justice calls a "reality [that] is limited to the anthropomorphic material world" where "respect ends when human life is extinguished, and the bodily and funerary remains left behind are meaningful as symbols and artifacts only" (*WILM* 124). In a chapter titled "How Do We Become Good Ancestors," Justice explores Indigenous people's understanding of the relationships between "the living and the dead, and other states of being between and beyond them" (123). He argues that Indigenous writers that address this aspect in their works portray "the dead as ancestors with continuing relationships with the living" (124). This vision of reality, Justice argues, is relational, such that life and death are not understood in terms of linearity; rather, "all realities are liminal and affect one another" (126). It is precisely within this vision of reality that Catching understands the relationship that ties her with her three ancestors. This is explicitly articulated when, prior to her abduction, her mother informs her that '"Catching women are fighters […]. We've had to be, to survive. And all the strengths of the Catching women flow down the family line and into you, Izzy'" (*Catching Teller Crow* 28). In fact, throughout the novel, Catching grounds and informs her narrative of survivance within those of the "Catching women", whose stories of survival and resistance against the traumas of colonisation are incorporated within Isobel Catching's own narrative poetry. It is these names and words that she remembers while in sequestration.

Nevertheless, what is striking in the way the Catching women's stories are introduced in the novel is that they are told through the voice of Isobel Catching's mother, even though the latter is also dead. Even more interesting is that each of these survivance stories includes a character trait specific to each of Catching's ancestors, which she adopts to construct and inform her own survivance. In "Shock and Awe" (2016), Natalie Clark argues that survivance and resilience in the face of trauma are not "individualistic but are instead linked to past, present and future generations" (9). Indeed, Clark provides the example of Cree Elder and Scholar Madeline Dion Stout, who, in her memoir of the residential school system titled "A Survivor Reflects on Resilience" (2012), asserts that her parents' resilience and resistance ground her own (48). She writes: "Their resilience became mine. It had come from their mothers and fathers and now must spill over to my grandchildren and their grandchildren" (48). In *Catching Teller Crow,* this inheritance of stories of survivance and resilience is, for instance, demonstrated

through the story of Catching's immediate grandmother, Leslie Catching, whom she introduces with "Mum's voice speaks" (111). Leslie Catching is one of the Stolen Generations that fell prey to the century-long Australian colonial policies of child removal. However, even though she "*knew she'd have to live through hard day after hard day"*, Leslie Catching "*remembered the rocks of her homeland. Old rocks. Rocks that had lived for millions of years. Your Grandma made herself strong like rock. She survived hard times. She survived hard years. She got through until she was grown up. Then she went looking for her mum, who'd never stopped looking for her*" (111–2). It is at this point that Catching states that she is "not glass thrown against rock", just as she had thought after her initial encounter with the Feed (108). Instead, she declares: "I *am* the rock. / […] As long as I remember where I come from. / *Who* I come from" (112). Here, the authors' emphasis on the words "am" and "who" is not innocuous. Rather, it expresses Catching's rejection of the status of a passive victim through her endeavour for self-recognition and self-determination that, as Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), are crucial aspects that foster a change in the "psycho-affective equilibrium" of the colonised subject (148). Catching identifies herself not only as part of a family that is itself part of a larger people, but also as an individual with her own subjectivity and agency who refuses to be a frail glass and chooses instead to espouse the toughness of rocks. Furthermore, this passage reflects an important aspect that allows for a reading through the lens of Vizenor's survivance aesthetics. In his numerous works, Vizenor develops several neologisms, including what he terms "sovenance." In *Fugitive Poses* (1998), he explains that "sovenance" is not mere remembering and nostalgia; rather, he defines it as "that sense of presence in remembrance, that trace of creation and natural reason in native stories" (15). In line with this, not only is the story of Catching's grandmother introduced through the voice of her deceased mother rather than through Catching's own, but it also allows her to ground her own story in a logic of a trans/historical survivance of the Catching women.[22]

[22] As explained in Chapter One, the term "trans/historical" is introduced by Nancy van Styvendale in "The Trans/historicity of Trauma" (2008) to suggest a historical multiplicity of colonial traumas. Here, "trans/historical" is used to describe the continuing survival and resistance of the Catching women in the face of colonial traumas each with its spatio-temporal and material realities, and each with its own traumatic effects.

In *Split Tooth*, the narrator's path of healing takes the form of a journey of regaining both her psychological and sexual agency. This is articulated when, at a given moment during her adolescence, the narrator experiences a kind of astral projection, during which her spirit leaves her body and is carried by the wind to the ocean shore. She ends up on a "large ice floe" that is "swept out to sea" by the shifting wind (Tagaq 92). As the water starts to heat up and the floe melts into small pieces, the narrator is "plunged into the water", stating that: "It is so cold that it burns. Treading water and feeling the life leave my body, I accept" (93). Suddenly, the small pieces that make up the ice floe morph into "miniature polar bears, dozens of them" and start emitting "mewling noises" in an "indecipherable" language which the narrator understands as an attempt "to comfort [her]" (93). However, one of the small polar bears stands out; it grows and becomes so massive, "his sphere of *reality* warming the ocean for [her]" (93, emphasis added). He gives her "his *corporeality*", she states, such that the ocean becomes "like a warm bath" (93, emphasis added). These passages reflect a multiplicity and fluidity of realities that are intrinsic to Inuit ways of knowing captured here through what Grace Dillon, in *Walking the Clouds*, calls "Native Slipstream" (3). Dillon defines Native slipstream as "a species of speculative fiction within the sf realm, infuses stories with time travel, alternate realities and multiverses, and alternative histories" (3). In this way, the narrative concretises what Justice considers as a multiplicity of forms and experiences of reality that "bleed into one another" (*WILM* 124). Not only does the reality of the polar bear reach out to that of the narrator's, it also does so through its "corporeality", endowing her with one its natural attributes: the ability to endure the cold Arctic waters.

