

“NOTHING CAN CONTAIN THIS STORY NOW”: INCARCERATION AND
CONTEMPORARY NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Cornell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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December 2018

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“NOTHING CAN CONTAIN THIS STORY NOW”: INCARCERATION AND
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Cornell University 2018

“‘Nothing Can Contain This Story Now’: Incarceration and Contemporary Native American Literature” demonstrates how the forced displacements of Native Americans generated by the Indian Removal Act in 1830 and the Termination and Relocation Policies from 1945 to 1960 are linked to forms of confinement, separation, and isolation. This dissertation rethinks an Indigenous historiography that understands the colonization of Native people and Native space primarily in terms of removal and displacement – and thus in terms of mobility – and aims instead to conceive American Indian colonization in terms of incarceration, isolation, and confinement as well.

Looking at the prison, the boarding school, and the reservation as strategic sites of settler colonial enclosure in contemporary Native American texts, I demonstrate how Indigenous literature incorporates a fundamentally mobile understanding of reading and writing that imagines a movement of pursuance towards others and towards places where sound and story emerges. Instead of relying exclusively on visual and graphic evidence for Native stories and Native space, the texts in this dissertation provide strategies to conceive of and read audible remainders in the landscape – “a residue of voices” as Glancy puts it in *Fort Marion* (Glancy, *Fort* 9). In pursuing a type of residual reading, this project takes seriously the carceral

project of “disappearing” Native beings and their stories while looking for tactics of audible release from the carceral confines created by settler colonialism.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lena Krian grew up in a small town in southwestern Germany. She completed her undergraduate studies and *Magister Artium* (M.A.) degree at Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, where she majored in American Studies and minored in Spanish and Medieval and Modern History. As part of her studies, she spent two years as an exchange student and Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant in the Department of Modern Languages at Austin College, Sherman, Texas. During this time, she also completed internships at the American Indian Policy Center in St. Paul, Minnesota, and at the Goethe Institute in La Paz, Bolivia. After receiving her M.A. degree at Mainz, Lena studied in the Department of Comparative Literature at the University at Buffalo, where she held a Dean's Fellowship and taught in the Department of Linguistics.

While pursuing her doctoral work at Cornell University, Lena helped create a reading group on "Indigenizing Sovereignty: Native Challenges to Modern Thought," for which she received an interdisciplinary graduate reading group grant from the Institute for Comparative Modernities, and was also selected as a participant at the Newberry NCAIS Workshop "Research Methods: Betting on Indian Country," held at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Lena taught at Auburn Correctional Facility as part of the Cornell Prison Education Program. During her graduate studies, Lena also taught refugees and incarcerated youth in Germany. At the Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, where she currently serves as a project collaborator in the "Q+" Honors Track Program, she also worked in the Program for Women and Families.

In memory of my father

Detlev Krian

To Henry, my tiny teacher

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisors Elizabeth Anker, Mary Pat Brady, and Eric Cheyfitz for their support and guidance throughout my time at Cornell. Elizabeth Anker's scholarship on postcolonial statehood and law and literature, along with her generous feedback and invaluable professional advice, have helped to define the direction of my work. Mary Pat Brady's work on space and geographical scale expanded my theoretical frameworks, and our countless conversations in numerous places ranging from her office, to the playground, and to cyberspace have contributed greatly to my development as a scholar and as a person. Eric Cheyfitz's rigorous criticism and his scholarship on Native epistemologies and federal Indian law have shaped my scholarship in profound ways. I am particularly grateful for his encouragement to pursue activist teaching – through it I have become a more rounded academic.

I am also indebted to Grant Farred, Saida Hodžić, and Paul Nadasdy for their support in my early years at Cornell. I am thankful to many other members of the Cornell and Ithaca community who have made my time in Ithaca an invaluable experience and who, each in their own way, have shaped the way I think about and see the world: Cory Cochrane, Kevin Duong, Carl Gelderloos, Mandy Gutman-Gonzalez, Alex Harmon, Meg Hayertz, Bret Leraul, Hannah Mueller, Daniel Peña, Nancy Quintanilla, Daniel Rados, Daniel Sinykin, Maggie Soulstein, Seth Soulstein, Alli Sribarra, Kartik Sribarra, Namgyal Tsepak, and Johannes Wankhammer. Many thanks also to Kara Peet, who has made years of working over long distances possible in

many ways.

A Graduate Reading Group Grant from Cornell's Institute of Comparative Modernities allowed me to conduct a substantial amount of research for this dissertation and exchange ideas with other graduate students and faculty members. The Newberry's Center for American Indian Studies Program and the American Indian Studies Program at Cornell facilitated my participation in a workshop at the University of Nevada, where I was able to share my work on Indigenous sovereignty with other scholars in the field. Many thanks to the fellow seminar participants who attended with me the Futures of American Studies Institute at Dartmouth, and to Ivy Schweitzer, Mark Rifkin, and Caleb Smith, whose comments on parts of this dissertation were extremely insightful.

My time at Cornell has been strongly shaped by the incredible people I have had the honor to teach. I am grateful to all of my students, who have taught me more than they can ever know throughout these years. I am deeply thankful to have had the privilege to teach two seminars at Auburn Correctional Facility with the Cornell Prison Education Program. The hardworking students I taught at Auburn are deep, intellectual, and creative thinkers whose eagerness to learn and grow continues to inspire me today. My teaching experience at Auburn gave me a glimpse into the transformative potential of pedagogy and intellectual thought, and I am eager to continue pursuing these topics in my future work.

I am grateful to the academic mentors who have shaped my interest in intellectual work. Peter Anderson has been essential in my intellectual development. I would certainly not be an academic writer today if it were not for his countless

comments and re-readings of my work. Ruth Cape provided me with many opportunities during my time at Austin College and showed me that it is possible to “sit in the middle of the Atlantic.” I am also thankful to Julie Hempel, from whom I have learned not only a great deal about Afro Latin American literature, but also strategies for maintaining a well-balanced academic life. John Poupart at the American Indian Policy Center in St. Paul first introduced me to Native epistemologies, restorative practices, and issues regarding Indigenous sovereignty. I am profoundly grateful for having had the honor to work with him. I would also like to thank Alfred Hornung’s generous support throughout my time at Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz and beyond.

I am grateful to Doris Lindner who has given me many opportunities during my time at the *Dekanat 05* at Johannes-Gutenberg University Mainz. My wonderful colleagues Miriam Braun, Franziska Schmid, and Christian Knöppler have made working while dissertating a productive and rewarding endeavor. I am also grateful to my colleagues within the field of American Studies in Germany; their insights have had a great impact on my project: René Dietrich, Nicole Poppenhagen, Nele Sawallisch, and Jens Temmen.

Many thanks to my amazing friends near and far, new and old – without them this challenging time would not have ended with a PhD. Thank you Agitha Anandarajah, Björn Bertrams, Stefan Born, Javier Burdman, Pierre Calba, Sandra Calba, Daniel Borgeldt, Isabelle Bröckling, Jochen Dörrscheidt, Sara Eierle-Geyer, Lisa Glassner, Anna Grifka, Kelly Hecklinger, Till Hilmar, Jan Peter Ibs, Christian Illgner, Felicitas Keßl, Marlies Klamt, Katharina Mack, Frida Luce, Gisela Neidhardt,

Laura Reinheimer, Carolina Rossi, Davia Ruge, Lena Taub Robles, Judith Wagner, Rebecca Wessinghage, and Lisa Wolf. Many heated conversations over mediocre cafeteria food with Stefanya Gencheva and Judith Schmidt have helped me find ways to balance an academic life and on many instances they have given me the courage to continue to pursue this path. I am also grateful to Daniela Berner and Klara Schubenz who have supported me in so many ways, ranging from sharing their academic and non-academic wisdom, to helping with childcare, to simply being great company.

Carly Kaloustian Ottenbreit read almost every single word of this dissertation, and her insightful feedback was fundamental to this project. I am beyond grateful for Carly's time commitment, for the intellectual rigor she devoted to this dissertation, and for the years of friendship since we first met at Cornell. I feel very lucky that we ended up in the same corner of the globe.

I would also like to thank the remarkable staff and teachers at the *Städtische Kita Unigelände* in Mainz – without their generous and caring labor I would not have had the time and energy for this project. I also cannot thank my mother Ursel Krian enough for jumping in at childcare emergencies, generously giving her time to allow me the time and space to write. I am also grateful to my siblings, Anne and Thilo, who have set examples for me throughout my life. Thank you Nathan Taylor for showing support and care and for your eagerness to grow with me. Finally, I thank Henry, who inspires me to look at the world with curiosity and wonder, and whose endless play and joy have helped me through the bigger and smaller bumps on this path. It is my hope that he will benefit from this work.

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INTRODUCTION

*I learned early that my life
was separated by walls
and roll calls*

- Laura Tohe (Diné) “No Parole Today” (38)

In the midst of the Removal Era of the 1830s, when Native American peoples all over the United States were deported from their homelands and forced to resettle in Western territories, the Sauk warrior Black Hawk dictated the story of his life to the translator Antoine LeClaire. Published in 1833, *Black Hawk: An Autobiography* relates the events of Black Hawk’s life against the backdrop of the tumultuous conflicts between Native and Euro-Americans in parts of present-day Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin. With the Sauk tribe forcibly removed to lands west of the Mississippi, Black Hawk and other leaders were taken into custody as prisoners of war, and it was at this juncture – between imprisonment and his return to his newly removed community – that Black Hawk dictated his life story to LeClaire.

Though critics typically describe Black Hawk’s autobiography as a story of removal, this reading tends to gloss over that Black Hawk’s text is written after several months of imprisonment. In the text itself Black Hawk only briefly describes his incarceration as the most unimaginable “dishonor,” a dishonor so tremendous that he would prefer “death” to imprisonment and that he compares to “torture” (Jackson 142). Given that Native American communities’ criminal justice systems did not rely on punishment before contact with Europeans and banishment was the worst possibly imaginable solution to crime, Black Hawk’s strong feelings about his imprisonment

make all the more sense.¹ However strongly Black Hawk feels about his incarceration, the text makes mention of his captivity only in this single instance above in addition to Black Hawk's dedication and the editor's "advertisement" preceding the body of the text. Instead of discarding Black Hawk's incarceration as a subplot, I propose a reading of his autobiography as a narrative of removal *and* imprisonment.

Keeping with the way in which settlers in the American West claimed ownership of Indigenous land and displaced Native people from their homelands, the editor of the work, John B. Patterson, similarly assumed "sole proprietor[ship]" of Black Hawk's text, labeling it an "autobiography" (Krupat, *For Those* 40). This genre of what literary critic Arnold Krupat coined "Indian autobiography" originates, as Krupat argues, in a "collaborative effort" between Indigenous authors, translators, and editors and helps fulfill the genre's ideological function of portraying the Native's progression from "savagery" to "civilization" (*For Those* 49; 47). Krupat further argues that Patterson's "Advertisement" and introduction of Black Hawk as a "State-prisoner" create the "emplotment" of this progression to civilization as "defeat," the common emplotment of the "Indian autobiography" (Krupat, *For Those* 48). Krupat writes, "For it is only when the Indian subject of an autobiography acknowledges his defeat, when he becomes what Patterson calls a 'State-prisoner,' that he can appear as a 'hero' ... Perhaps; yet it is only as a 'State-prisoner' that he can assert anything at all, or be 'allowed to make known to the world the injuries his people have received from the whites'" (*For Those* 49). Paradoxically, it is not until Black Hawk is confined to and controlled by the walls of a prison that he can attain a public presence

¹ For more information on banishment in Native American communities see Kunesh.

and be heard by a Euro-American audience. Thus, it is only within captivity that the Sauk's story of removal can be narrated as heroic defeat and, possibly, be narrated at all. Thus, imprisonment functions as a narrative figure in Black Hawk's autobiography, providing a narrative frame within which Black Hawk and the Sauks' story is enclosed. Black Hawk's incarceration and defeat ensure the absence of a threat to the settler colonial project of removal. This frame molds the Indian autobiography into the shape of a container, within which an American Indian story can be retained and told before, as Black Hawk indicates at the end of the text, disappearing completely from the settler colonial stage.

Moreover, imprisonment functions as a figure that drives the plot of removal, creating a cycle of incarceration and removal in Black Hawk's text. This cycle becomes apparent when Black Hawk recounts the context of the 1804 Treaty of St. Louis, which provided legal justification for the Sauks' displacement and the Black Hawk War. Black Hawk recounts that one of his people allegedly kills a white settler before the treaty is signed, a false accusation for, as it later turns out, the murder was self-defense.² The supposed offender is imprisoned in St. Louis. Immediately, the Sauk try to reinstate peace within both communities who have been injured by this alleged crime and the imprisonment. A Sauk council appoints a delegation of four men to go to St. Louis, pay for the killed man, and free their community member from confinement. As Black Hawk explains, "This being the only means with us of saving a person who had killed another – and we *then* thought it was the same way with the

² See Jackson (54n25). Moreover, the story about the alleged murder exemplifies the construction of Native Americans as "deviant," a colonial category of identification that Luana Ross explores in her astute work on the construction of Indigenous criminality in the United States criminal justice system.

whites!” (Jackson 53).

Underlying the Sauks’ actions is an Indigenous restorative approach to criminal justice in a social system that relies on a condition that Vine Deloria and Clifford M. Lytle describe as a “tribal society” that is “in harmony with each other” (112). Eric Cheyfitz talks about a similar harmonious condition of balance in Navajo culture that is called “*hozho*, which is also translated as *beauty*, *happiness*, and *wholeness*” (“Just Society” 296). In anthropologist Gary Witherspoon’s words, “The Navajo concept of ‘hozho’ refers to that state of affairs where everything is in its proper place and functioning in harmonious relationship to everything else” (qtd. in Cheyfitz “Just Society” 297). It is this condition of balance that Indigenous restorative justice attempts at restituting for both the Native and Euro-American communities.³ In this light, it should become clear that imprisonment – or putting a member of the community not in the “proper” place but in a place isolated from everyone else – disrupts this condition of balance at its very roots.

When the Americans told the Sauk delegation that they wanted land in exchange for the prisoner, the Native men surely understood their demand as a form of restorative justice. Black Hawk explains that the party of Sauk men agrees to the

³ Prison abolitionists and prison reformers have adopted this notion of restorative justice. Scholar and activist Angela Davis refers to Herman Bianchi who “suggested that crime needs to be defined in terms of tort and, instead of criminal law, should be reparative law. In his words, ‘[The lawbreaker] is thus no longer an evil-minded man or woman, but simply a debtor, a liable person whose human duty is to take responsibility for his or her acts, and to assume the duty of repair.’” (qtd. in *Are Prisons Obsolete?* 113-113). Moreover, criminologist Howard Zehr is known for his foundational work on restorative justice.

suggested deal and waits for the release of their friend.⁴ Thinking the Americans have only asked for a small plot of land, the Sauk delegation is unaware, as Black Hawk contends, that they have just signed a treaty, sold the Sauks' homeland, and, hence, effectively assented to the removal of their tribe.⁵ Thus, the Sauk tribe's attempt at paying for the prisoner and, thus, at evading the settler's punitive carceral system and restituting a condition of balance ultimately results not only in the tribe's removal but also in the detention of Black Hawk and other warriors for resisting the settlers' land grab.

Black Hawk's autobiography exemplifies a fundamental linkage between imprisonment and removal in Native American writing that, as I argue in this dissertation, is a key motif in American Indian literature. I envision this work as a catalyst to re-think the Indigenous historiography that understands the colonization of Native people and Native space only in terms of removal and displacement – and thus in terms of mobility – and instead to also conceive American Indian colonization in terms of incarceration, isolation, and confinement. Looking at U.S. Indigenous history, imprisonment has posed a continuous threat to American Indian people: Native Americans were confined and forced to work in the Spanish mission system in the

⁴ William Henry Harrison, the governor of Indiana Territory, negotiated with the Sauk delegation. It is unclear what exactly happened during the negotiations. Quashquame, a member of the Sauk party claimed that Harrison made sure the Sauk delegation was constantly drunk during their visit. Moreover, it is unusual that Harrison did not take a written report of the negotiations and negotiations would normally include all tribal leaders, not merely a small group. See Jung 20.

⁵ Black Hawk argues against the validity of the treaty, stating that the men were not authorized by the Sauk community to sell lands. In addition they were intoxicated and, thus, unable to make a rational decision.

Southwest and in California;⁶ Indigenous warriors were imprisoned as criminals; American Indian children were detained in boarding schools;⁷ and in the present day, Native Americans face an exorbitantly high incarceration rate compared to the general population.⁸

However, the Native post-contact experience tends to be narrated almost exclusively according to a story of displacement generated by the Indian Removal Act in 1830.⁹ The story that is most often referred to in this context is undoubtedly the Trail of Tears, when Indigenous peoples were deported from the Southeastern region of the North American continent to “Indian Territory,” or what is now the state of Oklahoma. Three decades later, the removal of the Navajo people from north-central New Mexico territory to a prison in eastern New Mexico on the Bosque Redondo became known as the Long Walk in the 1860s, and from 1945–1960, the Termination and Relocation Policies led to the closure of over 100 reservations, as a result of which American Indian individuals were relocated into cities. These events, spanning over a

⁶ James Rawls demonstrates that the distinction between slavery and mission labor is complicated since even though Spanish royal texts proclaim that Indigenous people were free, they were obliged to provide their “free” labor for the colonizing project of the Spanish crown.

⁷ For an overview of boarding school policies see Francis Paul Prucha’s account on the beginnings of missionary schools and Krupat’s recent work on boarding school writing. Prucha explains that the federal government’s education and “civilization” program was born from funds allocated by the U.S. president to “benevolent societies” to support schools for Native students based on an “Act making provisions for the civilization of the Indians adjoining the frontier settlements” in 1819 (222); With the founding of Richard Henry Pratt’s Carlisle Indian School in 1879 the boarding school movement began. It was not until 1928 – ten years after Carlisle was closed – when the “government survey, *The Problem of Indian Administration* challenged the boarding school policies, leading to a period when a number of boarding schools were closed and those that remained open underwent significant changes. See Krupat, *Changed Forever* xix-xx.

⁸ A 1999 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics states this rate at 38%. The most recent report from September 2017 does not provide an exact number but it does say that even though general incarceration rates have decreased, the American Indian and Alaska Native incarceration rates have continued to increase. See Greenfeld; Brumbaugh 5.

⁹ Most recent examples of this scholarly focus on American Indian removal include: Bowes; Haveman, Black. Also, literary author Diane Glancy adopts the issue of removal in her writing, publishing a two-volume novel on the Cherokee Trail of Tears entitled *Pushing the Bear*.

century, are less frequently mentioned than the Trail of Tears, but nonetheless constitute important instances of forced mobility in the United States.¹⁰

Though this narrative of removal is certainly accurate and vitally important, I highlight that – like the prisoner’s detained journey to the prison – these forced displacements eventually result in forms of confinement, separation, and isolation, be it within the prison, within the borders of a reservation, within the urban boundaries of the city, or – more abstractly – within the confines of Western individualism.

This notion of the individual is a foundational narrative figure of United States colonial history that operates as a strategic form of Native confinement. Perhaps most explicitly, the Dawes Act of 1887 constitutes one of many attempts at breaking up collectively held lands into individual segments, which would eventually be owned by individual Native men as the heads of one single household. Thus, the act was meant to disrupt communal kinship ties amongst Indigenous people, to create nuclear family units instead of large kinship structures, and turn Native people into “individual property holders” (Cheyfitz *Columbia Guide* 16). This carceral strategy of isolating individuals and fragmenting kinship structures into individual ownership sections is at work also in the label of Black Hawk’s story an “autobiography,” a genre that relies on an author’s individual identity and ownership over her life story. Black Hawk – as well as other Native American writers – rejects this enclosure within this notion of individual personhood, “expressing,” as Krupat writes using Jace Weaver’s words, “a ‘communist’ rather than an individualist identity” (qtd. in *Loss and Renewal* 109).

¹⁰ For a detailed account on the Long Walk see Denetdale; For more information on the termination and relocation policies, see Fixico.

Another instance that aimed at enclosing Native people within an individual subjectivity is the Termination and Relocation Era, driven by the idea of splitting up the collectivity of the tribe and fragmenting American Indian people into individual subjects by relocating them from the reservation to the city. Initiated by the passing of the House Concurrent Resolution 108 in 1953, which called for Native individuals to take on their civic responsibilities and, hence, assimilate into what was considered a mainstream U.S. American lifestyle, the termination and relocation policy combines removal and isolation as one colonial, assimilative strategy.