Nevertheless, the respective realities of both the narrator and the polar bear do not stop at a simple interaction; rather, they merge into each other, becoming one. This fusion is articulated through an act of erotic communion; the narrator declares:

> I mount his back and ride him. [...] We are lovers. We are married. [...] He keeps me safe and I am drunk on his dignity. [...] My skin melts where there is contact with my lover. The ocean and our love fuse the polar bear and me. He is I, his skin is my skin. Our flesh grows together. [...] My

> whole body absorbs him and we become a new being. I am invincible. [...] I will live another year. (Tagaq 93)

The polar bear, or Nanuq in the Inuktitut language, holds a special position in various Inuit knowledge systems; it is regarded as a resilient and strong totemic ancestor, and is often associated with hunting. In “Nanook, Super-Male” (1994), Bernard D’Anglure explains that in “ancient times” the boundaries between humans and animals were permeable with the polar bear as “the closest to man of all animals: when it metamorphosed it was recognizable by the size of its canine teeth and its pronounced liking for fat” (170). D’Anglure writes that, “according to our informants, ‘the bear is the ancestor of man and its flesh much resembles that of human beings in colour, texture and taste’. [...] It was said that the soul of a bear was very dangerous, that it should be treated like that of a kinsperson” (174). Accordingly, the above communion informs the novel’s assertion of “kinship with the other-than-human peoples” present in “most traditional Indigenous systems” and reflected in Indigenous wonderworks (Justice, *WILM* 141). Nevertheless, the agency and subjectivity conferred on the bear—for he is presented as a character with whom the narrator has sexual intercourse that leads to their fusion into a “new being”—marks this passage as a quintessence of the aesthetics of survivance. Among the neologisms that Vizenor presents in his works is the concept of “transmotion,” an aesthetic strategy of Native survivance. In “The Unmissable” (2015), Vizenor explains that the prefix “trans” in transmotion “initiates a sense of action or change, a literary and unitary motion, and a wider concept of the motion in images and words” (64). As an aspect of survivance aesthetics that celebrates Indigenous ontologies, “transmotion” entails a representation of transformation that, according to Deborah Madsen, includes “the interchangeable transformations of the human into animal and animal into human” (“Tragic Wisdom and Survivance” 4). “Native transmotion,” Vizenor writes, “is survivance, a reciprocal use of nature, not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty. Native stories of survivance are the creases of transmotion and sovereignty” (*Fugitive Poses* 15). Tagaq’s aesthetics of transmotion not only inform the natural motion of the narrator toward the ocean in a spiritual form, but also capture the transformation she undergoes after merging with the totemic animal. This fusion creates a “new being”, after which the narrator acquires a sense of dignity and invincibility.

7. Rainbows and Aurora Borealis: Healing as Survivance

As discussed above, the colour grey is employed in *Catching Teller Crow* to embody the pain and traumatic impact of abduction and rape that both Catching and Crow (Sarah Blue) endure in the "beneath-place", or the bunker. In contrast, colours that form the rainbow come to symbolise Catching's path of healing as survivance. Indeed, after being taken to the second Feed, Catching is stripped from more of her colours. Back in the room where she is sequestrated, she is woken up by Crow in tears, as she informs her that "'[her] colour's almost gone'" (*Catching Teller Crow* 149). Catching closes her eyes and asks Crow to repeat the names of the Catching women with her. In a kind of lucid dream, where she is "*walking on a hill*," she meets a group of girls "*sitting in a circle*" (150). One of the girls, described as having "*freckles on her nose*", addresses Catching, asking her why she is there, and adding that they thought she was with Crow (150, emphasis added). Surprised, Catching asks the girl if they know Crow, to which one of them says: "'*Of course we do*'" and adds that Crow is "'*fighting the wrong fight*'"; contrary to what Crow thinks, the girl asserts, "'*You can't fight feeling with not-feeling*'" (150). It is at this point that Catching realises that these are "[*t*]*he girls who died*" in the bunker (150). What is described in this passage is, in fact, less of a dream in the conventional sense; rather, it is an alternate reality to which Catching gains access within her dream, and which is aesthetically registered in the novel through Native slipstream. As it will become apparent in subsequent sections, Native slipstream is employed in the novel to reflect an Indigenous way of knowing and understanding of space, time, reality, and existence.

Indeed, in Catching's dream, the girl with the freckles informs her about something that changes the way in which she conceives the grey marks that the two Feeds have left on her body and, by extension, the way in which she conceives her own trauma. Catching declares: '"*If you can name it, you can catch it,' she calls. 'If you can catch it, you can fight it. Everything has its opposite. Remember!*'" (151). Indeed, Catching comes to understand that by these statements "Freckles could've meant the grey" (153). Catching stares at the grey on her wrist and remembers the first time she was taken to the "beneath-place," she states:

My stomach heaves.
My skin crawls.
But I know the name.
I open my eyes.
Stare at my wrist. Say it.
'You are *despair*.' (154, emphasis added)

Indeed—and as the girl with the freckles informs her—once Catching names the grey and understands that it is "despair", it appears to get "lighter" (154). Remembering the girl's statement that "[*e*]*verything has its opposite*", Catching begins to understand that she needs "[h]ope" (154). At the very moment when she thinks she has no hope, her mother's voice emerges again to tell the story of "Granny Trudy Catching. / [her] great-great-grandmother" (155). Trudy Catching "*was born into the frontier times when white men first came to our homeland*" (155). Although she lived through the turmoil of colonisation, "*she drew strength from her homeland. Her family. Her people. She never forgot how to laugh. She never forgot how to love. Your Granny knew how to hold on to who she was*" (155). Drawing on this story, Catching declares that "hope flickers" and "grows into flames" that build into a "[f]ire [blazing] out from [her] heart, up into her wrist", making the grey marks disappear and revealing her "soft skin" with "[t]he blue vein beneath" (156). Catching names the other grey marks on her body "fear" and "sadness" (158). Strikingly, in order to find and gain back the opposite of these feelings, Catching states that "people can time travel in their head" to "[r]emember into the past" and "[i]magine into the future" (158, 145). Indeed, she returns to a childhood memory when she had confronted a bully child in her school, declaring that "Courage eats fear. / The Feed handprint on my stomach disappears" (159). Moving on to the next stain of grey that represents "sadness," Catching states that "[t]his time [she] go[es] forward" to the future and sees herself, along with Crow, having fun and laughing on the beach; in this way, "joy" eats "sadness" (159). It is worth pointing out that Catching's ability to "time travel" in her head is not a traditional fantasy trope. Rather, as Ambelin Kwaymullina herself points out in "Edges, Centres and Futures" (2014), "notions of time travel, astral projection [...] are part of Indigenous cultures" (3). In *Catching Teller Crow*, Catching's ability to travel back and forth in time, which is depicted through Native slipstream

common in Indigenous wonderworks, captures the authors' endeavour to inscribe Catching's path of survivance within Aboriginal ways of knowing.

In a chapter titled "The Escape," Catching describes her flight from the "beneath-place", having gained back enough of her colours and, by extension, her strength. During this escape, she comes face-to-face with the Feed and, even though there remains still a "piece" of grey "buried inside" her that "makes [her] want to hide from the Feed", Catching, now much stronger, chooses "the opposite of grey" and decides to "face the Feed" (*Catching Teller Crow* 162). Naming her "last grey," she states: "'You're shame.'/ 'This grey's *yours*,' I say. 'My colours are *mine*. I'm not carrying your shame for what you did. Only my pride. For surviving you'" (162). Having named it, it finally "disappears. / Like it never existed. / It never should've existed'" (162). As noted above, this recurrent motif of colours is crucial to the novel's portrayal of Catching's trauma and survivance. Indeed, after finally fleeing from the "beneath-place" and defeating the Feed, Crow states: "We are *rainbow girls*, Isobel-the-Catching! We will bathe in the clouds and sing in the sun and let the world paint our souls and our souls paint the world" (163, emphasis added). Once again, there is a recurrence of the "rainbow" in the novel, which may allude to an important aspect of Aboriginal worldviews and cosmogonies. Yet, the authors do not provide further details about this aspect, a choice that may be considered deliberate. In "Children of Change, Not Doom" (2016), Lynette James sheds light on the way in which Indigenous authors tactfully mobilise "important references to cultural touch-points," such as elements that pertain to the sacred (165). This, James explains, is due to the authors' legitimate apprehension regarding mainstream audiences' exoticisation of "spiritual practices" that are unknown to them (165). This tendency to employ elements of the sacred subtly and evasively, James asserts, is not to be understood as a "mystification" meant to "titillate mainstream outsider audiences with 'primitive,' 'incomprehensible,' or fanciful nonsense non-science" (166). Instead, she states that "[r]eaders are given enough details to show that characters engage in deliberate and careful practices with clear parameters, rules, and transferable knowledge. The protagonists make it clear that people who need to know more detail (those initiated into those positions) would know more" (166). Similarly, in "Miindiwag and Indigenous Diaspora" (2007), Dillon raises the same issue, arguing that within Indigenous speculative fiction, authors "successfully navigate

and ‘hide’ too much insight into the ceremonies, thus avoiding desacralization” (234). As it is placed within the context of Aboriginal worldviews and cosmogonies, “the rainbow” in *Catching Teller Crow* pertains to the Sacred. In *Aboriginal Spirituality*, Vicki Grieves notes that one of the common creation ancestors within Aboriginal Spirituality is, indeed, the “Rainbow Serpent” (8). She explains that it “is associated with watercourses, rivers, creeks and billabongs and is represented in rock art up to 6000 years old” (8). Within the traditions of the Palyku people, this Creation Spirit, Ambelin Kwaymullina states, “sung the world into being” (“Edges, Centres and Futures” 3). Accordingly, if, on the one hand, the presence of the colour grey in the novel symbolises trauma and death, the colours, and the repeated references to the “rainbow,” on the other hand, gesture towards Catching’s path of healing and survivance. What is described in the novel is far less Catching’s physical escape from the “beneath-place” and far more the way in which she psychologically confronts the traumatic impact of rape, with all the despair, sadness, and shame that it entails.

In Tagaq’s *Split Tooth*, the narrator’s journey of reclaiming her psychological and sexual agency culminates when, in a physical form, she walks to the sea for a second time. Lying on the ice, her spirit “find[s] the smallest crack and slip[s] into the Arctic water below” (Tagaq 111). Now in a spiritual form, the narrator explores the depths of the Arctic water, which she describes as “a stadium event of Life” from which her “Spirit” drinks (112). Feeling her “Body” slipping away, the narrator travels back to the surface and regains possession of it: “It takes a monumental effort to wiggle my toes and open my eyes after the Exploration” (112). Interestingly, the words “Body,” “Spirit,” “Life,” and “Exploration” are capitalised in this passage, asserting the relationship that the Inuit have with life, corporeality, and spirituality. Indeed, Justice underlines the significance of such capitalisation in Indigenous literatures, which, he contends, affirms the status of subjectivity and agency (*WILM* 6). This is expressed, for example, when the narrator declares that “Body give[s] Spirit permission to leave” and “Spirit moves through it [water] differently than Body does” (Tagaq 111). Here, the Body, the Spirit, and the Life of the narrator are characters in their own right, and are, therefore, capable of exerting influence on the course of events. Accordingly, the capitalisation of these

aforementioned words expresses Tagaq's assertion of an Inuit specificity, according to which the relationship to these aspects extends beyond the material and utilitarian, and, indeed, beyond mere possession and objectification.