Looking at removal as the key motif in American Indian colonial history only considers one part of the American Indian experience of displacement. Instead, U.S. settler colonial history is driven by the interconnection of removal and imprisonment, in which removal tends to lead to a form of imprisonment. If Indigenous scholars begin to think about Native history not only in terms of removal but also in terms of incarceration, this mode of thought will facilitate intersectional connections between numerous histories of incarceration in the United States and elsewhere. Ultimately this re-thinking can help disclose connections between the U.S. settler colonial project of securing and expanding territory through displacement and removal and the politics of the prison industrial complex.

Given this centuries-long history of incarceration as well as discriminatory and exclusionary practices, it may not come as a surprise that Native American people currently experience the highest incarceration rates per capita in the country. Yet, while the disproportionate incarceration rates of people of color in the United States and prison writing have recently received much scholarly attention within the

humanities and social sciences and become a focus of much public and academic debate on criminal justice reforms and prison abolition, conversations about mass incarceration tend to overlook issues connected to the Indigenous prison population.¹¹ This blind spot within the field of critical prison studies is problematic for various reasons.

Firstly, omitting the Native American experience in the prison industrial complex reiterates the colonial project, a key rhetorical feature of which is portraying Native Americans as vanished, which in turn helped to justify westward expansion and settlement of allegedly unoccupied lands. Thus, within academic scholarship this erasure furthers the continuing colonization of and state-sanctioned violence against Native American people and what is presented as essentially vacant Indigenous lands. Secondly, the Native American carceral experience demonstrates that the project of mass incarceration is not only a biopolitical issue, which expresses itself in the disproportionately high numbers of incarcerated people of color. Mass incarceration is also a colonial method applied to a geopolitical problem and deployed in the service of ensuring the settler state's territorial expansion. As Canadian First Nation Studies scholar Robert Nichols and U.S. Native American Studies scholar Mark Rifkin respectively argue, Indigenous populations do not only constitute racialized bodies that are meant to be controlled within the settler colonial project. Rifkin points out that the federal government manages Indigenous populations according to "legitimate modes of collectivity and occupancy," creating a connection of biopolitical *and*

¹¹ The major exception is scholarship on Leonard Peltier, who because of his celebrity status has received much attention. Scholarship on the prison-industrial complex and Native incarceration is fairly limited. Notable are: Cuneen; Grobsmith; Nichols; Ogden; Reed; Ross *Inventing*; Ross's edited issue on "Settler Colonialism and the Legislating of Ciminality."

geopolitical modes of control that he calls “*bare habitance*” (emphasis in the original , 90). Both scholars look at the goal of the settler colonial project of solidifying settler colonial claims to territory and to undermine Indigenous autonomy. Rifkin seems to see little hope in expressions of Indigenous sovereignty, which according to him merely reiterate the settler state’s claim to its “overriding sovereignty” that defines Native populations as exceptional (435 U.S., quoted in Rifkin 90). Contrary to this view, Nichols argues, “Indigenous sovereignty itself calls forth an alternative normativity that challenges the very *existence* of the carceral system, let alone its internal organization and operation” (emphasis in the original 445).

This dissertation looks at the colonial project of carcerality from both angles: First, I analyze the ways in which Indigenous texts depict the settler state’s creation of carceral conditions for Native populations; second, I investigate expressions of Indigenous sovereignty and the ways in which Native American literature offers alternative ways of understanding space as non-carceral. The second angle presumes a decolonial, abolitionist perspective that relies on Native epistemologies of kinship and “natural democracy” and which envisions a decolonized notion of Indigenous space (Cajete qtd. in Cheyfitz “Balancing” 144).

Natural democracy, Santa Clara Pueblo scholar Gregory Cajete explains, is the foundational social system to Indigenous thought in which all beings – humans, animals, plants, and beings such as rocks, which would be considered inanimate objects according to Western epistemology – exist in interdependent kinship relationships with one another and obtain responsibilities towards one another. Within a system of natural democracy, as I demonstrate in the upcoming chapters, space is not

defined according to Western spatial theory – as an abstract narrative that can be perceived from above, one that is flattened out, mapped, outlined, and circumscribed by borders and other forms of limitation such as property. Instead, space according to the idea of natural democracy constitutes a living environment that expresses itself through interdependent relations and interactions with others.

As I investigate the current moment of mass incarceration, contemporary texts by Indigenous authors will shed light on the American spatial narratives surrounding this brutal phenomenon. Each text takes place in a narrative moment at the juncture of mobility and carcerality, similar to the moment in which Black Hawk dictates his life story. Building upon scholarship on mobility in the field of carceral geography, I investigate instances of mobility within carceral space. As carceral geographer Dominique Moran suggests, even though the “prison *appears* inherently spatially ‘fixed’, and prisoners in turn *seem* to be immobile by virtue of their imprisonment, [...] the mobility of both prisoners and guards within and between penal institutions means that ‘contemporary practices of imprisonment are characterized by [the] tension between apparent fixity and forced mobility’” (Moran 74). I investigate this tension in contemporary Indigenous texts and analyze characters’ experience of what I call “detained mobility.” I differentiate “detained mobility” from carceral geographers’ use of “forced mobility” because unlike in the context of the prison, the colonial force that detains Indigenous characters in the literary texts is not always physically embodied by the presence of guards or carceral institutions (Moran 74).

Detainment is often a structural condition that partially results from the ways in which space is translated into notions of property and territory and, hence, divided

into fragments and allocated by and amongst certain social groups. Through the literary texts, the dissertation performs in a certain way its own detained movement through three carceral spaces: The prison, the boarding school, and the reservation. In a similar fashion that the autobiographic genre appears to limit Black Hawk's story to an individualized form of narration, at first glance, the texts around which each chapter revolves function as carceral constructs, as well: The written text's material constraints seemingly confine the story to an individualized author and to a singular story that ends with the book despite the narrative's insertion in an Indigenous collectivity and the reciprocity of oral narratives. Here too, I argue that natural democracy and the interdependence with other beings and other stories challenges this seeming circumscription of individual authorship and the material restraints of the book. The texts, thus, function as contemporary case studies dealing with the literary treatment of carceral space, mobility, and certain carceral qualities of the written text.

Jointly, the three texts not only draw attention to the written word's potential carcerality within a settler colonial environment; they also depict an alternative, non-carceral notion of Indigenous space that is grounded in an interdependent practice of reading and writing. This practice goes beyond a merely visual approach to the written text and can be applied as much to a literary text as to a spatial narrative. Interdependent reading and writing entails a phenomenological relationship to one's surrounding that incorporates not only vision but also sound and that, hence, pays tribute to the orality of Native cultures.

Each text that I investigate in the following chapters expresses an involvement of sound in literary and spatial narrative. The texts depict a notion of speech-filled

space that I analyze in Cherokee writer Diane Glancy's *Fort Marion and the Trauma of Native Education* in Chapter One. Glancy's text envisions an environment that is a place of interlocution and interaction with other beings within natural democracy. In Chapter Two, Ojibwe author Linda LeGarde Grover's short stories portray this interaction with others as the environment "echoes" with stories. At the center of Chapter Three is Spokane writer Sherman Alexie's debut novel *Reservation Blues*. An accompanying soundtrack with additional songs to the ones printed in the book also becomes part of this speech-filled landscape that exists outside the material book but to which characters make reference. Thus, Native writing incorporates and interacts with speech-filled space and the multitude of beings, who exist in this space. The texts in this dissertation incorporate a fundamentally mobile understanding of reading and writing for they imagine a movement of pursuance towards others and toward sound: *Fort Marion's* speaker follows the voices of the prisoners, in Grover's story the environment's echoing and re-echoing of stories constitute traveling sound, and in *Reservation Blues* the characters move toward "waiting" "songs" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 8, Alexie *Reservation* 306).

In Chapter One "Hearing Indigenous Space: Speech-Filled Writing in Diane Glancy's *Fort Marion and the Trauma of Native Education*" I analyze the phenomenology of confinement and detained mobility in Glancy's creative memoir and demonstrate that the text exposes the confining aspects of visual spatial narratives and written culture. Rather than relying on vision – which philosopher Elisabeth Grosz shows constitutes the sensory approach to space in traditionally Western thought – *Fort Marion* foregrounds sound as a way to understand and engage with spatial

environment and with the written text. I call this type of audible writing “speech-filled writing” and point to its presence in both Glancy’s literary text and in the spatial narratives the text reveals.

The second chapter “Indians in Custody: Tracing the Guardian’s Gaze in Linda LeGarde Grover’s *The Dance Boots*” evolves around the author’s 2010 short story collection on the multi-generational boarding school experience of Ojibwe people. In the context of the entire book, I analyze the collection’s final short story, “Bingo Night,” in which the protagonists drive a car from the reservation to their home, which becomes a placeholder for the boarding school. The story negotiates definitions of belonging under United States legal guardianship. Guardianship derives from a phenomenological and disciplining relationship of watching over the ward, and aims at replacing a reciprocal kinship relationship of motherhood that involves careful observation and listening. Instead of this type of guardianship, which, as I demonstrate, is also foundational to Western notions of territorial belonging and sovereignty, Grover’s short stories disclose an interdependent notion of belonging in stories.

The third chapter “Scaling ‘a Very Definite Place of Death’? Detention and Harmonized Space in Sherman Alexie’s *Reservation Blues*” will show that Alexie’s 1995 novel *Reservation Blues* alludes to the ways in which Indigenous characters experience confinement and detained mobility. I argue that this restrained condition is caused by a spatial narrative that relies on a process of scaling of space, of vacating space of its content and abstracting space into segments, which in turn can be owned and territorialized. As one of these scaled spaces the reservation exists within what I

call “detained space-time,” a stagnant, death-like notion of time within a confined scaled space that forbids Native characters to escape from their imprisonment. Instead of being subject to this restraining condition, *Reservation Blues* provides an alternative spatial and temporal narrative that relies on the act of harmonizing and that pushes the boundaries of the novel’s genre-specific scalar and confining qualities.

This project explores further the “spatialized writing tradition” that Abenaki literary scholar Lisa Brooks explores when she looks at pre-colonial practices of written interactions amongst Native people. Brooks shows that the exchange of wampum or pictographs on birchbark – practices that, as she notes, originate in a “Native space” – connote “the relations between people, between places, between humans and non-humans, between the waterways they joined” (12).¹² Instead of relying exclusively on visual and graphic evidence for Native stories and Native space, the texts in this dissertation provide strategies to excavate, conceive, and read audible remainders in the landscape – “a residue of voices” as Glancy puts it in *Fort Marion* (Glancy, *Fort* 9). In pursuing a type of residual reading, this project takes seriously incarceration’s project of “disappearing” beings and their stories while looking for tactics of audible release from the carceral confines created by settler colonialism.

¹² See also Brigit Rasmussen’s keen account on early Native writing systems.

CHAPTER ONE

HEARING INDIGENOUS SPACE: SPEECH-FILLED WRITING IN DIANE GLANCY'S *FORT MARION PRISONERS AND THE TRAUMA OF NATIVE EDUCATION*

At the end of the Southern Plain Indian wars in 1875, seventy-two Native American prisoners were moved from Oklahoma to Fort Marion, near St. Augustine, Florida. The U.S. War Department transported members of the Arapaho, Caddo, Cheyenne, Comanche, and Kiowa tribes and labeled them leaders of resistance in the preceding wars and, hence, criminals. After being shipped across the country hundreds of miles from Indian Territory to Fort Marion, the prisoners became an exotic attraction for crowds of tourists and a test case for Captain Richard Henry Pratt's educational program that aimed at assimilating Native Americans into mainstream U.S. society. Pratt's famous motto to "kill the Indian and save the man" through education was first implemented at the Fort Marion prison and later employed in American Indian boarding schools (qtd. in Lookingbill 62). Volunteers instructed the prisoners in English, math, geography, and writing so that eventually the prisoners would leave behind their Native ways and become "civilized" subjects of the United States.

The surviving archival records of the prisoners' experience during the three years at Fort Marion are limited to letters, which the prisoners wrote after going through Fort Marion's literacy program, a few wall carvings, and the prisoners' famous ledger book drawings that chronicle their forced journey from Indian Territory

to Florida and their experience in captivity. Most of what is known about their history today is drawn from archival materials collected by Pratt. In *Fort Marion Prisoners and the Trauma of Native Education*, Cherokee author Diane Glancy resurrects the prisoners' sparsely documented stories and places the prisoners' experience with Pratt's educational policies in conversation with Glancy's own experience as a formally educated Native writer. The work combines historiography with elements of personal memoir and the imagined voices of the prisoners and, thus, resists common notions of history, autobiography, and fiction. The result is a fractured amalgamation of what would typically be classified as vastly dissimilar textual categories: Imagined speech, personal memoir, historiographical facts, letters, photographs, and the prisoners' ledger book drawings. Drawing upon these varied sources, Glancy's text tests the boundaries of form and genre and provides a multifaceted insight into the experience of incarceration and education. The combination of historiographical sources with the polyphony of Glancy's own voice and those of the prisoners produces what I call speech-filled writing. This type of writing is based on an interdependent understanding of the natural environment as filled with beings and interlocutors. In this environment the speaker enters into an exchange and a conversation with other beings, providing a type of collective testimony to sound and oral culture rather than an individual speaker's expression or a historical record of written evidence. Glancy's speech-filled writing challenges Western notions of what constitutes knowledge and inserts an Indigenous perspective into Western understandings of an historical event.

This admittedly unusual blending of textual categories has earned both acclaim

and criticism.¹ In his seemingly perplexed review of Glancy's complicated work, professor of education Jon Reyhner points to some of the main issues that Glancy's text problematizes. He critiques the blending of genre and poetic voice for lacking historical evidence and for "mak[ing] up dialogue" (888). He ends his review, asserting that, "Glancy is good at giving her readers a feeling for the 'dislocation at the heart of education' that the Fort Marion prisoners and many students face, however I recommend that anyone interested in the history of the captives at Fort Marion read Brad D. Lookingbill's *War Dance at Fort Marion*" (888). Reyhner's comments and the implicit hierarchies between oral dialogue and written evidence as well as emotion and historical information underscore the historian's focus on the written and visual form, a focus that explains Reyhner's bewilderment over Glancy's project of recovering (oral and invisible) voices. Because of the lack of written and visual evidence of the prisoners' lives and the ways in which historiography washes away oral narratives, Glancy imagines the prisoners' recovered voices and, thus, creates a historical account that does not fit into the Western notion of historical memory.² By mixing the voice of the speaker who recounts her experience within the U.S. American education system with the voices and experiences of the prisoners to a degree that at times makes a distinction between the voices impossible, the work draws connections between the forced education of the prisoners and present-day Native education and

¹ Though expressing doubt about Glancy's methodology, Eric Anderson praises *Fort Marion* for its innovative ways of displaying the prisoners' lives in motion; James Mackay highlights the ways in which *Fort Marion* uncovers the historical traces of colonialism in the present. Steven Williams calls Glancy's text "imaginative," "gripping," and "creative."

² However, this imagined discourse is not absent from purportedly historical sources about the prisoners; for instance, Brad Lookingbill, the historian whose work Reyhner recommends, says that the prisoners "were pleased with the chapel meetings," which they were forced to attend (111). Lookingbill provides no indication – except for citations in footnotes – that this presumed piece of information stems from colonial sources and is, therefore, very biased and at least to some degree not factual.

exposes a multiplicity of American Indian voices that would otherwise not be heard.

This multiplicity of voices in *Fort Marion* challenge colonial forms of enclosure, be it enclosure in a specific genre, enclosure in the form of an individual subject or speaker, or spatial enclosure through imprisonment, the notion of property, and territory.³ Resisting these types of containment, Glancy's speaker suggests a type of spatial and historical literacy that relies on sound and vision. Glancy presents the ways in which vision according to Western epistemology operates as a way of enclosing and isolating Native people from kinship formations. This type of detaining quality to vision is represented in Glancy's depiction of what I call "writing as settling." This type of writing contains knowledge within itself while excluding other forms of knowledge and beings. *Fort Marion* also provides an alternative notion of writing in which the writer engages in a conversation with multiple beings in the environment. Glancy's text, I suggest, exemplifies a piece of speech-filled writing: A type of writing that is audible, interdependent, and inherently mobile. *Fort Marion* invites the reader to understand writing as interdependent movement between beings rather than according to terms of Western structuralist or post-structuralist theories of writing.

Perhaps because of Indigenous Studies' focus on the history of removal, the majority of Glancy scholarship has focused on her 1996 novel *Pushing the Bear* that

³ My attention to these dominant enclosing forms derives from Caroline Levine's account on the transformative nature of literary and sociopolitical form. Levine argues that "affordances" – a term that she borrows from design theory – are innate to the material and design of respective forms and define form's ability to transform and collide with other forms. Glancy's text outlines these types of affordances in the ways in which the speaker resists being entrapped in the enclosed forms created by settler colonialism.

narrates the experience of the Cherokee's Removal in the 1830s.⁴ The general lack of scholarship on Glancy might result from her being perceived as what James Mackay terms an "awkward writer" (11).⁵ Mackay leaves this notion of awkwardness open to interpretation but the diversity of Glancy's prolific work, ranging from poetry to fiction to historical nonfiction to drama as well as the debates surrounding her ethnic and religious identity make her a complex and strongly contested writer. Glancy self-identifies as Cherokee but she is not enrolled in the tribe. She grew up in Kansas with her German American mother and her (non-enrolled) Cherokee father. Because of her status as non-enrolled and her allegedly lacking connection to Cherokee culture, nationalist critic Daniel Heath Justice deprecates Glancy's work; poet Frank Parman goes even farther by calling her a cultural "fraud" (in: Appleford fn 2, 252). I bracket this question of identity politics for most parts of this chapter since the project of this chapter is not invested in questions of representation and authenticity but rather in the questions of Native American removal and isolation that the Fort Marion prisoners

⁴ See Hada; Justice; Krupat.

⁵ Much of the research on Glancy's literature focuses on Glancy's persona. For instance, there is a fairly large number of works on Glancy's Christian faith. See Farrell Bednarowski; Fitz.

exemplify.⁶ However, this chapter will demonstrate how in many ways Glancy's notion of reading and writing make these questions of identity politics superfluous.

Spatial Narratives of Inertia

Glancy's award-winning poetic memoir *Claiming Breath*, published in 1992, engages with issues of mobility and writing, themes that later dominate her 2014 work *Fort Marion*. *Claiming Breath* relates a year of travel between the speaker's jobs in Arkansas and Oklahoma. She describes a strong feeling of separation – a feeling of spatial separation, of being in-between two places, of being disconnected from friends and family, and a psychological separation caused by two radically different heritages on her mother's German American side and her father's American Indian side. This notion of separation and isolation is echoed in the text's fragmented structure, which

⁶ Amongst the limited scholarship that has been done on Glancy's literary expansive oeuvre, a number of scholars have shown interest in the issues of spatial mobility that I thematize in this essay. For instance, both Polina Mackay and Alexandra Gansa explore possibilities of maintaining a sense of being at home in a mobile state of displacement. Mackay analyzes the ways in which the seemingly stable category of "the home become[s.] as mobile as the road" (42). Ganser also focuses on the road in Glancy's writing and calls Glancy's speaker in her memoir *Claiming Breath* a para-nomadic traveler, a traveler who is "at home on the road" and who, thus, combines and unhinges different notions of mobility: The Indigenous nomadic heritage of certain tribes, the history of forced displacement, and the rite-of-passage-narrative of the white American male on the road (182). Both scholars investigate the ways in which this type of nomadism functions in a space that is firmly structured. My research on Glancy's *Fort Marion* is invested in similar questions of Indigenous belonging following this history of displacement and the colonial structuring of space according to forms of property. However, this chapter intervenes in current Glancy research by showing how this notion of displacement tends to be interpreted according to Western notions of space as inert and as only conceivable through vision. I argue that Western knowledge translates Native American space and Native people into Western visual forms and, thus, separates and isolates Indigenous people from kinship structures.

also reappears in *Fort Marion*.⁷

In addition to these formal concerns with issues of separation, the speakers in *Claiming Breath* and *Fort Marion's* constantly contemplate the role of writing as a colonial tool for separation and as a vehicle for unification and liberation. In one of these short poetic fragments in *Claiming Breath*, the speaker describes Western spatial structures as part of form and, thus, aligns her spatial thought with that of many spatial theorists who understand space as text: "Out West, the frontier is on the edge of form. Not shape, but structure & organization of the writing. It is tribal, this hybrid & unfamiliar of the familiar. It's the part that comes from not belonging. Bawks. Words push into the new sphere. Tribal means belonging, but not belonging to civilization. This is the tension that results" (Glancy, *Claiming* 7). In this passage the speaker alludes to an act of mapping but it is not the shape of the nation that creates an imagined community and its means of belonging. Instead, she notes that it is writing as a tool of colonization – with its structure and organizational principles – that creates a sense of belonging for the invaders, and concomitantly a sense of who and what is unfamiliar. She asserts that the settler's writing creates this opposition: The settlers impose literacy onto oral traditions during colonization and turn land that was previously part of a primarily oral culture into writing. The newly colonized land is incorporated into the settlers' spatial narrative and, thus, into the structure and organizational principles of Western spatial narratives. An essential part of this

⁷ This resurrection of a silenced historical narrative constitutes what Amy Elias calls "coyote aesthetics." In her essay on Glancy's *Pushing the Bear*, Elias argues that like the trickster coyote, Glancy redefines, disrupts, and makes ambiguous Western binary oppositions. Glancy's fragmented aesthetics is part of this coyote aesthetics as Elias writes, "a coyote aesthetics would deconstruct speech/writing and speech/silence binary oppositions in relation to the telling of history. Fragmentation of the historical narrative would be one way to do this. A coyote aesthetic might value fragmentation as a way of telling history that incarnated the oral tradition's spoken silences" (197).

incorporation constitutes the translation of land into the Western idea of property,⁸ This translation process involves the inscription into the written form, as property is quintessentially written; it exists as maps, titles, and deeds.⁹ It is particularly interesting that the speaker does not relate this form to shape but rather to “structure and organization of the writing” since the Western frontier is typically imagined as a line on the map, giving firm shape to the American nation at the time (Glancy, *Claiming* 7).¹⁰

The speaker describes this colonial act of writing as a violent push into new territory, creating a dualism between those who belong to Western civilization and those who are “tribal” (Glancy, *Claiming* 7). Glancy’s text echoes Krupat’s assertion that it is writing that creates this type of oppositional way of thinking in Western epistemology.¹¹ The speaker suggests that “form,” “structure,” “organization,” and “writing” are attributes that define Western civilization, implying that according to this Western, colonial narrative “the new,” tribal “sphere”, which is “beyond” all of these attributes, is characterized by opposite features – unformed, unstructured, unorganized, and unwritten (Glancy, *Claiming* 7). Here, the text poses a (post)colonial critique of writing as settling – this dualistic type of writing is aggressive and

⁸ For a detailed account on this translation process, see Cheyfitz, Eric. *Poetics*.