The process of the separation and then reunion of body and spirit that the narrator of *Split Tooth* calls "Exploration" triggers a crucial event in her journey of healing. As her body and spirit reunite, she declares: "The Northern Lights have descended upon me during my spirit journey. […] Light leaves Time and takes on physical form. The light morphs into faces and creatures, and then they begin to solidify into violent shards. This energy is not benign like that of the ocean dwellers; these are the Masters of Law and Nature" (113). Once again, the capitalisation of the "Northern Lights" and their designation as "Master of Law and Nation"—which are, in turn, also capitalised—is not innocuous. In Inuit worldviews, the phenomenon of Northern Light (Aurora Borealis), known as "Arqsarniq" in Inuktitut, is believed to be the embodiment of the spirits of ancestors. Siobhan Logan, in *Firebridge to Skyshore* (2009), explains that one of the most common traditional stories among the Inuit concerning the Northern Lights is that of the "realm of spirits" that could only be reached by the ravens and by the dead (10). According to these stories, Logan adds, spirits of those who succeed in reaching this realm are called "sky-dwellers", and when the Northern Lights appear in the sky, they are understood to be playing a football-like game using the skull of a walrus (10). In *Split Tooth*, the narrator contrasts the "Northern Lights" with the "ocean-dwellers"—a reference to the polar bears—and states that the energy of the former is far more powerful. In yet another erotic scene, she allows the "Lights" to penetrate every orifice of her body and fill her womb (113). Afterwards, she declares:

> I have felt renewed after the night on the ice. My tendons are thicker, my thoughts quicker. I am more capable. Fear is learning to run from me, not the other way around. I am not afraid anymore, as if meekness is slinking away into the deeper corners where it cannot dominate my psyche. The night with the Northern Lights changed my whole life. […] This is where my lesson was learned: pain is to be expected, courage is to be welcomed. There is no choice but to endure. There is no other way than

> to renounce self-doubt. It is the time of Dawning in more ways than one. The sun can rise, and so can I. (121–2)

Similar to her sexual communion with the polar bear that, as explained earlier, provides her with a sense of dignity and invincibility, the narrator's erotic encounter with the Northern Lights empowers her physically and, more importantly, psychologically. Yet, while the former is provisional and allows her to "live another year" (93), the latter "change[s] [her] whole life" (122). Indeed, not only does she rebuke fear, she also ironises it by appropriating its very quality of "fright." Here, "fear" is metaphorised and depicted as a sentient being that no longer possesses control over her psyche. Moreover, the narrator's interaction with what she calls "the Masters of Law and Nature" embodied by the Northern Lights instils in her psyche traits that had been previously annihilated by psychological and sexual trauma. Though she states that "pain is to be expected, courage is to be welcomed", the narrator asserts her resilience and resistance as an imperative to confronting the pain of her trauma (122). Through the capitalisation of the word "Dawning"—used here in its gerund form—the narrator parallels the quotidian victory of light over darkness, embodied by "the dawn," with the need for an active and permanent sense of survival, resistance, and resilience in the face of the pain inflicted not only by a traumatised environment plagued by centuries of oppressive colonial policies and their far-reaching traumatic impacts, but also from her own exposure to violent and cumulative sexual trauma.

Nonetheless, the narrator's path to healing does not end here; instead, the lesson that the Northern Lights wish to teach her has only just begun. In the aftermath of this night, the narrator notices that she does not menstruate and begins to feel a "flipping in [her] belly" (132). She states: "All I know is that I am not alone anymore; I am protected now. [...] I have the twins in my belly. I speak with the twins every day, a boy and a girl" (132–3). Strikingly, the spiritually conceived twins recall the divine conception of Jesus by the Virgin Mary, as recorded in Christian scriptures; yet the former subverts the latter in several ways. On the one hand, unlike the biblical figure of Mary, the narrator's pregnancy is the result of a consensual and welcomed sexual intercourse which empowers her both physically and psychologically. On the other hand, rather than conceiving a

single male child, the narrator is expecting fraternal male-female twins, to whom she refers as her elders and not as her children. She declares: “My elders are in my tummy. I *respect and admire* them. They know so much more than I do. [...] They are not my children but my equals and my leaders” (133, emphasis added). Moreover, the narrator asserts that she can “communicate freely” with them by “leave[ing] [her] consciousness and com[ing] to them into [their] *spirit world*” (133, emphasis added). This passage explicitly asserts an Inuit vision of life and death and the unique understanding and conceptualisation of the relationship between the living and the dead. Indeed, the Northern Lights in Inuit knowledge systems are the embodiment of ancestors and the spirits of the dead. As discussed above, one of the aesthetic qualities and specificities that Justice attributes to Indigenous wonderworks is their ability to register the flexible and permeable relationship between the realms of the living and the spiritual worlds. According to this vision, respect and veneration extend to the dead, for they are “ancestors with continuing relationships with the living” (Justice, *WILM* 124–6). In *Split Tooth*, it is precisely within this logic that the narrator’s twins are presented; she considers them her elders and leaders whom she respects and admires, for they have deeper and greater knowledge than she does. Indeed, the narrator is soon imbued with the knowledge the twins embody, allowing her not only to understand the nature of her pain and trauma, but also the nature of healing and the way in which this healing can be fulfilled. When the narrator gives birth to the twins, whom she names Savik and Naja, she describes Savik as “pointed, brooding”, making people “cry in mourning or in grief” if they hold him in their hands for a long time (Tagaq 156). Moreover, she states: “Savik eats up the agony, and seems to grow stronger when he bears witnesses to suffering. [...] Forcing out that agony leaves an open wound, it leaves people depleted. I notice that those who spend too much time with him grow ill and radiate a *grey pallor*” (156, emphasis added). Naja, on the other hand, is presented as “bright,” “calm and soft”, with a voice that “heals anxiety” (158). Unlike her twin brother, Naja “inhales trouble and exhales solutions like a filtration system. She cleans people. […] I saw her healing my mother’s cold on a molecular level” (159). Accordingly, the narrator comes to understand that her twins represent pain and healing, respectively, with the ability to affect her and her entourage.

In *Split Tooth*, Tagaq plays with the motif of colours to provide a material manifestation of trauma and healing. Indeed, while Savik makes people sick and "radiate a grey pallor", Naja "brings sheen to people's hair and glow to their cheeks" (156, 163). After some time has passed, the narrator notices that Savik grows to be bigger than Naja, realising that "[t]here must be an imbalance of pain in the world" (159). The repercussions of this imbalance begin to impact the people around her, starting with her uncle, an alcoholic, who slowly dies from liver failure. Indeed, Savik's ability to inflict and bring out pain targets the narrator herself. While breastfeeding, he bites his mother's breast, "biting off the end of [her] nipple" (177). Here, the narrator comes to realise that "there was no room for him on this earth" (177). She states: "I knew he would only grow stronger and his prey would not only be restricted to the old or sick, to the malevolent or weak. I knew his prey would become Love" (177). It is precisely this fear that forces the narrator to kill Savik by returning him to "the frozen ice" (180). However, rather than dying, Savik transforms into a seal. In a violent scene of metamorphosis, his "neck hardens into a solid, boneless mass […]. He builds a wall of protection around his heart […]. My hands are burning, the bones in my hands are burning and there are a thousand boiling blisters where I am holding him. […] he is mutating", becoming a seal that then "flops into the crack in the ice" (181). Being intertwined, Savik's contact with the Arctic waters impacts Naja as well, and she dies of hypothermia shortly after in her mother's arms. Deciding to release her body into the water, the narrator finds that Savik "absorbs her flesh and they are one. She is he and he is she. Finally they are whole […]. The seal looks up at me with love and hatred, death and life. It looks at me with the *Knowing*. Then the seal swims away" (181, emphasis added). Tagaq's very choice of the "seal" is not fortuitous; Kristen Borré explains in "The Healing Power of the Seal" (1994) that, for many Inuit communities, "Seals and seal hunting have intrinsic social value [...] seal maintains the physical, mental and spiritual health of the individual, the social well-being of the community, and confidence in Native power relations to maintain self-determination in the national and international world which is vested in the body politic" (1). In the context of Tagaq's novel, the seal embodies that very same "physical, mental and spiritual health" to which Borré refers, and through which the novel grounds its processes of physical and psychological healing. Indeed, the seal *is* evidence of a healing that, the novel seems to be

suggesting, is attainable only through a balance between pain and recovery. There is a lesson here to be learned—one which the Northern Lights intend to impart upon the narrator. If she had once believed that her healing is dependent on letting go of her pain, here she learns that this is, in fact, impossible. There can be no healing without achieving the aforementioned balance between Savik (who imparts pain and trauma) and Naja (who provides solace). Their union is, therefore, the novel's final aesthetic statement about the representation of a path of healing and survivance that is grounded in Inuit epistemologies, ontologies, and worldviews derived from the natural environment and landscape of the Arctic.

8. Conclusion: A New Introduction

As argued and demonstrated throughout the previous sections, the protagonists of Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina's *Catching Teller Crow* and Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth* reject being trapped in a traumatic compulsion, while at the same time resist the victimising label of passive survivors of their respective traumatic histories. The novels' refusal to ascribe to the expectations of both the anti-therapeutic and therapeutic trends of trauma studies in their Eurocentric entrenchment can be read in line with Glen Coulthard's articulation of the "resurgent practice of cultural self-recognition" insofar as from a personal and subjective perspective, he explains that such resurgent practice entails a reconsideration of Indigenous cultures and identities in serving as a source of empowerment for Indigenous peoples as they work through their "alienation/subjection against the objectifying gaze and assimilative lure of colonial recognition" (43). Indeed, in *Catching Teller Crow*, Isobel Catching refuses to be determined by her trauma and all the despair, sadness, and shame it has imparted on her. Instead, she asserts her self-determination and draws her agency from the stories of survival and resistance of her grandmothers that, as demonstrated above, are grounded within their knowledge and their connections to their Country. In addition, she repeatedly rejects victimisation by insisting on the fact that, through telling her story, she is not seeking help; instead, she just wants "[t]o be heard" (*Catching Teller Crow* 95). In a similar way, the unnamed narrator in *Split Tooth* declares:

I do not forgive and forget
I Protect and Prevent
Make them eat shame and repent
I forgive me. (188)

In this penultimate poem, the narrator of the novel rebukes being trapped in a traumatic compulsion, while simultaneously rejecting a recovery that is dependent on a "forgetting" of her trauma. Instead, she inscribes her path of healing within the worldviews and knowledge systems that inform Inuit perspectives and visions of the natural environment and landscape of the Arctic. By the end of the novel, the narrator forgives herself for the shame she previously felt and, as such, asserts her self-determination, resilience, and resistance to self-victimisation.