⁹ For more information on writing and federal Indian law, see Cheyfitz and Huhndorf.

¹⁰ Graham Huggan describes the mimetic act of mapping the territory of the settler colonial nation as a way of fixing settler colonial authority. He writes that maps “use the duplicating procedures of mimetic representation and structuralist reconstitution as strategic means of stabilizing the foundations of Western culture and of ‘fixing’ the position (thereby maintaining the power) of the West in relation to cultures” (29).

¹¹ See Krupat “Trickster Tales Revisited” in *All That Remains*, especially pp.12-17.

hegemonic for it pushes over other discursive realms and dominates them.¹² As Rasmussen and Brooks show, these realms are not limited to oral discourses, as it is commonly misconceived, but they include various forms of non-alphabetic Indigenous writing.

This critique is applicable to the spatial discourse of the nation and its territory, a territory that pushes out Indigenous tribes and incorporates them as “domestic dependent nations” (30 U.S. at 17). But, Glancy’s critique also refers to the constraints of literacy imposed onto Indigenous people who have previously lived according to kinship formations generated by oral tradition. The passage, thus, also alludes to a domination that is caused by the imposition of writing in two ways: Writing as a technique to conquer and settle space and writing as a method to conquer and settle the Indigenous person. Being forced into literacy, the Fort Marion prisoners emblemize this experience of conquest through writing. This conquest is, perhaps, most tangible in the ways in which the law favors written evidence over oral testimony, for as Cheyfitz and Shari Huhndorf put it, in “U.S. federal Indian law ... oral testimony has typically not been admitted in the courts or not accorded the same validity as written documents” (265). However, this is merely one way of understanding writing as settling – writing as a tool of colonial oppression – for, as it will become clear toward the end of this chapter, the voices of *Fort Marion* incorporate speech and “*interlocation*” with the natural environment into the text and, hence, use writing in a radically different way than the colonial oppressors, namely as a vehicle of

¹² Following Cheyfitz I use parenthesis around the prefix “post” to draw attention to the federal government’s colonial hegemony over Indian Country. For a detailed account on federal Indian law’s colonization of Native peoples see Cheyfitz, *Columbia Guide*.

interdependence (emphasis in the original, Glancy, *Fort* 60).

When the speaker states, “tribal means belonging, but not belonging to civilization” she highlights the imposition of binary oppositions as in civilization v. tribe, or in her words of belonging and not belonging onto Indigenous people whose social mode of organization is defined by kinship relations (Glancy *Claiming* 7). Kinship structures are essentially structures of belonging that do not focus on modes of exclusion and instead highlight the existence of beings in reciprocal relationships. The word “tribal” alludes to yet another act of translation and imposition: In pre-colonial times, Indigenous communities did not identify along tribal lines of distinctions but rather by kinship and clan affiliations. The arbitrary division of tribes and tribal chiefs resulted from colonizers’ demands to negotiate with male representatives of nations. Hence, the imposed structure of the tribe parallels European models of nationhood and patriarchy. Glancy’s use of the term “tribal” alludes to the colonization of Indigenous modes of belonging inherent in kinship formations (Glancy *Claiming* 7).

This Indigenous notion of belonging involves all types of beings in the environment, even those who are typically seen as lifeless according to a Western worldview. These beings live in relation to each other and share responsibilities and “rights” within what Cajete refers to as “natural democracy” (in Cheyfitz “Balancing” 144). In many Indigenous societies, this worldview derives from a principal relationship to the earth, which is understood to be the mother or creator of all beings. Following Witherspoon Cheyfitz points out that this relationship is not metaphorical but rather “the literal ground of the notion of motherhood itself” (“Balancing” 146).

Thus, when Glancy says “tribal means belonging,” she does not solely refer to the colonial notion of tribe as in the legal definition of the nation within, which is determined only by its human members (Glancy *Claiming* 7). Instead, “belonging” in the above passage refers to the earth and various other beings, or, as William Bevis puts it, “[n]ature is part of tribe” (in Cheyfitz “Balancing” 145).

In contrast to this mode of interdependence with the environment, the speaker in *Fort Marion* describes the production and use of space in settler colonialism as aberrant from natural norms, and as fixed and inert: “The new people had buildings that could not be moved. They stood as a buffalo herd without legs, as teepees that could not be folded up and moved” (Glancy 11). The speaker’s comparison of the unmovable buildings to a buffalo herd and to teepees involves two important aspects of the innately mobile life on the Plains, as these examples highlight the interdependence of Native life. This interdependence is apparent in the ways in which the entirety of Indigenous life on the plains is centered on pursuing buffalo in search of food.

The speaker’s perplexity involved in this comparison between the colonizers’ static settlements and the mobile, interrelated aspects of Indigenous life foregrounds a radical difference in the ways in which the two groups understand and utilize space.¹³ This perplexity stems in part from a translation involved in federal Indian law’s conversion of Indigenous kinship relations to the land into Western notions of property. A similar act of translation is present in the passage above, in which the

¹³ This perplexity surfaces in another passage of *Fort Marion*: “They saw the pleasant houses in the towns where they disembarked from the train on their way to the ocean – the buildings could not be packed to migrate with the people like teepees. How could they stay in one place? What did they do without the buffalo to follow?” (59).

speaker attempts to translate property and settlement into Indigenous epistemology, according to which relationships to other living beings such as the buffalo herd determine Native life. The discrepancy between this Indigenous epistemology and the settlers' notion of space as property and the settlers' usage of space (which is completely separate from the surrounding natural movements) explains the speaker's reading of Western spatial narratives as innately "unnatural" – for lack of a better word.¹⁴ Moreover, the juxtaposition also demonstrates that, though a Western self-understanding envisions a Western way of life as progressive and continuously moving forward, an Indigenous view on Western spatial narratives reveals its immobility and its isolation from natural surroundings.

Western Space and Visual Knowledge

Fort Marion shows how this notion of detachment and isolation from the environment is characteristic to settler colonial and Western spatial narratives. In the Western imaginary, space is understood to be a collection of isolated objects that are bound together by vision. It is vision that creates an image and, thus, unifies the isolated objects within an environment. In her discussion of senses in phenomenological theory and Western philosophy more generally, feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz writes that vision is typically considered "a spatial sense" because it creates space between "the seer and what is seen" and, unlike other senses,

¹⁴ The term nature heavily relies on Western distinctions between nature and culture, a distinction that makes little sense in Native American epistemologies, in which all beings exist in reciprocity within a kinship system, in which culture is thus not distinct from the environment and vice versa. I am using the words natural and unnatural out of a lack of a better word that is not implicated by the nature/culture divide that Eric Cheyfitz critiques in his work. My use of the word 'natural' includes not only the Western notion of 'natural environment' but relates to Indigenous life in general, encompassing non-human beings, as well. See Cheyfitz, "Balancing."

it provides a representative image, giving knowledge about coexisting elements in one field (97-98). Moreover, Grosz characterizes vision as the traditional sense of knowledge in Western culture, a sense that is considered superior to other senses (97). Though this account of space puts emphasis on unification and the role of the visual experience in unifying, or as Grosz puts it, “hold[ing] together ... various disparate objects,” this view fails to address the fundamental assumption that objects are, in fact, separate and not always already unified (98).

In a state of natural democracy, beings are already in a reciprocal relationship to one another and do not require an outside framing to become a unified whole. Imposing this notion of visual knowledge production onto an Indigenous context is, in fact, a form of enclosure, for it separates and isolates the Indigenous person from much broader kinship structures than a visual frame. The speaker in *Fort Marion* references this imposition of visual knowledge by alluding to the colonizers’ gaze at the prisoners: “The people were here to look at them... People gawked at them (10)... The people stared at them. Maybe the people wondered if the prisoners were even human” (15). Here, in a similar way that vision produces space in Grosz’s comments, the settlers’ gaze in *Fort Marion* does not emphasize connection but it creates space between the white seer and the Indigenous prisoner, an act that Franz Fanon describes as an act of racial “fix[ing]” in the context of black colonial subjectivity (109). By putting the Indigenous person in this oppositional relationship to the white subject and not in relation to an extensive network of kin, the white gaze isolates the Indigenous person from their kinship network and instead places them only in a negative relation to the white colonizer. Thus, the white gaze that fixes and isolates the prisoner from

their kinship relations parallels the ways in which settlements and property fix the (nomadic, interdependent Indigenous) subjects in one place and thus isolates them from the migration path of their kin.

In addition to Western visual understandings of space as representative, unifying, and continuous, Grosz explains that hearing, which is the sensual root of Indigenous oral cultures, is typically considered “indexical” in Western knowledge, meaning that a sound points to a location of an object rather than representing the object. Thus, the indexical sound merely tells us where an object is located but it does not give us information about the object’s characteristic traits. Grosz states,

[t]here must be a cause, object, or event producing a sound, although sound in no way resembles it. As sight holds together and unifies various disparate objects, cotemporal sounds are unified into a single sound no longer resembling its components (for example, stronger sounds drown out weaker sounds). Only a few sounds can be followed simultaneously, and beyond a certain narrow limit, sound rapidly becomes noise (98).

In the earlier scene in *Fort Marion* in which the speaker compares the settler’s houses to a “buffalo herd without legs” and to “teepees that could not be folded up and moved” the prisoners do not seem to narrate space in representative ways (Glancy 11). The visual houses are not generated by an act of unifying separate objects, e.g. roof, door, and walls into one cohesive image. Instead, the image of the “teepee that could not be folded up” points to the location of other “objects,” namely to the buffalo whose pursuance is already implicated in the foldable teepees (Glancy, *Fort* 11). In contrast, according to Western epistemology, the iconic image of the settlers’ houses is representative of an existent landscape. The speaker’s perplexity over the buildings’ rigid structure and her comparison to innately mobile features of Native life on the

Plains suggests an understanding of visible space that is not representative of a field of vision – of unified objects – but rather indexical of, or interdependent with other beings and their previous and future movement. Thus, an Indigenous understanding of space in *Fort Marion* is not representative – the text does not create a field of vision – but is rather interdependent with other beings and points to their previous and future movement. Therefore, the speaker narrates space according to those indexical ways that Grosz connects with hearing (Glancy *Fort Marion* 11).

Interestingly, the text itself – positioned between two photographs of the prisoners – seems to be contained within a storyline of progression. The first image shows a group of prisoners in “native costume” inside the fort, the last image, also a group photograph, depicts some of the prisoners sitting in a nice row in Euro-American dress. The book seems to implement its own enclosure of the prisoners’ story within the visible image of the prisoners and the progression toward “civilization” expressed in these photos. However, if read in an interdependent way, the images may direct the reader/viewer to the prisoners’ previous and future movement. Thus, the pictures, particularly the depicted dress of the prisoners, point to relations and other beings as well as the portrayed prisoners’ forced movement from their homelands to the prison, as well as their future movement to Hampton and other places. Read in such a way, the pictures may open up a wider story of movement rather than one of enclosure within a confined storyline of progression toward civilization.

The speaker also interprets space in interdependent ways when she wonders about the pattern of the settlers’ movement. She asks, “[w]hat migration path did the

train follow? How did they make the tracks that wandered across the land?” (Glancy, *Fort 10*). The question about the train’s path references animal migration and suggests an understanding of movement that assumes an environmental trigger and purpose that could explain the settlers’ invasion. The speaker, thus, poses questions that aim at finding a connection with other beings and their previous and future movements. The speaker questions the path the tracks follow, or in other words the catalyst for the train’s path and she asks how the tracks are made or rather what preceded the tracks. The word “wander” demonstrates the failure to understand the tracks in a “natural” interdependent way as it implies the absence of “natural” purpose for the settlers’ movement (Glancy, *Fort 10*). The speaker goes on to say that “[t]he new people came without rest. They marked the land” (Glancy, *Fort 10*). The tracks merely mark the land without apparent reason to the speaker. Unlike natural marks on the land the train tracks will not eventually change or fade due to the impact of the environment and instead, they provide a fixed, linear structure of movement on the land. These types of marks exemplify writing as settling insofar as they provide a colonial structure that considers the written and spatial text unchangeable and fixed. The movement of both – spatial and written – structures is not driven by natural triggers but by a fixed linear movement between two places that are in a binary oppositional relationship to each other: origin and destination, or the book or a line’s beginning and end.¹⁵

When the prisoners are forced to ride on the train in precisely this linear way, *Fort Marion’s* speaker rejects this idea of movement as fixed and linear, asserting that “[n]ow the land rode with the prisoners in the wagons, and in the train. When they

¹⁵ Here, Glancy’s description of colonial spatial text corresponds with a structuralist understanding of writing that is bound to fixed patterns that are determined by binary oppositions.

closed their eyes, did they still see the land?" (Glancy 8). The passage foregrounds a spatial narrative that is not primarily rooted in a visual representation of space, as the speaker is not certain that the prisoners still see the land that is riding with them. Moreover, the speaker's suggestion that the land remains with the prisoners collapses the distance between seer and what is seen that Grosz identifies in Western thought. This experience of connection with the land is radically different from the visual experience of the Western seer and the resulting spatial distance between the seeing subject and the object being seen. Instead, this narrative of space relies on interdependence. In the same way that Native people follow the buffalo, the land follows the movement of the prisoners. Here, the land is not the origin from which the characters are moving away; the land's presence on the train unveils an understanding of space and movement that is not determined by the linear progression between two opposite poles of origin and destination. Thus, rather than being at a distance, this Indigenous notion of space is defined by interdependence and pursuance. Glancy's text insists that space must be understood in terms of proximity and connection, rather than in terms of distance and isolation.¹⁶

Interdependent, Speech-Filled Space

Early in the text, the speaker describes an experience with space that is defined by an interaction with the landscape. The experience creates a sense of similarity and belonging amongst the Indigenous prisoners who come from different Native groups on the Plains and are isolated from their kin: "They had ridden their horses across the

¹⁶ In Western terms, this moment marks a collapse between what is typically understood as the opposition between space and place. See Massey.

plains under the sky. They had followed the buffalo. The wind spoke to them. The round moon on the dew of prairie grass made a sheen that lifted the night. The sky spoke with stars” (Glancy, *Fort* 8). Unlike other passages in Glancy’s work that describe settler colonial space as violent form or as fixed, linear structure, this passage depicts a notion of speech-filled space that is experienced through pursuing movement. The purpose in the characters’ movement is instantly introduced in the above scene when the speaker states that they follow the buffalo. The characters are not wandering in what seems like the purposeless direction of the settlers’ train tracks but their movement is caused by the buffalo’s migration. The scene depicts a conception of space that consists of at least two levels: The ground and the sky. These levels are part of what religious scholar Lee Irwin calls the “dream world” of Greater Plains “religious topology” (29). This world is alive, layered, and an “undivided wholeness” and opens up in its entirety to people while experiencing visions (Irwin 29). According to this worldview, the world consists of at least three interdependent layers, “with the middle representing the mysterious realm in which all beings meet and interact” (Irwin 30).

This notion of space is distinct from the pushing form that creates the frontier in the beginning passage of this chapter. Though in this space beings from the above and beyond layers may enter other layers, this permeation is not a violent one but rather one that is constituted by interdependence. The scene depicts this kind of relationality between spatial layers: Kin relations are the catalysts for movement as the human characters follow the buffalo with the help of their horses. The darkness is “lifted” because of a sheen created by the interaction of various parts of the landscape:

the moon, the dew, and the prairie grass (Glancy, *Fort* 8). Thus, this Indigenous spatial narrative is not hierarchical and dichotomous but interactive and relational. This relational chain of actions also highlights that this space is not unified through the vision of a subject, as the elements within the environment always already exist in an interdependent relationship to each other. However, the visual is an integral part of this spatial experience, as the interdependent interaction between “[t]he round moon” and “the dew of prairie grass made a sheen that lifted the night” (8).¹⁷

The emphasis on speech is, perhaps, the most striking feature in the passage. The landscape performs speech while the characters on their horses participate in a continuing conversation between various speakers. The characters are not presented as dominant individuals who subdue or give structure to the landscape but they are merely participants in an already ongoing discourse. While they ride their horses, they are interlocutors as the wind speaks to them.¹⁸ Moreover, they are witnesses to a conversation between the sky and the stars in the above realm.¹⁹

Contrary to notions of human agency in writing, the human characters in the scene of the horse riders, as well as the speaker of *Fort Marion*, are not the creators of the narrative but they constitute interlocutors and witnesses in an ongoing conversation amongst numerous beings. The text highlights that the characters are not

¹⁷ In the same way, the visual is included in Glancy’s *Fort Marion*. The written text, which consists in large parts of dialogue and therefore of speech, is interspersed with photographs of the prisoners’ ledger book drawings.

¹⁸ According to Cheyenne knowledge, air has been given to humans by the “spirit beings” and “makes breathing and life possible” (Irwin 30). Thus, the characters’ conversation with wind – moving air – constitutes a lively interaction that embodies the interdependence with other beings and layers of the world.

¹⁹ According to Irwin’s descriptions of the dreaming experience, this discourse could be a part of a vision. He explains, “[t]hrough the power of dreaming it is possible to be in communication with any of the beings that inhabit these many different worlds” (31).

producers but merely recipients of this condition: “All of this was given to them from the Maker’s hand” (8). The Maker, here, refers not to a patriarchal human-like being but to the earth as original mother. Thus, the scene highlights earth’s creative qualities as the original producer of this spatial narrative. This sense of environmental agency is, perhaps, the greatest difference between this Indigenous speech-filled space and Western theories of geography. Though spatial thinkers have conceptualized space as narrative, Western thinkers tend to conceive narrative as rooted in solely human behavior.²⁰

In *Fort Marion*, this type of environmental agency becomes apparent primarily through sound. Rather than depicting the prisoners’ spatial environment merely in visual terms, Black Horse, a Comanche character in *Fort Marion*, describes space as audible and, thus, elaborates on an understanding of space that is not solely visual but filled with speech. Ah-kes, Black Horse’s daughter, is afraid because she cannot see anything while being on the train. Black Horse tells her to imagine they are sitting in their camp at night and she hears the stories she used to hear before falling asleep. He continues by telling her that though the Maker wanted to place people’s ears “on the back of our heads,” he misplaced them on their sides because people kept moving their heads “to see what [the Maker] was doing” (Glancy *Fort* 7). Because of this misplacement, Black Horse affirms, now they “can only know what happens when it is besides [them]” and not when it is behind them (Glancy *Fort* 7).