Nevertheless, healing in both *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth* is not presented as linear and finite; rather, it is conceptualised as an ongoing process. This is reflected in *Catching Teller Crow* in the titles of the last two chapters, which are titled "The End" and then "The Beginning," respectively (173, 190). Moreover, after hearing Catching's story, the police detective disappointedly states, "'I thought I could help her [Catching]. But we didn't get here at the beginning. We got here when it was all over. We got here at the end"', to which Catching responds by saying, "'[o]f course you're here at the end. So what? *It's the beginning that hasn't happened yet*'" (189–90, emphasis added). Commenting on this non-linearity in their novel, the two authors explain that in Aboriginal stories, the world is non-linear, such that time "does not run in a line from the past through the present and on into the future" ("Authors' Note" *Catching Teller Crow* 195). Rather, they assert that "life is in constant motion" in which an event is considered as "past", not through the linear passage of time, but rather "by the degree to which affected relationships have been brought into balance" (195). The authors write: "the journeys of Catching, Beth, Crow and Michael Teller do not 'advance' because linear days pass, but because they are finding ways to heal" (195). In *Split Tooth*, this understanding of healing as an ongoing process is expressed in the final poem, in which the narrator declares: "Cleanse me. Wash the blood off. I am still working. I survive still. I am stronger now. / Worship me. I am boundless. I stood up. I am worthy. / *Start again*" (189, emphasis added). These closing lines reflect a need for a continuous survival, resistance, and self-determination in

order to allow for an escape from the cyclical nature of trauma. In "'What to do when you're raped,'" (2020), Wieskamp and Smith explain that a rhetoric of survivance challenges the Euro-American linear temporality of the trauma and its assumed traumatological timeline (80). Indeed, they state that by resisting being restricted to the past, present, or future, a rhetoric of survivance reflects what they call an "'infinitive' temporality" that allows past, present, and future to flow together and "embraces the role of one's past to influence one's present and future" (81). As such, Wieskamp and Smith argue that survivance in the face of trauma conceives survival/resistance as an ongoing process that, in contrast to the Euro-American traumatological timeline, does not assume "a trajectory towards brighter future, but presupposes surviving as a constant action" (81). In doing so, they assert, a rhetoric of survivance expresses an Indigenous "temporal sovereignty by rendering Native experiences visible and actionable" (81). In *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth*, it is precisely this non-linear and ongoing sense of healing that is formally and aesthetically registered in both novels, which, therefore, present themselves as narratives of survivance.

As Indigenous wonderworks, *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth* offer various decolonising readings of trauma and healing from Indigenous perspectives. Indeed, the novels adopt a storytelling technique of free-verse poetry through which the protagonists' traumatic histories are narrativised, and in which the genre of the western Gothic is astutely employed as a subversive strategy to present a critique of colonial and settler-colonial structures which, through the racism, oppression, and subjugation of Indigenous peoples, continue to facilitate such traumas. Such a critique de-pathologises Indigeneity and sheds light on the responsibility of colonisation in producing the historical formations of these traumas. In addition, both novels read against the expectation of both the anti-therapeutic and therapeutic trends within trauma studies. The protagonists of *Catching Teller Crow* and *Split Tooth* resist being determined and pathologised by their traumatic histories while at the same time rejecting the status of passive survivors who must "work through" and forget their traumas. Instead, they assert their self-determination and posit their healing as an ongoing process of survival and resistance informed by their cultural heritage, worldviews, and collective agencies. As such, these Indigenous wonderworks emerge as narratives of

survivance that eschew what Justice calls the story of “Indigenous deficiency”, and that instead carry within them “Stories That Heal” (*WILM* 3).

Conclusion

Indigenous Literatures as Sites of Decolonisation

> [T]he theory and practice of Indigenous anticolonialism, including Indigenous anticapitalism, is best understood as a struggle primarily inspired by and oriented around *the question of land*—a struggle not only *for* land in the material sense, but also deeply *informed* by what the land *as system of reciprocal relations and obligations* can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms.
>
> ——Glen Coulthard*, Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*

Throughout the preceding chapters, this thesis presented a thorough discussion of the representation of colonial traumas and Indigenous modes of healing in a selection of twenty-first-century Indigenous novels. Among the crucial aspects raised in this study, is that any attempt to understand the interrelated relationship between these two analytical axes needs to be situated not only within the particularities of settler-colonial histories of violence and oppression, but also within the specificities of Indigenous modes of resistance and perspectives on decolonisation. Indeed, the thesis presented a discussion on settler-colonialism as an ongoing reality for Indigenous peoples in the USA, Canada, and Australia, demonstrating that such structures have always been premised on establishing settler-sovereignty on Indigenous lands. Thus, depending on given historical and geographical contexts, settler-states in North America and Australia adopted a myriad of coercive and non-coercive eliminatory practices geared towards the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands and from their self-determining authority. This ranges from the early frontier homicides, removal and confinement, and biocultural assimilation, to the more contemporary politics of recognition and accommodation that, as argued throughout the thesis, are devised to confine Indigenous peoples within circumscribed structural and subjective modes of recognition that ultimately further their dispossession. The juxtaposed readings offered throughout the chapters demonstrate that, while emanating from different Indigenous cultural and literary traditions and

addressing distinct settler-colonial experiences, the Indigenous novels selected for this study conceptualise colonial traumas in their structural, material, subjective and cultural facets as being engendered and facilitated by the practices of settler-colonial dispossession. Conversely, the study indicates that the different visions of healing reflected in these novels are anchored and informed by Indigenous articulations of embodied sovereignties with the land in its material, epistemological, and ontological dimensions.