In this scene, Black Horse comments on the importance of community and

²⁰ Henri Lefebvre’s *Rhythmanalysis* is an exception. Lefebvre argues that everything operates according to a “rhythm.” Though an analysis of Lefebvre’s notion of rhythm would certainly be insightful, Lefebvre’s focus on the body, which is entrenched in the Western dualism of mind and body, makes an analysis of Glancy’s text with a focus on its Indigenous context problematic.

stories in knowledge production. He suggests that hearing the stories of the surrounding community will give his daughter comfort in uncertain times and an unfamiliar place. In the company of her kin, Ah-kes is not afraid even when she cannot see anything. In reference to the scene mentioned above, in which the riders are participants of and witnesses to a conversation amongst different types of beings in the surrounding landscape on the plains, Black Horse's use of the word "stories" gains a broader meaning than the Western notion of story, which is solely narrated by humans. Perhaps, the storytellers in Black Horse's stories include human kin but in the context of the earlier scene and the ways in which the landscape is described as filled with speech, Black Horse's suggestion to think of surrounding stories surely must also include narratives from non-human participants. Because of these audible stories the text suggests, Ah-kes knows what happens. Knowledge, Black Horse implies, derives from hearing the narrative of the land.

In contrast to Black Horse's audible knowledge, Western philosophy identifies sound as fleeting and discontinuous and, therefore, as an inadequate source of knowledge. Grosz writes, "[u]nlike the activity sight bestows on the seer, hearing is entirely conditional on being exposed to a noise-emitting event... To provide a temporal continuity, hearing alone is not adequate, for it must rely on memory" (98). If one is to understand an Indigenous history, which is dominated by destruction, disruption, and displacement, this notion of visual evidence as providing continuity and, therefore, knowledge is useless. The Native American experience of removal, relocation, and allotment and the concomitant destruction and alteration of the majority of visual relics of Native American life cannot produce visual temporal

continuity. Thus, in addition to oral cultures' general reliance on audible memory, "to provide temporal continuity" Native American historical knowledge inevitably needs to rely on non-visual sources of knowledge (Grosz 98). In fact, this visual annihilation is at the root of *Fort Marion's* main intervention as the speaker seeks to recover the prisoners' voices since we are left with few visible records of their existence.

Fort Marion constitutes a deliberation on how to gain knowledge with a sparse, colonial archive of exclusively visual evidence. When Black Horse tells his daughter a story about the succession of night and day, he identifies sources of knowledge in conversation with his environment:

What did the stars hunt for? Ah-kes asked. Black Horse answered, the sun, of course – they would always find it. Had she ever had two nights together without light between them? Yes, she reminded her father – when we were in the box-that-rides. Yes, he said, but they knew light was outside the rail car. They could hear the light say, I am here. They just couldn't see it (39).

Black Horse's image of the stars chasing the sun presumes an interdependent relationship between day and night. The pursuance of night and day, of stars and sun, alludes to a similar kind of interdependent movement as that of the soldiers on their horses following the buffalo in the speech-filled landscape that I discussed earlier. Black Horse's assurance that the light still exists outside the darkness of the train does not derive from his visual memory of light but from an audible experience of space, as he remains part of the conversation that surrounds him. It is interdependence and the reliance on pursuing interconnection with other beings such as the sun that "provides" the "temporal continuity" that Western thinkers mostly recognize in visual evidence (Grosz 98).

The Colonial Project of Isolation and Individualization

The removal of the Native Americans to Fort Marion and their isolation in the prison challenge the preservation of audible, land-derived knowledge and maintaining an understanding of the surroundings. On the train ride to prison, the speaker describes the darkness and the train noise as utterly unsettling: “At night, the moving darkness unsettled the Indians. The noise rattled them loose from all they knew” (Glancy, *Fort 7*). The image of the prisoners rattling “loose from all they know” is quite striking, as it shows the ways in which the mechanical noise of the train takes over the prisoners’ bodies and shakes them loose as if they were screws and bolts in the trains’ mechanical system (Glancy, *Fort 7*). Indeed, the prisoners are in a way part of the structure that the train represents as the train constitutes a potent image of Westward expansion and American imperialism, for which Native American people were forced to make room. At the same time, the act of loosening demonstrates that they are precisely not part of this technological, imperial power. In this “loose” position, the prisoners function, once more, as the counterpart to the newly founded American subject (Glancy, *Fort 7*). The prisoners are the loose outcasts to American society. In addition to their separation from the rest of society, the train’s bewildering noise and the “moving darkness” have the concomitant effect of detaching the prisoners from their own knowledge (Glancy, *Fort 7*). They do not see where they are going and – because of the train’s commotion – they also cannot hear the sounds of the land. They might not even be able to hear their peers’ stories since the train produces too much noise. In this context, the noise and the unfamiliar darkness detach the characters from

their previous kinship bonds to other beings in their surroundings while at the same time placing them in the position of an outsider to mainstream society.

That this bewildering noise and the subsequent feeling of not belonging are connected to the experience of incarceration becomes even clearer in another scene in which Black Horse struggles to follow his own advice to his daughter and not be afraid of the dark but to remember the productive sound of stories. Black Horse suffers from the noise in the darkness of the prison: “In the night Black Horse heard the moaning of the prisoners and the whimpering of Pe-ah-in, his wife, - the crying of Ah-kes, his daughter. He heard the pleading of others. Black Horse gritted his teeth – this darkness would not get to him” (Glancy, *Fort* 17). When the characters arrive in the prison and are incarcerated in the basement, the speaker also describes this enclosure in audible terms: “How could they sleep? On the prairie sound traveled between the teepees, but it dissipated into the air. In the casement of Fort Marion, where they all slept in one room, the walls held the noise” (Glancy, *Fort* 19). Here, the word “travel” makes clear that not only the buffalo herd, their human followers, and the foldable teepees epitomize the inherently mobile lifestyle on the plains, but sound as the source of knowledge is also intrinsically linked to movement (Glancy, *Fort* 19). And, though Grosz suggests that in Western epistemology, sound is understood to be ephemeral, this passage suggests that sound does not vanish but continues to exist as it “dissipates into the air” (Grosz 98; Glancy, *Fort Marion* 19). Dissipation does not necessarily constitute an entirely destructive event for it means, “to disintegrate and reduce to atoms, dust, smoke, or impalpable form” (“dissipate, v.” *OED Online*). Thus, according to this definition, sound on the prairie does not vanish entirely but it persists

in whisps in the air.

In contrast to the travelling sound on the prairie, the speaker says that in the prison cell “the walls held the noise” (Glancy *Fort* 19). Sound – along with the prisoners – stays captive within the prison’s walls, making knowledge and interlocution among the prisoners and with the environment impossible. The air in the prison becomes condensed with sound. Strikingly, the language in this compressed environment shifts from the previous use of the word “sound” on the prairie to the dense “noise” in the prison (Glancy, *Fort* 19). The rattling clamor of the train in the earlier scene is also described as noise, suggesting that this environment of isolation and suffering impedes the exchange and movement of knowledge-bearing sound and the characters are trapped in the overwhelming and bewildering atmosphere of sheer noise. This means that in the isolation of the prison, the prisoners cannot pass on their knowledge and the experience of suffering to other beings in the environment. At the same time, they are cut off from the environmental conversation surrounding them and the prison. Thus, the prisoners’ knowledge cannot be complete, as it is merely a fragment of what would be exchanged in an open environment. The prison in *Fort Marion* creates isolated pockets of partial knowledge.

The isolation and the concomitant detachment from Native epistemology and Indigenous ways of life in these passages is part of the boarding school policy that Richard Henry Pratt was developing at the time of the Fort Marion imprisonment. His project intended to destroy interdependence and kinship formations – the central structures of Native life – and to “kill the Indian and save the man” (qtd. in Lookingbill 62). By teaching Native people Christianity and a Western work ethic,

Pratt's boarding school program was designed to individualize Native subjects, turning them into industrious American individuals of "his own image" (Lookingbill 62). This notion of paternalism and the need to teach Western ways to Native people was instigated by the 1831 Supreme Court Case *Cherokee Nation v. State of Georgia*, in which Chief Justice John Marshall declared Indian tribes to be "domestic dependent nations" that exist in "a state of pupillage" (30 U.S. at 17). The language of "pupillage" in *Cherokee Nation* is striking for it demonstrates that federal Indian law creates the foundation for Pratt's educational program. By referring to Native Americans as existing in a state of pupillage, Marshall erases Indigenous claims to knowledge and, thus, creates the image of the American Indian as a perpetual student who needs to be instructed in Western epistemology.

Glancy's text foregrounds this policy of individualization through the speaker's deliberations of the plaster casts of the prisoners' faces that Pratt commissioned (See figure 1). Pratt hired sculptor Clark Mills to create the casts in order to preserve "the *vanishing race*" (emphasis in the original, Glancy, *Fort* 43). In fact, it was the "zoologist and assistant secretary at the Smithsonian Institute," Spencer F. Baird, who convinced Pratt that the plaster casts would "'immortalize'" Pratt, who modeled the "mold-making process" before the prisoners were forced to go under the plaster and provide "an extremely interesting contribution to Indianology" (Lookingbill, 125; qtd. in Lookingbill 126). Pratt calls himself "the first victim" when he goes under the plaster, demonstrating the discomfort that the procedure generates (137). The casts were first exhibited at the Smithsonian's Ethnology Department's display on "the races of man" and later "relegated to storage" (Fear-Segal 43;

Lookingbill 128).²¹ There, as historian Jacqueline Fear-Segal explains,

the Fort Marion Indian heads were displayed to the public as they had been cast, severed at the top of the neck and attached to a square base. This style of presentation not only robbed the prisoners' plaster heads (and by implication the individuals they represented) of both power and gravitas, it also gave the chilling impression of decapitated heads, similar to war trophies (45).

The criminalization implicated in this type of display is emphasized in Pratt's autobiography, in which he includes a list addressed at Baird cataloguing the prisoners' tribal affiliations, their names, physical measurements, and the alleged "offenses of the prisoners" (138).



Figure 1: *Photograph, Fort Marion Casts*. Peabody Museum, Harvard, Cambridge, Massachusetts. In *Fort Marion Prisoners and the Trauma of Native Education*. Diane Glancy. University of Nebraska Press, 2014, p. 42.

²¹ The Peabody's masks are copies of the ones at the Smithsonian and were given to the Peabody in 1878 (Steinberg).

The sculptor of the life casts, Clark Mills, is also the creator of President Andrew Jackson's statue on Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C. Jackson is, of course, infamous for his violent treatment of the U.S.' Indigenous peoples and for their forcible removal to Indian Territory. This connection between the Mills' works demonstrates that the isolation, to which the life casts give shape, goes hand in hand with policies of removal and violence. The contrast between the casts' isolation and preservation in the archive at Harvard's Peabody Museum and the statue's central location in front of the White House functions emblematically for the centrality of Indian removal to the legal and national space of the U.S. nation and highlights the prisoners' marginalization from its body politics. Ironically, the casts of the Native prisoners did end up at one of the most elite educational institutions in the United States, as if fulfilling Pratt's original plan of assimilation through education. But, they have become historical records, objects of study removed from the present moment in time and the visible space of the nation.²²

The sculpting of the life casts becomes exemplary for the prisoners' experience of incarceration as a solitary experience that isolates the characters from their relational way of life. Plaster's main usage as a covering material for walls creates a strong connection between the plaster life casts and the prison walls and, thus, highlights the enclosing and isolating qualities of the procedure. The consolidation of

²² Until today, the prisoners' descendants have unsuccessfully attempted to repatriate the masks. Because the masks were made by the Smithsonian and they are not physical remainders of Indigenous subjects, the 1990 Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act does not apply to the life-casts. Special rules apply to the display of the masks; they are not to be moved and kept in the archive and they are to face each other on opposite shelves with the offerings from their descendants; see Steinberg.

the individual's form gained in this process alludes to Pratt's educational policies that aimed at assimilating Native people to the American majority's way of life, a way of life that is centered on the type of individual to which the plaster cast seems to give shape.

In Glancy's text, this isolation, represented by the plaster casts, is depicted as tremendously destructive. The speaker describes the prisoners' experience of going under the plaster as an experience of abject captivity and isolation. One of the characters describes the plaster on his face as the feeling of being "in thickets so overgrown he could never climb out" (Glancy, *Fort* 41). Dry Wood compares it to falling into water and Making Medicine feels like, "he was alone inside himself. Everything he knew was gone" (Glancy, *Fort* 41). All of these descriptions address a strong sense of entrapment but Making Medicine's account in particular emphasizes a feeling of isolation, similar to solitary confinement. His claim that "everything he knew" is now absent highlights that the experience of being in the plaster, of being an individual, alone, and separated from others is an impediment of the type of interdependence that the horse riders on the prairie experience (Glancy, *Fort* 41). The speaker mentions several times that the characters' ears are plugged during the procedure. They are, thus, disconnected from the knowledge-bearing sounds and conversation surrounding them and since they cannot hear the stories around them, "everything" they "knew was gone" (Glancy, *Fort* 41).

In another passage Captain Pratt gives the incarcerated girl, Ah-kes, the skin of a fish the soldiers had caught for fun. The skin looks like a doll "with arms and legs" and Ah-kes ties a string around it and puts it in the water to "fish[...] with her line in

the water. She fished for the rest of who she was... in her water prison” (Glancy, *Fort* 49). Like the above passage in which Making Medicine feels alone within himself, this highlights the idea of confinement, of being separated from essential parts of the self, of incompleteness. This partial self is not the Western individual self that Pratt envisions for the prisoners but a communal self that exists only in kinship bonds. Thus, the text suggests that colonial practices of incarceration do not merely displace people from their communities and their environment but that they create subjects incarcerated within the very notion of the individual self, always trying to “fish” for the rest of themselves, a rest that is founded in an interdependent way of life.

Seeing the life casts in the archives of the Peabody Museum in Harvard is, in fact, the catalyst of the speaker’s research on the prisoners. This research and the speaker’s endeavors at telling her own story through the story of the prisoners constitute a similar attempt at “fishing” for the rest of herself. However, the connection that is desired through this act of fishing does not derive from the visual experience of seeing the prisoners’ plaster casts. The vague description of the prisoners’ faces as “afraid or defiant or passive” does not offer visible insight into their story or what could have been their emotional, internal state (Glancy, *Fort* 43).²³ Again, the text highlights that vision and the spatial form of the plaster cast cannot produce a complete, informative history of the prisoners’ experience even though Pratt envisioned them as a way to preserve a “race” that will soon have “vanish[ed]” (Glancy, *Fort* 43). Instead, the casts produce a physical feeling in the speaker’s body: “I felt their voices in my throat. It was more like a lump in my throat. I felt their

²³ Though *Fort Marion*’s speaker does not see a clear facial expression, it is a “vital [facial] expression” that Baird sought to obtain through the making of the life casts (qtd. in Pratt 137).

stories wanting to be told. I felt their words wanting out” (Glancy, *Fort* 43). The individual contours of the plaster casts confine the prisoners’ words – they need to get out. The speaker, hence, puts emphasis on the ways in which Native education and its focus on individual form enclose and cover up Indigenous histories. It is sound – the speaker’s voice – that can free the prisoners’ entrapped stories and provide insight into the seemingly vanished accounts of an Indigenous past. Thus, the speaker describes an interdependent connection between the prisoners and herself, a connection that is primarily reliant on speech.

On a textual level, *Fort Marion* provides a similarly conversational space as the speech-filled landscape in which the characters ride their horses. The speaker asserts that her writing is a record of the prisoners’ gathered voices and, thus, she replicates the ongoing conversations in the speech-filled land of the prairie. Her travels across the country mimic the horse riders’ pursuing movement in search of the buffalo as she is following the prisoners’ movement in the 1870s.²⁴ She talks about “those earlier voices coming and going, convening from the past”, implying that she is mostly a witness to their conversations with little agency over the course of the narrative (Glancy, *Fort* 89). Her use of words like “record” and “reportage” to describe her writing emphasizes that the text is a piece of factual reporting rather than a fictional piece of writing (Glancy, *Fort* 88).²⁵ Like the characters on the prairie, she is witness to a conversation in which she participates but over which she has limited agency as

²⁴ In an interview with Russel Bogue, Glancy explains how she pursues speech-filled space in her own research: “When I research the Cherokee Trail of Tears, or Sacajawea, or Kateri Tekakwitha, I travel to where their history took place. The land carries their memories and stories. I couldn’t hear their voices if I didn’t know that. Native heritage is an awareness of the past, of the closeness of the ancestors, and whatever is spirit.”

²⁵ According to a Western reading, “reportage” mostly refers to a written record of observations.

she functions mostly as the person recording the story.

The notion that the speaker speaks with the voice of the prisoners is omnipresent in the text. In fact, she explains elsewhere that in oral tradition other voices always precede a person's voice: "I discovered, of course, that I was hearing their voices from oral tradition... To speak with one's voice was to let others speak first" (Glancy, *Fort* 88-89). She elaborates on this idea of letting others speak first and aligns the others' voices with her own: "Their voice alone was my voice alone, and together we were alone in a single narrative of multiple voices" (Glancy, *Fort* 89). Here, she collapses the separation between "their" voices and her own voice (Glancy, *Fort* 89). Strangely, it is the separation and isolation created by settler colonialism – the sense of being "alone" – that creates the connection between the voices in this passage (Glancy, *Fort* 89). It is this shared experience of isolation that generates an innate connection between herself and the prisoners, and it is because of this connection that her voice cannot be alone. She realizes this when she tries to write about her experience with formal education and has to take into account the experience of others before her: "To write about my education was to begin speaking of others – those earlier voices coming and going, convening from the past... How to operate as an individual in a tradition that centers on community was the gap in one's thinking that had to be covered" (Glancy, *Fort* 88-89). The separation implied in the repeated use of the word "alone" is addressed in more concrete terms with the imposition of an individual self at the end of the passage (Glancy, *Fort* 89). This notion of the individual creates a radical incongruity with the communal and

interdependent worldview of Indigenous people.²⁶ The comparison between the prisoners' incarceration and isolation and the speaker's experience with Native education foregrounds a sort of genealogy of isolation of Indigenous people in the U.S. school system. Because of this structural isolation, her voice and the prisoners' voices belong together.

Though in *Fort Marion* writing functions as a tool for surpassing this isolation, the speaker alludes to the ways in which writing has isolating aspects deriving from the writer's isolation and Western views on authorship as individualistic. Glancy writes, "[i]t took the invention of the self-absorption of writing to put these pieces into place" (Glancy, *Fort* 70). On the one hand, the speaker's reference to the self in "self-absorption" refers to an Indigenous communal self (Glancy, *Fort* 70). It is a preoccupation with this communal self, a community that consists of the various types of beings in natural democracy. According to this reading, the speaker describes this absorption with the community as a necessary part of the work of writing. On the other hand, "self-absorption" refers to its Western meaning, in which the individual writer concentrates on her own self (Glancy, *Fort* 70). According to this meaning of self-absorption, writing necessitates the isolation of the writer and a certain engagement with her individual self. Michel Foucault investigates this idea of the isolated writer in his well-known essay "What is an Author?". He argues that the notion of and interest in the author stem from discourses on property that were translated into intellectual property and the author's "individualization" or rather projections of certain characteristics onto an individual author (115). Interestingly, this

²⁶ For a detailed account on Western individualism and Indigenous kinship structures see Cheyfitz "Balancing."

coupling of property and individualism goes back to the emergence of property and its origin in landownership, which gave rights to white male individuals.²⁷ This link between the notion of space as ownable by certain individuals and a notion of writing as ownable (by certain individuals) is a Western discursive relationship that Glancy revises in *Fort Marion*.²⁸

The speaker continues that writing with multiple voices helps her bring to the surface a world that has been made invisible: “In passing through the transference, I found the nearly invisible scratches on the casement wall at Fort Marion, and thereby inferences could be made of the invisible world from which they came” (Glancy, *Fort* 70). Here, the word “transference” brings to mind the psychoanalytical method of transferring past relationship patterns to the persona of an analyst and, consequently, to uncover and ultimately heal the individual’s repressed trauma (Glancy, *Fort* 70). This allusion to trauma and psychoanalysis is also present in the book’s title *The Fort Marion Prisoners and the Trauma of Native Education*. However, it is difficult to apply psychoanalysis to an Indigenous context, in which the self is not individualized but communal. Psychoanalysis’ focus on the individual and the nuclear family is incompatible with Native American kinship structures, but this orientation has been at the center of the assimilative legal policies such as the Dawes Act and the establishment of American Indian boarding schools. The trauma that Glancy’s text exposes is the collective trauma of genocide that is generated in large parts by the violent experience of being forced into the isolation of the individual and, thus, of

²⁷ See Cheyfitz *The Poetics of Imperialism*.