Nevertheless, for such insights to clearly emerge in this section, it is important to juxtapose the findings of each chapter in a dialogical relationship. Indeed, Chapter One argued that Tommy Orange's *There There* and Kim Scott's *Taboo* represent the structural and material dimension of colonial traumas as engendered by the histories of settler-colonial dispossessions against their Indigenous communities. This is conveyed in their novels through their inscribing of the political and socio-economic oppression that characterises the trauma of colonial modernity experienced by their protagonists within one of the structural genocides that were committed against their peoples during the era of the frontier expansion in the USA and Australia. Conversely, Chapter Three demonstrated that in *Killer of Enemies* and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, Bruchac and Kwaymullina construct sovereign futures for their Indigenous peoples insofar as Indigenous knowledges and forms of relationality between humans, other-than-humans, and the land are presented as not only grounding the protagonists' powers in navigating their post-apocalyptic worlds, but also as offering the possibility of futures beyond present eco-dystopias. This, the chapter argued, reflects healing and survivance form material and cultural perspectives insofar as the authors project Indigenous visons of embodied sovereignties with the land into futuristic narratives. As for the subjective dimension of colonial traumas, Chapter Two asserted that in Richard Wagamese's *Indian Horse* and Tara June Winch's *Swallow the Air*, the trauma of racism endured by the protagonists of the novels is also related to the question of the land. Indeed, the chapter revealed that the racist exclusions of the protagonists are, above all, related to their visible presence in spaces on which settler-states and societies claim a form of sovereignty that is premised on Indigenous absence. Contrary to this, Chapter Four contended that in Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina's *Catching Teller Crow* and Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth*, healing is aesthetically and formally registered

as a process of survivance, whereby the protagonists' recovery of their psychological agencies and subjectivities is informed by Indigenous ontologies and worldviews that are derived from their knowledge of their lands.

What can be grasped through the trans-Indigenous readings of these novels around the broad themes of trauma and healing is the various decolonising readings they offer that are at once socio-political, psychological, and cultural. Indeed, these novels disrupt settler-states' endeavour to normalise and naturalise their existence insofar as they shed light on Indigenous peoples' historical and contemporary realities and articulate a resistance towards the contemporary settler-colonial politics of recognition. The novels de-pathologise Indigenous peoples by placing the forms of traumatisation they address within settler-colonial structures that produce and facilitate them. They represence Indigenous peoples, cultures, knowledge systems, and visions on embodied sovereignties within their lands. In this way, these novels embody the decolonial aesthetics that is typical of Indigenous art which, as Martineau and Ritskes argue in "Fugitive Indigeneity," rejects and "refuse[s] the struggle for better or more inclusion and recognition […] and, instead, chooses refusal and flight as modes of freedom" (IV). Indeed, they write: "Indigenous art unbinds indigeneity from its colonial limits by weaving past and future Indigenous worlds into new currents of present struggle. Indigenous art and decolonial aesthetics mark collective imagings/imaginings of possible paths forward, through, and beyond" (X). While it is true that this chapter is supposed to conclude this research in order to satisfy the formal requirements of a doctoral thesis, it is nevertheless important to recognise that is can be difficult and sometimes even disloyal to impose a conclusion to an ongoing story of resistance and resurgence. Stated bluntly, as long as settler-colonialism persists in its practices of oppression and dispossession, Indigenous peoples will always produce art whose decolonial aesthetics and praxes are directed towards the material struggle for decolonisation as inseparable from their embodied sovereignties *with* the land.

Theoretical Implications

Among the theoretical and methodological contributions provided by this thesis is, as its title suggests, an intervention in the growing field of trans-Indigenous

literary studies that has at its core the endeavour to produce Indigenous juxtapositions at the level of the global. Comparative approaches in Indigenous studies can be problematic because of the constant risk of homogenising different Indigenous cultures and experiences, not only within the same geopolitical context but even more so when it comes to bringing into close discussion texts form different Indigenous literary and cultural traditions and addressing different geopolitical contexts. In “Decolonizing Comparisons,” Chadwick Allen asserts that trans-Indigenous methodologies perform a kind of decolonisation insofar as they not only “denaturali[se]” the settler nation-state’s assumed position as the point of departure and arrival for Indigenous and Native American literary studies, but also “decentere” the settler nation-state’s assumed authority of setting the standards by which literary value and “methods for literary scholarship” are determined and adopted (378). Nevertheless, he states that, for this decolonising potential to emerge, there is an imperative of overcoming the “understandable fear” of comparison’s appropriative, colonizing, universalising, and essentialist discourse, while at the same time “thinking outside the dominant academy’s existing structures” (392). Indeed, the relatively new discipline of Indigenous juxtapositions requires adequate standards of training and scholarship; however. Allen argues that forgiveness should be granted “for mistakes made along the way, and thus it will require the refusal to label the scholar’s personal shortcomings as scandal, as excuse for not embracing the challenge and possibilities of Indigenous juxtapositions” (392). In fact, he writes: “A trans-Indigenous literary criticism will not follow a simple program of instructions or abstractions, but rather will develop through a practice of focused interactions across, beyond, and through juxtaposed works of Indigenous self-representation” (392).