²⁸ Though Roland Barthes has announced the infamous “death of the author,” Glancy’s speaker puts emphasis on the existence of a writing “self,” a self whom Barthes eradicates from the text.

being separated from kinship relations. Contrarily, according to psychoanalysis relationships are the cause for the individual's trauma. The conveyance of traumatic memories onto another person and the repetition of trauma is meant to heal and restore the individual in psychoanalytic therapy.²⁹

In an Indigenous context, however, psychoanalytic transference cannot be the instrument for healing trauma since the creation of the individual *is* at the very core of the trauma itself.³⁰ Glancy's text suggests a method for restoration that does not focus on the individual and that, instead, reestablishes interdependent relationships that have been disconnected by U.S. settler colonial policies of enclosure and isolation. In this way, the speaker's use of the word transference references the term's more general meaning: "conveyance from one place, person, or thing to another" ("transference, n. *OED Online*). This type of transference is evident in the speaker's travels across the country to follow the movement of the prisoners. This movement of pursuance is necessary because of a history of removal, displacement, and isolation. In order to generate interdependent relationships, the speaker has to move from one dislocated and isolated fragment of the story to another.

Moreover, her movement echoes the pursuing movement of the soldiers on the prairie and constitutes a means of participating in the land-based conversation that produces knowledge. The text reiterates this movement by alternating between the speaker's voice to prisoners' voices, to their drawings, to outside texts, and

²⁹ See Freud.

³⁰ Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* also explores this collective trauma of individualism. The elder Betonie helps Tayo in a ceremony to transform himself from a Western "I" back to an Indigenous "we." For a detailed reading of the differences between Western notion of the individual and the collectivity of Native cultures, see Cheyfitz "Balancing."

photographs. At some moments in the text, it is entirely unclear who is speaking. The speaker even gets confused about whether she is hearing her own voice or the voice of someone else: “Was it my voice? Or the prisoners?” (Glancy, *Fort* 113).³¹ Thus, in contrast to psychoanalytic conceptions of trauma and Foucault’s theories of the author, Glancy blurs the boundaries of the individual speaker and re-establishes broken connections within a communal voice.

Glancy’s Speech-Filled Writing

This method of establishing interdependent relationships by alternating and blending voices comes into clear relief in the text’s movement between personal pronouns. In one passage, the speaker describes the prisoners copying their teachers’ writing and writes, “[t]hey followed *her* [the teacher’s] marks on *our* slate boards with *their* marks” (emphasis added, Glancy, *Fort* 25-26). The change from “they” to “her” to “their” emphasizes a type of interdependence as the students copy the teacher’s words (Glancy, *Fort* 25-26). The interjection of “our” in the middle of the sentence includes the speaker, implying that the speaker – like the incarcerated students – copies the teachers’ letters onto her slate board (Glancy, *Fort* 25-26). In one of the earlier chapters, the speaker, in a similarly interjectory way, declares the intervention of the book to be founded on precisely this alternation of personal pronouns: “I’m interested in different versions of the same story – the telling and retelling of the story

³¹ Interestingly, in an interview with Rachel Luckenbill, Glancy asserts that she prefers to write creative non-fiction, a genre that, perhaps, most accurately describes *Fort Marion*, for allowing her to speak with her own voice. “I think I like creative nonfiction because it is my own voice. I hadn’t thought about that. In all the other genres, it’s other voices that come in and claim ownership, you know, and I’m sort of their servant. I always served these other voices. But in creative non-fiction, you get to hog it all. It’s my voice, although I go back and forth between all the genres” (112).

in different ways – moving from third person to first and back” (Glancy, *Fort* 14). Here, the speaker aligns her own story in first person to that of the prisoners, as a version of the same story. Thus, the slate board in the earlier mentioned passage assumes more significance than being a simple instrument for teaching literacy. The text suggests that the prisoners and the speaker write and rewrite the same story, even the same words (on the same slate board). Thus, Glancy theorizes writing as the type of interdependent process like oral tradition, in which multiple actors are involved in telling a single story. Her written text, like the prisoners’ slate boards, perpetually directs the reader to other voices, just like the other voices direct the reader to her voice. In this way, the speaker understands literary and historical writing in the same way as spatial narratives. She interprets it in interdependent ways, as pointing to previous movements, places, and events. Glancy’s writing is, hence, indexical of previous stories.

The speaker goes even further with this interdependent interpretation of writing and suggests, “writing was movement over the land” (Glancy, *Fort* 26). In contrast to Western structuralist views that portray texts as fixed, unmovable structure, as the hand moves over the paper or the chalkboard, Glancy’s text foregrounds the creation of a text as inherently mobile.³² Thus, she interprets writing in the same way that she reads spatial structure and movement: As directing toward previous

³² At times Glancy’s text almost seems to allude to deconstructionist views on writing as mobile, anti-totalitarian, non-linear, and referential. As Arnold Krupat has shown Derrida’s attempts at deconstructing the “privileged place of man,” does, indeed, bring Western theory closer to Native American understandings of the world (“Native American Literature” 164). Moreover, in “Balancing” Cheyfitz demonstrates that Native American epistemologies erases the need to deconstruct the nature/culture divide. However, in its own sort of universalist mode deconstructionist theory is not interested in questions of cultural difference and the ways in which language is used differently in non-Western cultures.

movement. Moreover, she sees the foundation for this text in speech and sound: “The prisoners learned to speak their language. They learned to write. They heard the squeak of the chalk like the train on its track coming into the station at St. Augustine. Writing was slow as a train leaving the station to start on its track again” (Glancy, *Fort* 26). By beginning her description of attaining literacy with “learning to speak their language,” the speaker suggests an interdependent understanding of writing as grounded in the social and relational act of speech and conversation (Glancy, *Fort* 26). Though the teacher’s writing on the board engages mostly vision, she describes the movement of writing in terms of sound. The squeaking noise of the chalk creates the dominant sound image, and recalls the screeching, mechanical noise of the moving train, illustrating the almost violent discomfort involved in attaining literacy.

Here, Glancy creates a parallel relationship between the noise in the prison cell in opposition to the productive sound of a shared conversation in the open landscape and the noise of writing in contrast to the knowledge-producing sound of conversation. Instead of producing sound that travels and pursues others and, thus, helps generate interdependent knowledge amongst a community of beings, writing produces an uncomfortable, piercing noise. The comparison of this squeak to the train’s noise brings to mind the commotion of the train that “loosens” the prisoners “from all they know” and, thus, demonstrates that writing, like incarceration and removal, is an isolating experience that separates the Native person from their kin and makes audible

knowledge unattainable (*Fort Marion* 7).³³ Here, the text suggests that the students become further isolated as they cannot participate in the interdependent exchange of knowledge.³⁴

The comparison to the moving train on its track recalls a similar type of movement as that of the earlier passage, when the speaker wondered about the tracks' migration path. It alludes to the seeming lack of purpose of the "wandering train tracks," which allow the train to move between origin and destination, and challenges a structuralist notion of the written word's linearity, a linearity represented in a book's ruling, and its beginning and end. She concludes this passage by stating, "[s]ometimes writing was making letters that backtracked on themselves (*Glancy, Fort* 26)." The notion of backtracking refers to a backward movement to an origin by taking the same, linear route that one has already taken. The speaker claims that this route can be self-referential, meaning that it does not lead to new findings. She applies this type of backward movement to writing and in the light of the book's non-linear project of fictional writing as a recovery of historic voices.

Glancy thematizes this movement of backtracking in more detail in the chapter, in which the above passage appears. Indeed, the chapter is entitled "Backtrack" and alludes to the death of one of the prisoners called Gray Beard, referenced in the chapter's subtitle – May 21, 1875, Northern Florida – the day of his

³³ Glancy's speaker underscores the isolating quality of the novel by saying "[a] book is solitary confinement" (53). This notion of the enclosing qualities of the book refer to Walter Benjamin's comments on the isolation stemming from the rise of the novel and its dependence on writing and the material form of the book.

³⁴ This sense of isolation can also be traced to the very nature of the relationship between writer and reader. According to Ricoeur, the act of reading mimics a dialogue but it lacks a possibility of response between the two sides. He writes, "[t]he reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading... It [the text] thereby replaces the relation of dialogue, which directly connects the voice of one to the hearing of the other" (107).

murder. On this day, Gray Beard jumps out of the train window and disappears in the darkness. The train “backtracked” to the location where Gray Beard had escaped but the guards cannot see the fugitive prisoner in the darkness. The train’s fixed movement on the tracks does not lead to the discovery of the missing subject. In fact, the train’s backward movement, combined with vision as the sense delivering knowledge, merely underscore what is already known: Gray Beard is missing.

Backtracking, hence, is not necessarily a movement to an origin that may deliver knowledge – back to Gray Beard. As the train continues to move forward, a search patrol that stayed behind ends up finding him. They instantly kill the escapee, a murder that is only knowable to those remaining on the train through the sound of gunshots (Lookingbill 54; *Fort Marion* 24). Again, there is a strong emphasis on sound, not vision, as delivering knowledge about Gray Beard’s death, demonstrating that vision again fails to deliver complete knowledge of events and places. The scene suggests that an American Indian historiography opens up a notion of bearing witness as a source of evidence that is not bound to vision but to sound. This Indigenous historiography takes seriously the perspective of a witness who conveys her experience on the basis of heard evidence.

The chapter ends with the date November 5, 2011, on which the speaker visits what seems to be the grave of some of the prisoners. She notes that the gravestone is engraved with the words “6 Unknown Indians” (Glancy, *Fort* 29). This unknown tomb brings to mind Benedict Anderson’s well-known deliberations on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. According to Anderson, the soldier’s anonymity is important so the soldier can function as a representative for any other soldier who has given her life for

the creation of the imagined community that is the nation. Thus, the gravestone of the anonymous soldier is a representative site that creates an imagined origin and a heroic past. This reading brings up questions in an American Indian context, for, though the gravestone marks a site of mourning, it does not constitute a site of origins or new beginnings for American Indians. It does, however, represent the origins and new beginnings for the imagined community of the U.S. American nation. The gravestone's location on the St. Augustine National Cemetery puts immediate emphasis on this U.S. American national context. Again, the traces for the vanishment of American Indians as an origin story for the U.S. American nation can be found in federal Indian law. The 1823 Supreme Court Case *Johnson v. McIntosh*, which provided legal justification for settler colonial land grabbing, describes the ways in which the death of the Indian became part of the origin story in the American national conscious:

As the white population advanced, that of the Indians necessarily receded. The country in the immediate neighborhood of agriculturists became unfit for them. The game fled into thicker and more unbroken forests, and the Indians followed. The soil to which the Crown originally claimed title, being no longer occupied by its ancient inhabitants, was parceled out according to the will of the sovereign power and taken possession of by persons who claimed immediately from the Crown or mediately through its grantees or deputies (21 U.S. at 590-91).

According to Chief Justice Marshall's logic, the advancement of the "white population" to the Western coastline of the North American continent inevitably coincides with the erasure of the Indigenous population (21 U.S. at 590). The image of the Indian receding into the forests euphemistically represents genocide as the ultimate outcome of colonization. Notably, according to Marshall it is not the white man's

aggression that drives the Native populations away; it is their pursuance of “the game” that leads them into “the thicker ... forests” and because of which they disappear (21 U.S. at 590). Marshall, hence, indicates that the disappearance of Native people is not induced by the settlers; it is the Native people’s nomadic life – the movement of pursuance that Glancy describes in *Fort Marion* – that causes their disappearance. Marshall describes the disappearance of Indigenous people as a necessary part of civilization’s advancement since the only, impossible alternative of this conquest would have been “to leave the country a wilderness” (21 U.S. at 590). The gravestone in the St. Augustine National Cemetery functions as a reminder of this original notion of erasure in the process of nation-building. Like the heroic soldier in the nation’s tomb the unknown Indians function, perhaps, in a less heroic but certainly noble way as a “necessary” sacrifice for the nation.

However, the speaker in Glancy’s text refuses to present the tomb of the unknown Indigenous soldiers as a representative site for the necessary death of any Indian in the past and as an originary source from which a current mode of American national identification can be drawn.³⁵ Glancy delivers the names of the ostensibly unknown Indians, even before the reader arrives at the passage of the cemetery. She, thus, demonstrates that the writing on the gravestone is not representative of *any* vanished Indian and that their death does not constitute a U.S. American origin story. She also lists the cause of each prisoner’s death – ranging from murder, to suicide, to tuberculosis. Thus, she offers an alternative reading to the story of the vanishing Indian who recedes into the forests in the face of Western progress, demonstrating that

³⁵ Sharon Patricia Holland insightfully describes the ways in which the U.S. national conscious understands itself in contrast to dead marginalized subjects.

the purported Western progress generated genocide. She demonstrates that the gravestone references an incorrect number of deaths at Fort Marion. Without providing absolute certainty over the amount of bodies in the grave the speaker lists nine deaths and later asserts, “twelve left their bodies there” (Glancy, *Fort* 29). Hence, the speaker demonstrates that the grave stone functions as a marker of falsified representation, a marker that alludes to an incorrect number of bodies and does not give credit to the known names of the entombed prisoners.

The opposition between the inaccurate inscription of the gravestone and the story that Glancy uncovers by the end of the chapter “Backtrack” pose the question whether historiographical and spatial writing, like the backtracking prison guards, can provide accurate information about an Indigenous history that subverts the master narrative of the U.S. American nation. Though the gravestone gives the appearance of placing an historical marker for the existence of the prisoners, of being a representative monument of the place where “6 Unknown Indians” passed away, it actually reaffirms the national historical narrative that presents Indigenous history as unknowable, vanished, and ultimately forgotten (Glancy, *Fort* 29). Without reverting to the movement of backtracking or searching for a seemingly lost origin, Glancy’s memoir makes these histories knowable.

The speaker suggests an understanding of writing that recovers these seemingly unknowable pasts by incorporating a worldview that understands the world as audible and as interdependent with the movement of others.³⁶ She asserts that the

³⁶ This notion of speech-filled writing adds to Kimberly Blaeser’s accounts on a Native American literary aesthetics and the ways in which Indigenous women writers articulate a Native American literary theory according to Indigenous realities.

prisoners would have understood writing as such in similarly interdependent ways as they read the physical marks of the train tracks, that is to say as derived from previous movements by various beings. She writes, “I think the prisoners would have seen the letters of the alphabet in terms of motion during their English lessons. The letters would have seemed like the footprints of shorebirds that ran along the surf and disappeared along the edge of incoming waves. The waves would have run across the beach and erased the prints of the birds’ feet” (Glancy, *Fort* 111). Glancy’s speaker interprets the written letters on the board as a type of trace of the birds’ movement. In an earlier scene, the speaker describes writing in similar terms of natural movement, “[t]hey watched the teacher make marks on the chalk board. They followed her marks on our slate boards with their marks. See – this is the way the rain makes a rivulet in the dust. This is the way the clouds curl in the sky” (Glancy, *Fort* 25-6).

In both scenes, the speaker comments on the spatial and mobile aspect of writing and the process of literacy. But, instead of understanding the visible words in representative ways, as standing in for something else and thus in the structural way in which writing is typically theorized in Western theories, the speaker interprets them as stemming from interdependent natural movements. The comparison of writing to traces in the landscape caused by natural triggers highlights a notion of writing that is not bound to the individual agency of the writer. Instead, the comparison between rain creating rivulets and clouds curling in the sky alludes to the interdependence of multiple elements, which are also prominent in the interplay of birds, sand, and water in the earlier scene. The movement that the speaker describes is a chain of movements: The rain creates the rivulet, which, when it is dried by the sun, remains visible as a

path in the dust until it finally vanishes. The speaker suggests that we can understand the letter on the slate board as similarly defined by interdependent elements as the rivulets in the sand. In fact, the reference to the students watching the teacher make marks and the consequential following of her movement implies that there is an interdependent relationship between the students' marks and the previous event. One could imagine this interdependent chain even further as the teacher's writing on the board prompts the student's hand to write on their board, eventually followed by a hand that wipes away the writing, spreading a layer of chalk across the board and the surrounding area. Thus, the speaker asks her readers to understand the text not in strictly visual ways – as visual image and as representative of the signified – but rather as interdependent with movements, events, and with the natural environment. In this way, the written text can be understood in similar ways as the sound that dissipates in the air on the prairie. *Fort Marion* proposes an understanding of writing as interdependent movement that is different from Western notions of writing as a linear chain of visual signifiers on the board or paper or as infinitely deferred meaning.

If we begin to think about Indigenous writing in this interdependent way, the question “who is the author” or even “who is an Indian” becomes irrelevant in many ways. This question concerns Glancy herself: Critics often call her “mixed-blood” due to her “mixed” Cherokee and German American heritage and criticize her for self-identifying as a Cherokee even though she is not an enrolled member of the tribe.³⁷

She is not listed as an enrolled member of the Cherokee because Glancy's great-

³⁷ Cheyfitz critiques the identificatory term “mixed-blood” that often arises in the debate over the authenticity of American Indian authors and literature. Cheyfitz argues that the term is implicated in a colonial history conflating the cultural logic of tribal membership with the bio-logics of blood and race, a conflation that first appeared in *U.S. v. Rogers*. See *Columbia Guide*.

grandfather - after having killed a white man - fled Indian Territory before the Civil War and was not present on Reservation land after the Dawes Act when tribal members were registered. Her non-enrollment in the tribe is, thus, not more or less representative of her personal affiliations or cultural background as any enrolled member, but it is rather a result of movement and dislocation at a particular moment in history. If we think about Glancy's writing in terms of this interdependence, the question of the author's identity becomes less interesting or even revealing. Rather than representing the Native American community as a whole or a tribe, the author, like a text considered to be Indigenous literature, merely helps direct us to other beings and their stories, and ultimately to the land, but not to the individual author.

At the end of the book the speaker links this interdependent notion of writing and learning on the chalkboard to her theory of space. She shares a short anecdote, in which she perceives her surroundings in terms of a previous event and in terms of writing: "Once, in a café in the Ozarks, I was reading a large chalk board with the day's menu. After I turned in my order, in a dim corner, I could see an after-image of the words I had read on the chalk board" (Glancy, *Fort* 117). This scene elaborates on the image of the students copying the teacher's words from the chalk board to show that not only is the single act of writing Native texts influenced by previous events and voices but also the spatial environment is implicated with previous acts of writing and speech that can come to the surface. Hence, the speaker perceives the world as a type of slate on which writing may occur. She calls this type of "after-image" an "after-vision," a type of apparition that alludes to the visionary episteme that Irwin describes as a common topology amongst Indigenous communities on the Great Plains (Glancy,

Fort 117).³⁸ Earlier in the book the speaker explains, “[s]omehow there was a residue of voices. A visage of the story... It was the kind of *voices* I picked up as *overlay* when I traveled. I think it was where I began to recognize the dislocation at the heart of education, especially Native education” (emphasis in the original, Glancy, *Fort* 9). The word “overlay” connects Native epistemologies and particularly the visionary topology of Great Plains Indians with geographical methodologies (Glancy, *Fort* 9). The cartographic overlay technique typically entails placing multiple maps of the same territory on top of one another; each map carries thematic information about different time periods. Looking at the visible intersections of these amalgamated maps helps extract new information about a development over time.³⁹ The speaker, thus, depicts a notion of space that is layered and of which each layer can provide more information about the current moment. This layered world also brings to mind Great Plains visionary topology and its multiple horizontally layered worlds. According to Great Plains epistemology, the dreamer encounters and communicates with powerful beings from other worlds – from other layers – in a state of movement and isolation from the community. The speaker in Glancy’s *Fort Marion* adopts this role of the dreamer

³⁸ This notion of writing and space as “vision” is not bound to the visual sensation. Visions, as Irwin explains, are a communicative experience of interaction with spirit beings. Glancy mentions another example of this type of “vision” in an interview with Rachel Luckenbill when the sound of piano music coincides with the sound of the train that the prisoners were on. She calls this way of making connections between seemingly unrelated moments and places a “spirit-led pulling” and, thus, links it to the ways in which the dreamer encounters spirits from other worlds. She explains, “[a]n example, I was working on a narrative, *Fort Marion Prisoners and the Trauma of Native Education*. It was about the seventy-two Plains warrior Indians on the way to Fort Marion in Saint Augustine, Florida. They were on the train for quite a ways. That’s when I was teaching at Kenyon, and there was an experimental Cuban pianist that came one night. He opened up the piano, and he was plunking, you know, he was playing the piano in a different way, inside out. I was just listening to the rhythm of that, and the next morning I woke up, and there were the Fort Marion prisoners on the train with the click clack of the train going over the tracks, and that whole passage was there because that night before I had heard something so unrelated to the story” (122).

³⁹ See Kraak.

when she travels across the North American continent and communicates with the prisoners' voices, who reside in these overlaid layers.

The word "residue" implies that the voices are a type of waste product left over after a process of dissolution (Glancy, *Fort 9*). On the one hand, one could read these voices according to the ways in which mainstream (written) historiography would read them: As excess material of oral cultures that is seemingly superfluous, as residual material from the history of genocide. On the other hand, it harks back to the ways in which Black Horse explains how sound on the prairie dissipates into the air. According to this understanding of sound and story, the prisoners' voices are preserved in the landscape in fragmented ways – as residue that create a kind of "visage" (Glancy, *Fort 9*). "Visage" brings to mind the prisoners' faces, which Pratt attempts to preserve through the plaster casts (Glancy, *Fort 9*). The unification of the prisoners' faces and voices into one single visage may seem to have a similar effect as Pratt's attempt at preserving the vanishing race – it appears to essentialize diverse experiences into one unified experience, especially since the chapter's beginning draws attention to the inmates' diversity in contrast to the soldiers' uniformity.

However, the location of the passage within the chapter that describes the prisoners' conversation with the land when they ride on their horses across the prairie points to a different reading. The speaker highlights a similar notion of speech-filled land by representing the voices as "a visage;" the image of the face foregrounds a personal interaction, as in conversation (Glancy, *Fort 9*). It personalizes and gives shape to the seemingly vanished stories of the prisoners and turns them into an interlocutor for the speaker. Moreover, a more obscure definition of the word "visage"

as “the face or the surface of the earth” points to more than an anthropocentric reading of the prisoners’ stories and includes the natural environment as the ultimate interlocutor (“visage, n.” *OED Online*).

If one connects these residual fragments in this landscape, the landscape uncovers a similar spatial conversation as the horse riders’ experience on the Plains. As the speaker suggests, *Fort Marion* recovers space that has been hidden from sight, or the speaker seeks, as she says, to disclose an “interior landscape of tribal voices and events that come over the lanes of traffic as I drive the highways and back roads on various journeys. As I re-drive their space” (Glancy, *Fort* 60). The reference to the interior landscape exposed in this journey alludes again to the overlay implicit in the cosmology of American Indians on the Great Plains. The speaker gathers her narrative by moving through the countryside: “I was using *interlocation* the way I used interstates to cross the country” (emphasis in the original, Glancy, *Fort* 60). The word play mixing interlocation with geographic location suggests the interdependence of conversation and space. The speaker’s journey, her state of existing *inter*, between places and times opens up imaginary knowledge about the prisoners’ experience. Here, *inter* may also refer to an existence between different realms of the world and, thus, an existence that is shaped by the interaction and conversation with powerful beings from other worlds. Though the written literary text is so strongly shaped by Western notions of isolation and individualism, the speaker advocates for literary writing’s ability to help imagine this type of existence in-between different realities. Ultimately, it is through literature that *Fort Marion’s* speaker overcomes the binary opposition of belonging and not belonging that colonial spatial narratives impose on

her. She writes, “[i]n my travels for this book, my *offsetness* met the *offsetness* of those prisoners who had lost their way of life, and in that, I found a placement, a sense of belonging” (emphasis in the original, Glancy, *Fort* 117). By overlaying different voices the speaker finds meeting points – points of connection – that help overcome the isolation of her own and the prisoners’ voices.

Through this technique of overlay, *Fort Marion* constitutes a piece of speech-filled writing, which does not necessarily pose a counter narrative but an additional narrative to America’s national spatial and historical narrative. She describes this dominant narrative by pointing to a similar image as the image of the visage of voices: “I want to *set right* a small part of America’s history by recognizing the stains on America’s self-appointed clean self-image” (Glancy, *Fort* 47). Here, “self-image” represents America as an individualized, homogenized face (Glancy, *Fort* 47). It is this enclosed image of an individualized American self, an image that in certain ways embodies the Native experience of marginalization, isolation, and incarceration and that is challenged by *Fort Marion*’s mobile speech-filled text. By imagining America as an overlay of these facial images on top of one another, the speaker imagines a spatial and historical narrative that incorporates multiple personas and multiple voices that critique the homogenous “self-appointed” narrative of the nation (Glancy, *Fort* 47). She suggests that one cannot learn about the history of Native education and imprisonment in specific, fixed places such as the gravestone in the St. Augustine national cemetery, at Fort Marion, or even at the archives of Harvard’s Peabody Museum. Instead, the speaker suggests that one can understand this history only in terms of Native epistemology – “the calculations of the Indian” (Glancy, *Fort* 117) –

by traveling and moving across space and, thus, by pursuing and connecting the interdependent fragments that have been disjointed and dispersed by settler colonial policies of imprisonment and removal. Fort Marion demonstrates how speech-filled writing constitutes a way to pursue, connect, and understand the multiple fragmented parts of an Indigenous history of removal and imprisonment.

CHAPTER TWO

INDIANS IN CUSTODY: TRACING THE GUARDIAN'S GAZE IN LINDA LEGARDE GROVER'S *THE DANCE BOOTS*

In the 1831 Supreme Court Case *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* Chief Justice Marshall defines the paternalistic relationship of Indigenous tribes to the United States as “resemble[ing] that of a ward to his guardian” (30 U.S. at 17). This self-proclaimed role of the “guardian” – a figure that embodies “America’s self-appointed ... self-image” to which Glancy’s speaker refers in *Fort Marion* – suggests an intimate relationship of care and protection between a paternal federal government directed by the United States’ “president as [the] great father,” and the “domestic dependent nations” that Marshall assigns to the tribes in the same case (Glancy, *Fort* 47; 30 U.S. at 17). Supreme Court Justice Samuel Freeman Miller expands upon this notion of intimate tribal dependency on the U.S. guardian in the 1886 case *United States v. Kagama*. Here, Miller asserts, “[t]hey [the tribes] are communities dependent on the United States. Dependent largely for their daily food. Dependent for their political rights. ... From their very weakness and helplessness ... there arises the duty of protection” (118 U.S. at 383-84). Miller describes the tribes as vulnerable and reliant on their governmental father for their very sustenance. The intimacy and paternalism implicated in both cases adopts a patriarchal, nuclear family model and projects it onto

the Native tribes.¹

Applying this construct of intimacy between the paternal guardian and the “helpless[...]” ward to an American Indian family space is, of course, a (mis)translation of U.S. Indigenous epistemologies, in which kin-based relationality and interdependence tend to structure the ways of belonging, into a nuclear model headed and dominated by a male patriarch (118 U.S. at 384).² These kin-based structures are, as Cheyfitz and Cajete demonstrate, not based on a worldview that understands social relations in terms of hierarchies and domination but rather in terms of equality and interdependence.³ Thus, translating Indigenous family structures into a structure of dependency rather than interdependence radically shifts conceptions of Native American autonomy. This type of translation attempts to incorporate the paternalism that helps define the “sovereignty doctrine” and that is “rooted in notions of dominion” into Indigenous understandings of autonomy and, as Mohawk scholar and activist Taiaiake Alfred notes, runs the risk of erasing Native American plurality

¹ Rifkin reads the incorporated status of Native nations in terms of Agamben’s biopolitics of bare life and argues that the reference to sovereignty always keeps Native nations in state of exception and peculiarity. Rifkin defines the status of Native nations as one stemming from the geopolitics stemming from previous occupancy and, thus, not mere biopolitics. He calls this status “bare habitance”: Differing political groups whose competing assertions are displaced in the biopolitical project to define the territoriality of the colonizing, sovereign nation (94). Moreover, Beth Piatote investigates the ways in which federal Indian law creates the paradoxical category of “foreign domesticity” by which American Indian nations exist within two national domestic spheres (4). Piatote looks specifically at the Indigenous home as a site of resistance against U.S. colonization.

² This mistranslation is also evident in the contemporary political structure of Native tribes. The tribe is a colonial imposition that derives from the colonizer’s translation of clan and kinship structures into hierarchically organized structures headed by a male patriarch.

³ See Cheyfitz. “Balancing.”

and self-determination (33).⁴

In this chapter I demonstrate how Grover's work disentangles Indigenous epistemologies of kinship formation, belonging, and autonomy from ideologies of domination and surveillance that underpin the notion of guardianship. Grover's texts suggest a notion of belonging and autonomy that is free from the type of paternalism now intrinsic to the very definitions of Indigenous sovereignty. I build upon literary scholar Beth Piatote's outstanding work on the Indigenous home as a foundation for understanding the ways in which the federal government has colonized American Indian families and homes in its attempt at defining Indigenous subjectivity and nationhood in terms of "foreign domesticities" (Piatote 4). I ask: How do Grover's short stories define the home, the family, and American Indian notions of belonging after the history of the separation of Indigenous families, the incarceration in boarding schools, and of the forceful imposition of U.S. guardianship over Indigenous

⁴ Alfred and Reyes and Kaufman are, perhaps, the most radical amongst sovereignty scholars, for they denounce the idea of sovereignty in its entirety. Alfred deems it "inappropriate as a political objective for Indigenous people" ("Sovereignty" 38). Rifkin's analysis of Native sovereignty through the lens of federal Indian law produces a similarly hopeless view; he states that assertions of tribal sovereignty reinforce the Native nation's status as different or exceptional and, hence, they reaffirm the "overriding sovereignty" of the federal government. See "Indigenizing Agamben." A significant amount of scholarship has looked more closely at the ways in which the settler state's acts of recognition of Indigenous sovereignty limits possibilities of asserting Native sovereignty in substantial ways. See Barker; Coulthard. Audra Simpson refutes a conception of sovereignty that derives from settler state's definitions. She argues for the notion of "refusal" and a reading of the settler colonial project not as a totalizing but rather as a failed project (7-8). A nationalist stream in American Indian literary studies argues for a nationalistic, separatist approach to Native literatures based on the inherent sovereignty of tribal nations. This critical movement asks literary scholars to critique American Indian works on the grounds of Indigenous thought. The most notable work in this line of thought is the collaborative piece *American Indian Literary Nationalism* by Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior who respond to Elvira Pulitano's and what they critique as a Eurocentric approach to Native literatures. Joanne Barker's edited anthology *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies* marks the most recent collaborative scholarship on the ways in which sexuality and gender have been instrumentalized to produce and reproduce colonial space and the settler state's sovereignty. The volume, Barker argues, is "predicated on *the polity of the Indigenous* – the unique governance, territory, and culture of Indigenous people in unique and related systems of (non)human relationships and responsibilities to one another" (7). Barker and other scholars assert a non-heteronormative, Indigenous sovereignty. See Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight?*; Rifkin, *Erotics of Sovereignty*.

populations? I analyze the ways in which conceptions of guardianship operate in the stories, as guardianship is intrinsic to an understanding of belonging according to a patriarchal, nuclear family model as well as to the legal relationship between the “overriding sovereignty” of the United States and the “domestic dependent” American Indian “nations” (435 U.S. at 191; 30 U.S. at 17). The principle of guardianship is at the very core of the notion of sovereignty and this principle is fundamentally incongruent with Ojibwe notions of motherhood as kin-based belonging. Grover’s stories portray a notion of home that, though impacted by the violence and dislocation of the boarding school, is clearly shaped by Native kin-based structures.

Guardianship has its etymological origin as “seeing” or “watching” with its implications of surveilling a minor and, thus, purportedly protecting them from dangers.⁵ This etymological origin is also at work in the concept of guardianship and wardship. Of course, guardianship as surveillance in the boarding school constitutes a Foucauldian disciplining mechanism that serves to implement the federal government’s role as guardian: Indigenous children were surveilled by boarding school staff to prevent them from escaping or from breaking the boarding school’s strict rules. Though both the guardian and the ward derive their position from an act of seeing, the difference in this binary opposition is located in the ward becoming part of what is seen and controlled. According to the binary logic of guardianship and wardship, the ward is, thus, in a way unable to see for herself.

Federal Indian law explicitly reveals the government’s assumed role as watchman during the termination era from 1945 to 1960. Commissioner of Indian

⁵Interestingly, guard and ward have the same etymological origin and relate to an act of seeing. See "guardian, n." *OED Online*.

Affairs Dillon S. Meyer stated that the government intended to cease its legal relationship as “supervisor” and revoke the special status granted to Indigenous tribes once they “met the ‘qualifications to manage their own affairs without *supervision* by the Federal Government” (in Wilkins 166, emphasis mine). This notion of supervision is not new: it has been a part of the federal government’s self-understanding as guardian at least since the beginnings of American Indian assimilation. As Janet McDonnell asserts, in the 1880s when the boarding school emerged, “the stated goal of federal Indian policy from 1887 to 1934 was to promote the speedy transition of Indians into industrious self-supporting citizens, free from government *supervision*” (emphasis added, 2-3).

In Grover’s short stories that explore the multigenerational experience of Indigenous people in state-sanctioned boarding schools, guardianship as a form of surveillance is expressed in the form of a gaze or by impeding the wards’ ability to see. This type of surveillance and impediment of vision – the “paternalistic model of watchfulness” as art historian Jonathan Crary terms it – is a mechanism of a certain type of sovereignty that is underpinned by a foundational understanding of “nature” as a state of war, an unruly state between individuals (26). This notion of nature can be conquered through the translation of land into property and territory.⁶ This gaze is, perhaps, most aptly depicted in Abraham Bosse’s famous front piece of Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (see figure 2). Bosse’s image is fundamentally territorial: Leviathan, the sovereign, hovers over the landscape. Even though Hobbes affirms that the individual parts are in a contractual relationship with each other and not with the

⁶ See Cheyfitz. *Poetics*.

sovereign, their bodies are oriented towards the sovereign's head. Thus, the individuals cannot see the territory that the sovereign, of whom they are meant to be a part, owns and over which he watches.



Figure 2: Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. 1651

Leviathan's gaze is directed over the people and toward the space behind their backs; the picture, thus, suggests that – facing the sovereign – the individual in the commonwealth gives up her ability to see what is around her and the sovereign watches for her. Even though in Western theory, territory is the ultimate place of belonging and origin – territory constitutes a home – the image of the Leviathan suggests the individual's profound unfamiliarity with this territory and home. Submitting oneself to sovereign guardianship, Bosse's image suggests, entails a fundamental type of alienation with one's surroundings, a blindness that, as I demonstrate, the forcibly sleeping Indigenous characters in Grover's work embody.

Contrary to this model of alienated belonging, Grover depicts a traditional Ojibwe home, in which observation and careful listening are substantial characteristics that define the home and make it an educational place. The boarding school as the ultimate site of U.S. guardianship and surveillance attempts to replace this notion of home; this replacement creates a sense of alienation and blindness in a number of Grover's characters. The stories depict this sense of estrangement as the government's violent implementation of a state of sleep on Native mothers, a state that results in the mothers' and their children's lack of vision and their search for each other.

As a result of this blindness, characters in the stories find themselves seeking familiarity and kinship. Fear is the sentiment that accompanies this search, for as Hobbes famously argues, people adhere to a sovereign because they dread others or the sovereign. This sense of alarm manipulates the ways in which the characters Alice and Earl look for their way home in Grover's story "Bingo Night." The lost way home

– a path that is ultimately redirected towards the boarding school where Earl was detained as a child – functions as an analogy for the ways in which Native people define a notion of home and belonging after the federal government violently separated Indigenous children from their kin and attempted to estrange them from Native American oral culture and knowledge. The alienation toward the surroundings constitutes a symptom of the colonial translation of Indigenous ways of belonging to the natural environment according to kinship structures into Western ideas of sovereignty, guardianship, and territory.

Instead, Grover’s texts call for a reliance on Native stories, stories that provide a sentiment of comfort rather than fright and a structure of belonging that radically differs from the conception of guardianship and its implications of dominion, property, and territory. By examining the trope of seeing, watching, and observing, Grover’s texts ultimately put forth a model of kin-based belonging, which finds its expression in the act of reciprocal observation and listening. Finally, Grover’s work proposes an expansive state of childhood and learning that radically differs from the negatively defined pupilage and wardship assigned to Native tribes by federal Indian law.

A Journey Home: Modes of Belonging in a Post-Boarding School Era

“Bingo Night” depicts several versions of home within an Indigenous context. In a monologue addressed at his old car in the very first paragraph of the story, Earl announces that the destination of their journey is “home” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 129). The direction of the car’s movement is significant: The couple is moving away from

the reservation-run school toward their home and later toward the boarding school. Thus, the story instantly addresses two notions of home and belonging: The home of the community on the reservation and the individual, urban family home. Though the story is located at the end of *The Dance Boots*, a collection of stories that disclose the silence around the Indigenous boarding school experience, the story's movement away from the reservation and its school does not suggest that this boarding school history ends "happily" in Native American educational self-determination. On the contrary, as Artense, the narrator in the first story, "The Dance Boots," suggests, "as Indian people our interactions with society and with each other include the specter of all that happened to those who went before us. As their schooling experiences defined too much of their lives, so that legacy continues to define much of ours. Yet without it, we disappear" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 9). Alice and Earl function as embodiments of these specters, specters whose lives are involuntarily defined by their experience in the boarding school and who, because of this experience, do not integrate themselves flawlessly into the reservation's community and into a collective storyline of Ojibwe nationhood in a post-boarding school era.

The reservation represents a notion of belonging in accordance with Indigenous nationhood and territoriality. The first lines describe the reservation school and its bingo night as filled with communal attributes: "The bingo hall was the school's source of income and a source of employment and pride for the reservation community. Those lucky enough to have been hired for one of the part-time jobs showed up early ... and waited" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 139). The existence of a bingo hall alludes to the governmental rights that Indigenous nations hold due to their

sovereign status.⁷ However vibrantly Grover depicts the bingo hall as an expression of Native sovereignty in the story, voices within Indigenous Studies have identified the ways in which precisely these types of expressions of sovereignty become grounds to undermine claims to Native sovereignty. Jessica Catellino, in particular, demonstrates the double-bind of American Indian sovereignty: On the one hand, American Indian sovereignty is often understood as need-based since Native nations are expected to be poor and “in need” of preserving their existence, a condition that Miller asserts in *Kagama*, when, on the other hand, sovereignty leads to economic self-determination or even to wealth, as was the case with the Florida Seminoles, this economic development tends to be understood as a type of cultural decline and it is used to deny American Indian tribes sovereign rights.⁸ The reservation with its bingo hall in the beginning of Grover’s story constitutes an immediate marker of the ways in which Indian sovereignty is always embedded in an act of recognition by the federal government. Catellino calls this complex state of sovereign dependency “sovereignty as wardship” (245).

However conflicted this notion of sovereignty may be, the Mozhay Point bingo hall and the school are a source of pride and sustenance for the community. The school represents another contemporary expression of Indigenous sovereignty

⁷ Generally speaking, class II gaming, which includes bingo, is legal for Indian tribes if the state, in which their reservation is located, allows these types of games. Native American gaming laws are regulated according to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) of 1988. However, the complexities of IGRA and the state of American Indian gaming exceed the argument of this chapter. For a detailed account on American Indian gaming and sovereignty See Cattellino, *High Stakes*.

⁸ Cattellino demonstrates how in the termination era from 1945 to 1960 the Seminoles had to demonstrate economic capacities to avoid termination. Later, their successful gaming endeavors have caused the emergence of “anti sovereignty movements” whose members question the Seminole’s “‘need’” of “‘special rights’ in law enforcement, gaming, and other arenas” (247). Similarly, proposals have been made in Congress that suggest moving away from treaty-based rights toward an approach of “testing... indigenous groups’ financial ‘need’” (248). See Cattellino. “Double-Bind.”

according to which the community determines Native education and helps sustain the tribal community in terms of its education as well as economically. By depicting this thriving reservation school as the point of origin for this last story of a book centering on the federal boarding school program, Grover seems to create a storyline of liberation. An emancipatory reading of this last setting would suggest that the book moves from undermined Native self-determination to the continuity of Native knowledge and Native culture. In contrast to the externally imposed boarding school policies, the text highlights the community's re-appropriation of the means of education as everyone in "the entire reservation community" takes "pride in the work produced by the children *of their own* reservation school run *by their own* reservation school board" (emphasis added, Grover, *Dance Boots* 139).

At the bingo hall, the text focuses on the elderly friends Beryl and Sis and highlights a mode of belonging that is based on interdependence and kinship. The two characters give each other reciprocal support: Beryl helps Sis when they are walking because Sis has a "bad knee" and when Beryl feels embarrassed because her nephew disappears with a girl, Sis draws the attention to herself by making a joke about her lacking bingo skills (Grover, *Dance Boots* 143-144). The text emphasizes how both Beryl and Sis have further relationships outside of their coupledness; both have grandchildren and Bud, Beryl's nephew is present at the bingo hall. Beryl and Sis refer to each other as friends and when they talk about Alice and Earl, Beryl uses kinship terms: "Uncle Earl" and "Aunt Alice" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 142). Thus, she highlights a familial bond between her and the couple even though the family tree in the front of the book does not suggest a genetic connection between Beryl – who is not

part of the family tree – and Alice and Earl.⁹ Though Beryl and Sis seemingly represent a type of unified reservation community, the text also portrays a type of rift between the older characters and the younger ones. Angie, who works at the bingo hall, is described as inattentive and Bud, Beryl’s nephew, is critiqued for being a womanizer who “usually had some white girl following him around” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 141). Both disappear without giving notice and, thus, cause embarrassment for the older people at the bingo hall “that the entire table unfocused on” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 143).