While determining the amount of knowledge required in given Indigenous cultures and literatures in order to undertake trans-Indigenous comparisons may be incommensurable, especially for scholars who are outsiders in relation to the body of literature and scholarship they approach, Allen’s remark concerning this aspect should not be taken as carte blanche to proceed in a trans-Indigenous literary study without surveying the literature and the scholarship available in each Indigenous context. While it would be condescending to claim that the trans-Indigenous literary study offered in this thesis is flawless or comprehensive, it

nonetheless strived to first situate each of the primary texts within their local historical, cultural, and scholarly contexts, then examine how they relate and what kind of insights they could offer at the level of the global. Indeed, in "Productive Tensions" (2017), Allen explains that trans-Indigenous modes "refocus attention on the enduring relevance of Indigenous personal and communal identities" that "have always held relevance beyond the level of the local" (241). While constantly bearing in mind the distinctiveness of Indigenous peoples, literatures, histories, cultures, and experiences, the task in this thesis was to identify lines of correlation between Indigenous literatures in their articulations of modes of resistance to and critique of settler-colonialism at the level of the local and the global for, as discussed in Chapter One, settler-colonialism is foundational to modernity and global capitalism. In these terms, it could be argued that the trans-Indigenous reading of Indigenous futurist works offered in Chapter Three epitomises this endeavour as it insisted on the necessity of considering these works within our epoch of the Anthropocene.[23]

The second theoretical contribution provided in this thesis is a contribution to the ongoing scholarly work on decolonising trauma studies. Sonya Andermahr argues that decolonising trauma studies has the potential of fulfilling the ethical engagements of the field in creating cross-cultural solidarities; yet, she asserts that this requires "recognizing the globalized contexts of traumatic events, the specific forms traumatic suffering takes, and the myriad ways in which it is represented in literary works" (501). As indicated in the introduction to this thesis, scholarly work on decolonising trauma studies has relied primarily on postcolonial theoretical frameworks which remain relevant for postcolonial texts and contexts. Yet, what has been noticed is that even the contributions that have addressed representations of colonial traumas and healing in Indigenous texts and contexts have missed grounding their studies within the particularities of settler-colonialism and within the specificities of Indigenous scholarship on decolonisation. Indeed, in "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang explain that in settler-colonial contexts, the category of settlers is

[23] For a thorough discussion on the interventions of Indigenous futurisms in studies on the Anthropocene, see Abdenour Bouich. "Beyond the End: Indigenous Futurisms' Interventions in the Anthropocene." *SFRA Review*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2021, pp. 160–71.

not limited to white people of European descent but encompass other peoples who were dispossessed by external colonialism and oppressed by internal colonialism (slavery, immigration, cheap labour…etc.) as they still settle and occupy stolen Indigenous lands (7). In these contexts, they argue, attending to "Indigenous decolonising analyses" that understand decolonisation from a material and not metaphorical perspective allows for the unsettling of "the innocence" of "transnationalist, abolitionist, and critical pedagogy movements", and creates opportunities for solidarity that "lie in what is incommensurable rather than what is common across these efforts" (28). Following this reasoning, while this study drew on insights that emerged from the scholarship on decolonising trauma studies, it did so by reconfiguring such insights in tandem with Indigenous scholarship on settler-colonialism and decolonisation. This included examining the historical particularities of settler-colonialism's structures of oppression of Indigenous peoples in North America and Australia, which, as delineated throughout the chapters of this thesis, are primarily oriented towards the acquisition of Indigenous lands.

In addition, this thesis posited that decolonisation, as reflected in the Indigenous novels discussed, is not conveyed as symbolic acknowledgements or socio-economic reparations, but rather as a process of repatriating lands to Indigenous peoples and recognising their embodied sovereignties. This is precisely what Tuck and Yang understand by decolonisation in settler-colonial contexts, as they argue that it "must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, *all* of the land, and not just symbolically" (7). As such, they declare: "This is precisely why decolonization is necessarily unsettling, especially across lines of solidarity. […] Settler colonialism and its decolonization implicates and *unsettles everyone*" (7, emphasis added). In these terms, this study argues that if the scholarly work on decolonising trauma studies—or any other multicultural scholarship—is to fulfil its ethical commitment to creating cross-cultural solidarities in settler-colonial contexts, there is an imperative to not only be attentive to the conditions of settler-colonial oppression endured by Indigenous peoples, but also to take into consideration the fact that solidarity with Indigenous peoples involves unsettling processes.

Future Directions

While this thesis is labelled as a trans-Indigenous study, it is important to note that it does not claim a definitive form of what a trans-Indigenous approach to Indigenous literature should pursue. In "Charting Comparative Indigenous Traditions" (2020), Allen writes: "For two decades or more, we have seemed just on the verge of developing a truly comparative Native American and Indigenous literary studies. […] But always we seem to be laying a groundwork, […] for an anticipated next generation of scholars sufficiently motivated and adequately prepared to move these and other 'comparative' projects" (447–8). As such, this study should be conceived as a drop in an ocean of trans-Indigenous comparative possibilities, for it remains limited in a myriad of aspects that would be important to delve into in future research. In addition to being exclusively concerned with the representations of colonial traumas and Indigenous healings, the novels that are selected for this thesis are all published during the first and the second decades of the twenty-first century and emanate from specific Indigenous tribe/nation contexts, including Cheyenne and Arapaho, Ojibway, Inuit, and Abenaki contexts in North America, and Noongar, Wiradjuri, and Palyku contexts in Australia. In this way, more exhaustive projects can address other Indigenous contexts across Turtle Island (North America), Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Oceania and could engage with other Indigenous art forms such, comic books, theatre, music, and paintings. Moreover, within this thesis there are several aspects that have not been properly addressed due to the scope of the research, including thorough discussions about trauma, healing, and environmental justice grounded within Indigenous feminist and/or queer perspectives. The genre of Indigenous futurisms is also growing and expanding across art forms, providing space for opportunities for trans-Indigenous juxtapositions around themes as diverse as Indigenous ways of knowing, climate change, extractive capitalism, posthumanism, among others. In a way, this thesis has endeavoured to adopt and draw from all these critical lenses in order to establish a framework of analysis that facilitates approaching the themes of trauma and healing within different Indigenous voices across the Indigenous global.

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