Alice and Earl’s movement constitutes a spatial counterpart to Beryl and Sis. Throughout the story Alice and Earl drive away from the reservation, which emphasizes the couple’s increasing distance from the tribe and from the territorial expression of Indigeneity as grounded within the space of the reservation. Their movement away, together with Alice and Earl’s separation from the event and the community is highlighted on a textual level by an intermission in the story that focuses on Beryl and Sis remaining at the bingo hall. They comment on Alice and Earl’s departure as deriving from a type of marital isolation: “[y]ou know how him and Aunt Alice are. They always want to do things for themselves, don’t like to ask for anything” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 142). Clearly, Alice and Earl isolate themselves from the community in multiple ways; they do not like to take things from others or ask for help. At the same time, the wording “they... want to do things for themselves” also suggests that they do not want to do things for others, suggesting a rejection of care for

⁹ The family tree in the beginning of the book is an interesting but problematic addition to the book. Though it provides clarity about the various familial relations in the text, it relies strictly on genetic and marital bonds. Therefore, it excludes characters like Beryl and fails at disclosing the expansiveness of kinship formations.

others and the interdependence that characterizes the relationship between Beryl and Sis.

This rejection of care arises in another instance, when the omniscient narrator, paraphrasing Alice's interior monologue, portrays care in economic terms of pay-off. Alice describes Lisette as "[t]he matriarch of the family and the whole damn bunch" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 135). Lisette is Earl's sister's sister-in-law who is now living in a nursing home. Alice's description of those who do not belong to "the family" as "the whole damn bunch" suggests that she denounces the idea of kinship that goes beyond biological ties. She describes Lisette's care for others as a type of unpaid labor on which one cannot rely:

[t]aking care of everything all the time and everybody letting her do all the work... Everybody was always counting on Lisette, and now look, spending the end of her life in the nursing home having to let other people cut her toenails and feed her and put in her teeth for company and tying her up so she could sit for a while in a chair. And with her mind all there, stuck inside that bed (Grover, *Dance Boots* 135-6).

Alice's comment about everybody's persistent reliance on Lisette's care and work is abruptly interrupted by the imperative "now look" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 135). Alice describes Lisette's physical decline as a disruption of people's reliance on her, indicating that a reliance on others is futile, perhaps, because it may eventually end.

Lisette's lost autonomy to take care of herself and of others is described as a type of imprisonment; she is "stuck inside that bed" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 136). Her institutionalization in a nursing home – another type of home – brings to mind a history of home care that is deeply biopolitical. The idea of intervening in the care of others emerged in the United States in the late nineteenth century in the form of home

care and was meant to improve poor people's health and morale.¹⁰ Like the boarding school, home care intrudes upon the domestic space and shapes this space according to a certain model of individualism and body politics. Lisette's "imprisonment" as care taker in the nursing home thus follows a similar genealogical development as the confinement of Indigenous children in boarding schools. Alice's comment "now look" assumes a type of natural logic to the end of Lisette's care and her eventual isolation in the nursing home (Grover, *Dance Boots* 136).

This view understands age as a serious crisis of individualism and resists the interdependent kinship structures according to which Beryl and Sis live their lives.¹¹ According to this worldview, Alice and Earl, who are also elders, face a similar crisis as Lisette. This crisis becomes particularly apparent when their car gets stuck in the mud. Both lay on the ground, preparing for their death and Earl asks desperately, "[w]ho would look for them? No children, or grandchildren, or great-grandchildren would be waiting for them at home wondering what was keeping them" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 147). Earl's desperate question assumes that rescue may only appear in the form of the watchful gaze of a biological family member. Ideally for Earl, the family and the home constitute the very locus of guardianship and watchfulness and, hence, of care and protection. Alice and Earl represent a disruption to the story of continuity and restoration, exemplified by the reservation, the bingo hall, and the reservation school. The characters express a mainstream American notion of individual self-reliance, which is part of the individualism the boarding school

¹⁰ See Buhler-Wilkerson.

¹¹ For a more detailed account on American individualism and Native kinship epistemologies, see Cheyfitz. "Just Society."

curriculum intended to teach Native children so that they could become so-called civilized Western subjects.

This type of individualism is prevalent also in the couple's quest for a type of home that relies on ideologies of individualism and property. Earl gets lost on this journey home and suddenly believes that he is close to the Harrod School where he went to boarding school. Without telling Alice, Earl decides to find and show Alice the Harrod School. Thus, Earl replaces the home as the original destination of the trip with the boarding school. Hence, Earl gears the story toward the history of the boarding school, a history marked by the attempt at domesticating Native American subjects according to Western ideals of the nuclear family and property ownership. The boarding school curriculum aimed at forcing Indigenous children into the form of the individual and, hence, at breaking off tribal and kinship bonds while ultimately not allowing them complete access into the white, Euro-American society.¹² The height of the boarding school era commencing with the Allotment Act in 1887 underscores the policies of assimilation into individualism and property ownership of the time. It also underscores the attempt to create a notion of home amongst Native American people that references not only Western ideals of individualism and land as property but also assigns sentimental attributes like belonging and origin to the property owned by the individual person or the family (headed by the family patriarch).

Earl's reference to the school as "property" highlights that his conception of

¹² This curriculum is part of a large apparatus of policies targeted at individualizing Native Americans. For instance, anthropologist Thomas Biolsi provides an insightful analysis of different policies on the Lakota Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations by which the federal policies aimed at creating "new kinds of bureaucratically knowable and recordable individuals, with new kinds of self-interest that could be predicted and manipulated by the officials" (28).

“home” is linked to the idea that land can be owned and that his origins are related to owning property (Grover, *Dance Boots* 136). By calling the school “property” combined with remembering the “barb wire fence” that was meant “to keep the cows from getting too far away from the dairy farm,” Earl alludes to a Lockean labor theory, according to which land is turned into property through the individual’s labor. Moreover, as Cheyfitz argues, the “very mark of property is the enclosure: the defining, or bounding of a place that signals the *perceived* settling, or cultivation, of that place” (emphasis in the original, *Poetics* 55). The foundation of this notion of property as enclosure is an “individual... who is ‘proprietor of his own person’” (Locke qtd. in Cheyfitz *Poetics* 55). Thus, Earl’s attempt to go back “home” to the boarding school as the place where individualism is created constitutes, on the one hand, the attempt to enclose himself in the property of his own person. Or, in other words, it is the attempt to assert himself as an individual. But, strangely, his quest is also an attempt to return to the boarding school as enclosed prison space, where the Indigenous child is under the guardianship of the boarding school staff and, thus, under surveillance.¹³ If the prisoners in *Fort Marion* experienced intense terror when submitting themselves to Pratt’s order to create plaster casts of their heads and, thus, producing individualized forms, Earl seems to search for a sense of security within the confines of precisely this form.

The replacement of the home with the boarding school suggests that, to Earl, the boarding school embodies a similar set of qualities as the home. Indeed, as the

¹³ The story’s path that originates on the reservation as the territorial expression of Indigenous nationhood, a notion that is deeply entrenched in these Western concepts of property and individualism, also alludes to the complex ways in which the reservation and Native sovereignty as wards of the federal government are entangled within these conceptions of territory and individualism.

boarding school ripped children out of their family's homes, it forcefully assumed guardianship from the Indigenous parents. Hence, the boarding school violently adopts the role of an original place of upbringing, perhaps even of belonging. Earl's attempt at going "home" to the boarding school represents this notion of home as a violent place of individual origins. His search resembles a quest for belonging after surviving the violent history of separation and individualization.¹⁴

Ojibwe Homes in Winter: Ending and Recreation under Federal Indian Boarding School Rules

Contrary to Earl's individualistic understanding of home, Grover describes the Ojibwe family's home during wintertime as a place of particular intimacy. In her essay "Nanaboozhoo and Nokomis" she characterizes winter as "the season for traditional storytelling" and the "season of listening especially carefully" (Grover, *Onigamiising* 148; 149). Already, it is clear that the Ojibwe home is oriented towards an inside rather than an outside. This home is filled with stories and family members are engaged in the act of careful listening and observing. Because of the cold, the family is physically close together indoors and the home and the stories, which are told in this setting, adopt particular significance. Grover writes:

Physically closer for warmth and company they talked and visited, listened to stories, and worked on what they could indoors: they made and repaired snowshoes, traps, household goods, clothing, and moccasins. Children learned how to do those tasks by watching their elders and paying attention. When it

¹⁴ In this regard, Earl's quest presumes a linear notion of time and space. Geographer Doreen Massey argues that going home is a nostalgic move, by which the (time) traveler attempts at "hold[ing] places still" (125). She argues that places are constituted by "interrelations. You can't go back in space-time. To think that you can is to deprive others of their ongoing independent stories" (125). In Earl's case, by going back to the boarding school, he holds himself in a condition of detention and surveillance.

appeared to someone older and wiser that they might have observed and had the maturity and skill to handle the task, they were given the opportunity to try; with practice they became competent and skilled. This is how elders educated and prepared children for when they would become adults, and then elders themselves; it is how the values and knowledge of the Ojibwe have continued, and why we have them today (Grover, *Onigamiising* 147-8).

As these lines make clear, the Ojibwe home is an educational place. Here, it is not the guardian who watches her offspring but rather children who observe those who are older in order to learn from them. The gaze is directed in the other direction: In order to eventually be able to imitate the elder's actions and tasks, children pay close attention and observe others carefully. This dynamic of looking from the point of view of the child to the older person resists the relationship of power between the watchful guardian and the ward. The watchful guardianship model merely reaffirms the power relations between guardian and ward – the guardian's gaze is not primarily aimed at allowing the ward to learn and grow into an adult herself; the guardian's gaze reaffirms the subject object relationship between seer and what is seen. Nothing about the process of watching is intended to change this distribution of power.

In contrast, the children's gaze in the Ojibwe home sets its purpose in education and imitation. The children's observation generates both their personal growth as well as the community's continuity. It is because of this notion of observation and practice amongst these multiple generations, Grover contends, that Ojibwe knowledge has successfully been preserved through generations. Moreover, the Ojibwe home is portrayed as a creative site. Not only do children learn tasks that will re-create the community once the older generation has passed, it is also the place where "sacred stories about creation and how the world came to be" are shared

(Grover, *Onigamiising* 148). Interestingly, this creative moment occurs in *biboon* – winter – the season defined by death and ending. This notion of winter, of ending and recreation, is significant for the readings in this chapter, as the stories analyzed below end in the fall and the characters, thus, face the end of the year, as well as the possible moment of recreation and continuity in an Ojibwe home.

The short story “Three Seasons” that is located earlier in the book than “Bingo Night” makes painfully clear how the boarding school violently destroys the Indigenous homes and families described in Grover’s essay. The story is centered on Maggie, Earl’s sister, on her escape from her abusive husband, and on her attempts to save her two youngest children from being detained in the boarding school. The story begins in *biboon* – winter – with Maggie’s escape from her husband. Thus, in this story winter is not marked by proximity and storytelling as it is in Grover’s depiction of the traditional Ojibwe home, but by separation and violence. This shift in the characterization of winter is highlighted more strongly in the first sentence of the story, in which the narrator of this part of the story states that Maggie flees from her home “without her husband, who was because of her lying unconscious on the floor next to the woodstove, or her three oldest children, who in the fall had been blown from home by the winds of seasonal change and federal Indian policy to boarding school” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 20). Under the colonial rule of federal Indian boarding school policies, *biboon* undergoes a redefinition from being a season of learning and observing within a multigenerational community to a season of separation and flight.

Despite the dominant theme of separation and escape, the beginning of the story highlights a sense of continuity and community that accompanies Maggie while

she is still with her youngest children. This sense of community is represented by Maggie's wedding quilt: "the quilt told a hundred stories about Mother and Nokom and the aunts and the ladies who had donated whatever they could spare that was suitable for a wedding quilt" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 21). In addition to the broken marriage that the quilt symbolizes, it represents the community of women who made the quilt and their stories. The quilt retains an important role throughout the following seasons outlined in the short story. It becomes the hiding place behind which Giizis and Biik, Maggie's two youngest sons, seek cover when the boarding school prefect comes to their home to detain Maggie's escaped older son Sonny and his cousin Waboos and takes them back to the boarding school. Thus, with the quilt the stories and community remain with the family and the quilt protects them by obstructing the prefect's watchful gaze on Maggie's youngest children. Here, the boarding school prefect, who assumes the role of the children's guardian, personifies the federal government. His role in the story is primarily defined by the act of surveilling and searching for those who have escaped his custody, making clear the link between the U.S. guardianship and surveillance. The children evade the government's surveillance by the figurative protection of the community's stories. Maggie's ways of protecting her children from the alleged guardianship of the boarding school also demonstrate that Ojibwe stories and community signify a secure place from the federal government's violent guardianship.

However, Maggie's quilts ultimately fail at shielding her children as the government takes Giizis to a boarding school. Maggie also has to send Biik off to live

with relatives so she is able to pursue her work at the mattress factory.¹⁵ After her children leave for the boarding school, Maggie puts away the children's quilts, "smoothing and soothing the prints of their bodies into squares that she then pushed under the bed. She had practiced this so many times in her head that her body moved and her hands did the work without thought" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 41). Unlike the tasks that the elders fulfill and that the children carefully watch in the traditional Ojibwe home that Grover describes elsewhere, Maggie has no children left in her home who could observe her tasks and learn from her. Thus, "without direction from heart or head," she fulfills quotidian tasks robotically (Grover, *Dance Boots* 41). This robotic notion of task fulfillment combined with the stowed-away quilts illustrates her complete isolation from the community. Not only Maggie's children are taken away from the stories the quilts represent but also Maggie now lives in isolation when she stores away the quilts and thus the stories for which there are no more listeners.

The scene demonstrates that under colonial rule *biboon* ceases to be the season of storytelling and community but, "as with the rhythm of the earth ... [Maggie] prepared for winter, the season of hibernation and dreams of her children's return" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 41). The text exposes how the boarding school's agenda of individualizing Native people affects all members of Indigenous communities whether they are in the boarding school or left at home. The story also connotes a shift in the ways in which temporality can be understood according to Native epistemology. While *biboon* used to signify a lively, social season of exchange, intimacy, and

¹⁵ It seems like her job is necessary so that the children can at least spend the summers at home: "Ma was able to send money to school for train tickets home so that when summer started Girlie and me could come home and not be put to work on the truck farm for our room and board" (33).

education, with federal boarding school policies it has become a season of isolation and waiting.

At the end of the story the narrator uses the word “rhythm” to describe the ways in which Maggie moves from one task to the next in preparation for hibernation (Grover, *Dance Boots* 41). The comparison to “the rhythm of the earth” occurs twice in the story and suggests a replacement of the previous life lived in a relationship to the earth – the original mother – with a life dominated by the whims of an alleged guardian who ultimately takes away her sustenance (Grover, *Dance Boots* 41). The seasonal rhythm of the earth defines a sense of regularity that the rhythm of the federal government can only provide with the regularity of capitalist production and the stagnant temporality of waiting. Basil Johnston argues that typically seasonal change is part of Mother Earth’s teaching to her human children:

Mother Earth revealed, by means of her transformations, that there is a Kitchi-Manitou [a creator]... By observing the relationships of plants, animals, and themselves to the Earth, the Anishinaubae people deduced that every eagle, bear, or blade of grass had its own place and time on Mother Earth... From the order of dependence on other beings, the Anishinaubaek determined and accepted their place in relation to the natural order of Mother Earth (Manitous 14-15).

Johnston’s comments suggest a notion of education that, as it is the case in the original Ojibwe home, relies on careful observation on the part of the child and demonstration on the part of the parent. However, the change of seasons, the narrator in “Three Seasons” suggests, no longer promises an interdependent relationship to the earth and other beings as it merely foreshadows the colonial violence of the federal government.

In fact, the government seemingly assumes the role of earth and consequently the role of the mother, “blow[ing]” the children away from home, in the same way that

the wind blows a leaf off a tree (Grover, *Dance Boots* 20). What is missing in this simile is the outcome of this act of blowing – a leaf will fall on the ground and eventually, turning into soil, it will feed the tree and other plants. The blowing leaf in an Ojibwe reading is, hence, not a sign of separation but one of relationality and interdependence. The metaphor of the federal government blowing away Maggie's children evades this sense of continuity and sustenance as the comparison ends with interruption of continuity in the form of the children's separation. Instead of teaching the interdependence of all beings, the change of season that the federal government performs teaches Maggie the contrary notion of isolation and separation. Here, (governmental) guardianship equals estrangement and division. The exchange of seasonal change representing an interdependence with all beings for this type of separated, individualized existence demonstrates that the government also cuts off the original maternal relationship to the earth and, thus, to all beings.

The new rhythm, according to which Maggie is forced to live, is marked by a period of interruption of activity and of life itself, an interruption that will find its ultimate expression in her hibernation. It becomes clear how the government takes away all definitive means of motherhood as embodied both by the earth and by Maggie. Instead of being sustained by her kinship relations, Maggie spends winter isolated from (social) life, like a hibernating animal in a state of reduced activity, preserving her energies in times of scarce resources. In this state of hibernation she may merely dream about "her children's return," hence, she will only be allowed to experience a type of fantasy that reality forbids (Grover, *Dance Boots* 41). The fact that Maggie stores the quilts under the bed and her job at the mattress factory expand

on the trope of sleep and hibernation, highlighting how the boarding school as well as capitalist production (represented by the mattress factory) impede storytelling and community-formation for Indigenous people. It seems like, now, Maggie's entire life is dominated by this state of sleep.

As the federal government puts Maggie to sleep by taking away her social resources, the government enacts the role of the sovereign, watchful guardian, a role that stems from Enlightenment theory. According to Jonathan Crary, the sovereign in Hobbes's *Leviathan* promises to protect their wards from dangers when they sleep, embodying a type of "paternalistic ... watchful[...]" figure (26). However, the story makes clear that in an Indigenous context, where kin is equated with sustenance, the government's watch over their "wards" constitutes a deprivation of sustenance.

The same type of debilitating sovereignty operates in "Bingo Night". In a short passage, Alice describes her birth experience in the boarding school, a birth for which she is narcotized and subsequently separated from her child during the induced sleep:

She remembered a hand or arm holding her head immobile, a folded white cloth brushing her nose and lips, pressing tightly when she resisted, easing once she stepped willingly into the darkness of that sweet and thick smell... 'Does she dream?' the matron wondered, and hoped not. Her baby, born while she lay unmoving and unaware, silent for birth (how could the doctors and the matron not hear the screaming and weeping inside her soul, the tearing of hair and clutching of robbed belly, the keening that would follow in her wake every day for the rest of her life?), disappeared and was never seen, although she would look for it in the face of every baby, then child, then young person.... Every person she saw from that day who looked to be about sixteen years younger than Alice (Grover, *Dance Boots* 145).¹⁶

This scene demonstrates powerfully the violence involved in the American Indian boarding school project. The hand or arm that pushes a white piece of cloth on Alice's

¹⁶ For a detailed account on sexual violence in boarding schools and the federal government's "racist reproduction policies" against Native women, see Smith, Andrea. *Conquest*.

face suggests a type of disembodied power that renders Alice completely immobile and defeated. Though the narcotization allegedly protects from physical pain and fear, the text makes clear that the real, continuous psychological pain stems from the loss and lack of knowledge that was induced on her while she was put to sleep.

Though Alice is silenced by the anesthesia, the interjection in the text – marked by parenthesis – highlights the disjuncture of her apparent silence caused by the narcotics and the “screaming and weeping inside her soul” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 145). The phrasing “the keening that would follow in her wake” emphasizes the continuance of the silenced clamor after “wak[ing]” from the anesthesia that accompanies Alice through her entire life (Grover, *Dance Boots* 145). More generally, the forced silencing in this scene brings to mind the ways in which the violence of the boarding school education has been kept secret amongst Native American communities.¹⁷

Before she is able to see her baby, Alice’s child is taken away. Hence, for the rest of her life Alice ends up looking for the child in every person of a certain age group that she meets. It is because of the narcotics that Alice has never seen her child and because of them she ends up searching for her, the familiar person, in all the unfamiliar people she encounters. In the above examples of Maggie and Alice, sleep operates as a type of blinding mechanism by which the guardian takes away their

¹⁷ In “The Dance Boots,” the first story of the collection, the narrator Artense explains that the reason for this secrecy is repressed trauma: “[T]he education of American Indians prior to my generation was a topic to be avoided, a source of secrecy and loss, with an undercurrent of shame. My uncle George told me when I was a little girl, that he had gone away from home to go to school. This was a ‘different kind of school’ that he didn’t like. He advised me that it wasn’t good to think much about the past, that we didn’t need anybody to feel sorry for us... Don’t ask him about it anymore, she [my mother] said; the story made him sad and would make me sad too, if I knew it, so don’t bother him about it; just be thankful for the life you have” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 7)

ward's ability to see for herself and recognize those who were previously familiar kin. Instead of watching over them and their property while they are asleep as it is the sovereign's task according to Hobbes and instead of providing help and sustenance as is indicated by Chief Justice Miller in *United States v. Kagama*, the federal government as guardian induces sleep to do precisely the opposite; they rob Native people of what belongs to them and take away the grounds for motherhood. The Indigenous mothers in these stories are put into a sort of anesthetized custody.

The reverse condition of children looking for their mothers or seeing their mothers in unfamiliar places is outlined in other stories of the book, as well. For example, Rose's mother in "Shonnud's Girl," a traumatized boarding school survivor, disappears from the family home frequently and eventually vanishes completely.¹⁸ After that Rose states, "I do see Mother everywhere" (96). Similarly, she sees other mothers who have been separated from their children: Girls from the home for unwed mothers where she is sent to work after having to leave the orphanage at age fourteen. In a different story, her brother Sam also talks about dreaming of their mother and his sisters (Grover, *Dance Boots* 101). These examples make clear how Grover's stories depict the atrocious consequences of U.S. guardianship and the ways in which the federal government's destruction leaves characters in a state of unfamiliarity and sometimes complete disorientation with their surroundings. Wardship under the federal government, the stories suggest, results in a state of searching. Instead of observing others and learning from them, as it would be the case in a traditional

¹⁸ "Shonnud's girl" hints at the fact that this home is a work farm where Rose's father, accompanied by his family, is sent to work for an unknown crime he committed in the past. Here, the text exposes further official methods of confinement and discipline that shape the homes of the characters.

Ojibwe home, the federal government's guardianship puts the Native American wards in Grover's stories in a condition of perpetual search for the familiarity of kin. The attentive, observing gaze of the learning Ojibwe child, thus, turns into the anxiously searching gaze of the ward.

"Who Could Remember What Came Before?" Ojibwe Stories as a Path Home

The characters Alice and Earl represent another case of "children" searching for their "mothers." Their search for the home constitutes a search for means of belonging after the colonial history of separation, individualization, and the surveillance of the U.S. guardian. Alice and Earl's quest constitutes a similar pursuit of kinship as the mothers and children looking for cut-off and defamiliarized relations. As Earl claims, he feels familiar with the environment, for he can drive home "with his eyes closed" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 131).¹⁹ With this comment, Earl suggests a degree of familiarity and comfort deriving from having "driven that way" countless times that would enable him to move through these surroundings even if he were not able to see (Grover, *Dance Boots* 130). However, when Alice and Earl get lost, the often-travelled road suddenly appears unrecognizable; the road seems curvier; the trees look "taller and denser" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 130). Earl's reflections suggest danger; the road is harder to travel on; the trees overshadow them and their denseness suggests a feeling of enclosure.

Alice and Earl apply a type of logic to their search that resonates with Hobbes'

¹⁹ Here, Earl expresses his comfort with his environment as a type of self-induced blindness. Given the relationship between the sovereign and sleep – the sovereign protects the ward in her sleep – one could argue that Earl acts according to a model of self-guardianship, by which he is comfortable giving up his sight because he feels an extreme amount of comfort with the environment.

theory of natural rights and fear of others. Throughout this process they become terrified by the “darkening green” of the woods (131). Earl worries that he and his wife will be attacked by creatures that “lived in the woods, that came out after dark” (131). Clearly, Earl’s inability to visually surveil his surroundings causes his anxiety, as he describes the density of the tress and the increasing darkness. Alice echoes this uneasiness with darkness and closed and crowded space: “‘Lordy, it was getting dark earlier these days’... For years, she had dreaded the long dark nights of winter” (132), “...and the trees and scrub were so close to the car. She had always craved open space and light” (137). Alice’s dislike of winter and darkness combined with her longing for open space and light suggests the desire to be able to see what is around her and to fend off possible threats. It is a fundamental fear of what is unfamiliar and invisible as well as the desire to assume guardianship as a way to surveil the seemingly dangerous surroundings. Alice’s apprehension of winter creates a contrast to the comfort of the Ojibwe home, in which families come together, share stories, and learn from their elders. Her craving for open space seems to reject the intimate setting of the Ojibwe home.

Both Alice and Earl struggle to stay awake on their journey. In light of Maggie and Alice’s experience of sleep as a blinding mechanism, Alice and Earl’s desire to sleep alludes to a submission to the state of unfamiliarity, a desire to give up the ability to see what is happening around them and yield to the watch of a guardian. Alice even mentions that Earl gets so “sleepy when he drove” that “she had to force herself to try to stay wide awake... Oh, now wouldn’t it be good sometime to be one of those old ladies who slept while her husband drove, she thought” (Grover, *Dance*

Boots 135). Instead of trying to stay alert and make sense of the strange environment, Alice would prefer to submit to Earl's guardianship. However, her fear and his seeming irresponsibility do not allow her to do so.

Both characters' desire to give up guardianship represents a type of cooperation with the blinding and sleep-inducing mechanisms portrayed above. Like Hobbes, Alice and Earl conceptualize sleep in terms of an unprotected state set against the backdrop of the dangers of the night. Alice and Earl's distress mirrors Hobbes' accounts of fear as the underlying condition of the state of nature and the reason why people give up their rights to a sovereign superior. According to Hobbes, it is through the commonwealth that individuals and their property may be protected from these dangers in their sleep. It is this "paternalistic model of watchfulness" that the sovereign power promises to the individual under their sovereign rule, a model that is intrinsic to the guardianship model expressed by the U.S. sovereign towards American Indian nations (Crary 26).

An understanding of nature according to kinship epistemology would suggest a communal environment of beings with whom one exists in an interdependent relationship. But, since Earl does not know Ojibwe stories, he cannot recall any familiarity with this sort of environment. Early on in the story the omniscient narrator highlights Earl's perspective on this moment of disorientation and the ways in which he attempts to orient himself:

[H]e couldn't recognize anything they drove past. In the darkening green, damp shapes familiar by daylight began to seem foreign, ominous, vaguely a repetition of something uneasy from the past, or was it of sometime to come? Or was it something from the here and now? ... Who could remember what came before, from what memories embedded in not only the stories but the

very lives and levels of consciousness, of the generations that heard and cared for the stories, holding them for the next generation of listeners and when the time was right, when it was meant to be? (Grover, *Dance Boots* 131).

When Earl attempts to find a sense of familiarity in the darkening environment, he encounters “vague repetitions” that remind him of something but he is unsure from what memories they stem (Grover, *Dance Boots* 131). Using the word “repetition,” Earl applies the language of narrative to the landscape (Grover, *Dance Boots* 131). Indeed, Earl attempts to read the landscape like a story, recognizing recurrences from stories in his environment and, thus, analyzing his surroundings as text.

By remembering parts of stories and recognizing them in his surroundings, Earl hopes to be able to familiarize himself with and thus navigate through the strange environment. However, Earl does not know the stories that would give meaning to the landscape. He is not one of those people, “who could remember what came before” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 131). His rhetorical question about those who know the stories suggests a disconnect between him and those containing knowledge of Ojibwe stories, echoing the sense of interruption experienced by Maggie after her children are taken to the boarding school.

This disconnect becomes more obvious when considering a later passage, in which Earl talks about his grandmother who “raised him the way the priest and the sisters told her to, didn’t let him around any of those old devil Indians, sent him to boarding school” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 147). In Earl’s childhood home corporeal punishment is used as a way to teach him and to remember biblical stories of eternal chastisement: “And took care of his sinning too – caught him lying once and yanked him by the arm over the woodstove, where she held his hand over the burner so he’d

get a taste of the hot blue fires of hell and remember for next time so he wouldn't end up burning for eternity" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 147). Earl's grandmother approaches stories – and “care” – as a way to frighten Earl and induce pain (Grover, *Dance Boots* 147). Memory, according to her curriculum, is supposed to contain pain and fear so that it can direct future behavior and reflect future consequences. Her punishment constitutes a type of advanced repetition of the later torture in hell, alluding to the odd temporal use of repetitions from the future in the above quote from Earl. When Earl wonders whether the “vague repetitions” in the landscape come from the past, the future, or from the present, the temporality of these “repetitions” diverges from the common definition of repetition as a recurrence from a previous act (Grover, *Dance Boots* 131). In light of his punishment as a way to memorize the story of hell, Earl's burnt hand constitutes a replication of an act of torture that in the narrative will recur in future hell. Earl reads the landscape according to this punitive narrative and is frightened of the Ojibwe narratives that he does remember. He can only think of ghost stories he heard from his grandfather and his friends when he was a child “and supposed to be asleep” and wonders if the creatures haunting these stories surround him on his lost path in the woods (Grover, *Dance Boots* 131).²⁰

Earl's deliberations on reverberations and the ways in which memory works through stories bring to mind a passage in “The Dance Boots,” the first story of the collection, in which the narrator, Artense, learns about the family boarding school history from her aunt Shirley. Before these conversations Artense affirms, “the education of American Indians prior to my generation was a topic to be avoided, a

²⁰ Again, sleep functions as a state that keeps one from dangers. According to this logic, he would have been guarded from his grandfather's frightful stories, if he had been asleep.

source of secrecy and loss, with an undercurrent of shame” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 7). Artense and Shirley lift this veil of secrecy – and so do the short stories in Grover’s *The Dance Boots*. After decades filled with phone conversations about their family’s multigenerational boarding school experience with Shirley, Artense talks about a different notion of repetition than what Earl looks for in the woods. Instead of repeating a future punishment, the telling and re-telling of her relatives’ horrific experiences in the boarding school create a sense of continuity and belonging for Artense: “Eventually, having heard the rhythm and pattern of repeating and echoing, re-echoing and returning, I felt the story taking root in my brain and in my heart and saw that the day was coming that I would continue Shirley’s task of listening and watching, remembering, and then doing my part to pass on and continue the story” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 8). Here, Artense describes a notion of repetition – of echoing – to describe the ways in which stories are repeatedly told. Stories, Artense suggests, operate in the same ways as echoes: The listener functions as a reflective surface and will later redirect the same story to others. Thus, the original story lies further in the past but through the act of echoing and re-echoing it becomes part of the narrator’s daily existence and will later be reflected to others. In fact, as the narrator of the short story, Artense functions as the echoing surface fulfilling the task she has adopted from her aunt Shirley. Artense continues to think about the ways in which the stories and experiences of others influence her own life: “I began to see that as Indian people our interactions with society and with each other include the specter of all that happened to those who went before us” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 9). Like the rhythm of the earth that teaches interdependence according to Johnston, Artense suggests that the rhythm

of stories will teach interdependence with “those who went before us” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 9). Thus, Artense suggests a re-creation of familiarity and kinship through stories.

The spatial dimensions of the word echo are striking. Not only is it the spatial environment that shapes the ways in which reverberations are produced and heard, but also it is precisely this spatial environment that is understood to be utterly social according to Native thought. As Gregory Cajete demonstrates according to the principle of “natural democracy” all beings exist in reciprocal kinship relations and obtain the same rights that in Western thought are reserved only for human beings (in Cheyfitz “Balancing” 144). Cheyfitz notes that according to natural democracy knowledge nature and culture are not separate realms, but “[w]ithin the context of ‘natural democracy,’... there is no nature/culture divide because culture is always already within nature and nature within culture” (“Balancing” 145). If we apply this idea to the environment of “Bingo Night,” the beings in the familiar environment surrounding Alice and Earl can become a similar echoing surface of stories as Artense and her aunt Shirley. Thus, the environment quite literally echoes with narratives.

Earl does discern some of these echoes and specters but instead of providing continuity, his perception of his surroundings is marked by disruption and incomplete memories. What he recognizes is merely a “vague repetition” that makes him wonder, “[w]ho would remember what came before” and “from what memories” these repetitions stem (Grover, *Dance Boots* 131). It is the incompleteness that keeps Earl from establishing a sense of continuity and participation and that could help him locate himself in the surroundings. Instead of helping Earl navigate through this seemingly

unknown place, the specters and echoes of the partial stories frighten him: “He blinked away a horse galloping toward the car, red eyes, open mouth full of teeth, and ears streaming smoke, and wondered if he should ask Alice if she knew where they were” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 131-32). Again, the story lays its focus on sight – or lack thereof – when Earl “blinks away” the horse (Grover, *Dance Boots* 131). Earl fearfully blinds himself from seeing the stories that Artense carefully watches and to which she listens. Blinking the horse away, Earl cuts off the potential for learning and understanding by watching carefully. Earl’s reaction to the stories is entirely different from Artense’s who recognizes a need to continue the “task of listening, watching, and remembering” and passing her habituated knowledge on to others and, hence, to continue the story (Grover, *Dance Boots* 8). Contrary to Artense’s habituated knowledge, Earl’s fails to understand the reverberations around him. The narrator repeats multiple times, “[h]ow many times had he driven that way” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 130; 131). However, his alleged knowledge of the road causes him to be inattentive: “[H]e hadn’t felt the need to look for any landmarks” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 130). Seemingly aware of the route home, Earl gets lost because he is reliant on a false sense of familiarity.

Though both Earl and Alice remember stories, stories that seem to give them a sense of orientation, they do not share these stories or arising doubts and questions with each other.²¹ Except for a few quotidian interactions, the majority of the car ride is marked not by sound – the original meaning of the Greek word *ēchos* – but by

²¹ These stories do not necessarily give them a “right” sense of direction. For instance, Earl remembers the boarding school and how they put up the fence. This story (falsely) leads him to try and find the boarding school.

silence. The narrative mode that dominates the story is interior monologue. The characters do not participate in and continue the rhythm and patterns of echoing and re-echoing that Artense describes in the beginning of the book. Moreover, as the brief passage about Earl's grandmother and Alice's traumatic birth scene at the boarding school demonstrate, it is Alice and Earl's upbringing at home and in the boarding school that creates the silence around Ojibwe stories and a disruption in the continuation of these stories. Unlike Artense who understands herself as a continuance of the stories, the couple in "Bingo Night" constitutes the type of interference with the storyline against which Artense works.

Infantile Mothers and Motherly Children: Learning to be at Home in a Natural Democracy

The story's ending, complete with the young couple, Angie and Bud, rescuing Alice and Earl from their death in the mud, provides the ultimate promise of growth and recreation. The ending in the mud alludes to the Ojibwe creation story, where the world is flooded and after several animals fail at recovering mud from the bottom of the water muskrat finally succeeds. Out of this mud Sky Woman forms earth on a turtle's back and infuses the soil with "life, growth, and abundance" (Johnston *Manitous* xv). Thus, getting stuck in the mud does not only mean a desolate struggle with death but also the chance for recreation and growth, as well as a type of return to the earth that is the original mother. In the beginning of the scene, Alice "looked down at her husband, then up at the sky full of open space and stars" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 145). Alice seems to adopt the role of a mother as guardian, protecting and watching

from above over Earl, who is described as “helpless,” “unable,” and “unmoving” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 144; 146). Her gaze at the defenseless Earl from above seems to reiterate the watchfulness of a superior guardian. Her subsequent gaze up toward the sky appears to be a response to Earl’s question about their location and seems to be a suggestion toward death as their “two old spirits [are] about to fly” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 149). Alice’s gaze up “to the sky full of open space” at first glance may even represent a type of death wish as her death may fulfill her previously articulated wish for open space (Grover, *Dance Boots* 145).

However, in light of the creation story, Alice’s gaze at the sky constitutes an allusion to Sky Woman – the first mother whose twins are the first ancestors of the Ojibwe (Johnston, *Manitous* xvi). This allusion reveals that Alice’s care for Earl is not the care of a mother in the model of the watchful guardian who fends off external threats. Instead, her gaze constitutes a moment of seeking instruction from Sky Woman as original mother. Protection, thus, does not constitute watching over a ward, it constitutes an openness to look at others and in doing so to learn from others. Johnston explains this role of the mother as teacher in Ojibwe thought as he recounts a dramatization of this creation story by the Ojibwe trickster Nana’b’oozoo and the lesson inherent to the story. According to this story the world is flooded again and Nana’b’oozoo, able to bind together two logs, floats on the water. He remembers the creation story and cooperates with the other animals, who are about to drown. When muskrat retrieves mud from the bottom of the water, Nana’b’oozoo, like Sky Woman, infuses the mud with his breath and the earth is restored. This story, Johnston argues, teaches people about their dependence on Mother Earth and on other beings. He

writes, “[w]ithout the logs, a species of vegetation, Nana’b’oozoo would have drowned, and without the assistance of the creatures of the animal world, he would not have obtained the morsel of soil necessary for the restoration of the Earth and his own survival” (*Manitous* 13).

What Johnston articulates in these lines is a notion of education that is intrinsic to Native American social life and to the notion of natural democracy. The condition of natural democracy, Johnston seems to argue, always constitutes a lesson taught by Mother Earth. At first glance the flood in Nana’b’oozoo’s story seems to constitute a moment of deprivation and lack of motherly sustenance but in the end the deprivation teaches Nana’b’oozoo the existence of interdependent relationships with other beings. Alice and Earl’s desperate moment of getting stuck in the mud with no one looking for them is a similar, “maternal” moment of instruction. Angie and Bud’s rescue direct the couple to the existence of interdependent relationships surrounding them. The short story’s allusions to the earth and to Sky Woman demonstrate a notion of education and motherhood that is intrinsic to the natural environment.

When Angie and Bud rescue the older couple, Angie mimics the ways in which Sky Woman breathes into the soil, as her breath is described as “warm on the old woman’s face” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 146). Angie’s breath on Alice’s face alludes to a restoration of sustenance, shelter giving, and instruction in Alice, who before has considered her time as a mother to have ended with the concurrent birth and loss of her baby (Grover, *Dance Boots* 145). Here, as the younger person infuses the older with this notion of motherhood, and, hence, acts as mother (aka as Sky Woman), it becomes clear that motherhood in the story is neither biological, nor chronological,

nor is it a one-sided relationship. Instead, traits of motherhood can be found in any living being. Witherspoon describes motherhood in the case of Diné epistemology: “Essential parts, as well as the earth itself are called mother. Agricultural fields are called mother, corn is called mother, and sheep are called mother. These applications of the concept –ma certainly make it clear that motherhood is defined in terms of the source, sustenance, and reproduction of life” (in Cheyfitz “Balancing” 146). The story depicts a similarly expansive condition of motherhood and calls for a reliance on this condition.

In addition to this expansive condition of motherhood, “Bingo Night” exposes a Native American understanding of a similarly expansive condition of childhood. The passage preceding the last scene of Alice and Earl’s rescue alludes to the characters’ condition of childhood when little people, who according to Ojibwe narratives only present themselves to children, come out of the bushes and burst into song made up of the words that Earl has just uttered to Alice: “‘Gaawiin gego gotaaji ken. Don’t be scared, now’” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 147). As strange as this scene appears, Earl’s urge is one of the few moments of direct speech in the story and breaks the previous silence of interior monologues with *ēcho* – sound. Earl’s address is literally echoed by the community of little people and evokes the sort of rhythm, echoes, and re-echoes that Artense mentions in the beginning of the collection. And, indeed, the scene with its echoes constitutes a moment of orientation and rescue for the couple.

The reader learns that the little people are called *memegawens*; they are figures that inhabit traditional Ojibwe stories and typically present themselves to children in

danger. The mood in the story shifts with the appearance of the *memegawens*: Whereas the story has been dominated by a sense of fear until this point, comfort is now the prevalent sentiment. Singing and listening, Alice lies down in the mud next to Earl. The scene mirrors the type of Ojibwe home in winter shared by multiple generations and filled with stories, careful listening, and observation, except here it is set in open space. This space is defined by the presence of song, by Alice's physical closeness to Earl, and by the multigenerational community of "*memegwesiwag*, parents and grandparents, and people much older than that" (148).

However, in this notion of home the teachers are not the elders who are being observed by the children. It is the children who sing and dance and who "comfort their playmate Alice" and the adults who observe the children and listen to them carefully (Grover, *Dance Boots* 148). This community of little people tell different histories of boarding school imprisonment, military engagement, and kinship relations; they bring to mind "the specter[s] of all that happened to those who went before us," specters that Artense talks about in the beginning of the collection (Grover, *Dance Boots* 9).

The scene becomes a stage for stories and an Indigenous community that encompasses multiple generations. The little people's urge to Alice not to be scared now is addressed at all of those who have experienced this history and who surround the children as their audience. The relief that Alice receives from watching, listening, and participating in the children's activities suggests that in light of these histories and of the ways in which the federal government as alleged guardian has broken up and alienated Native families from one another, it is now the adults who may learn from observing and listening to the younger generation. Grover states in her essay "When

the Sky Signs,” that this lack of fear is the reason why children can see the *memegawens*: “A child who is visited by the little people or spirits has not learned to be frightened by the unfamiliar or unearthly” (Grover, *Onigamiising* 8). Like the audacity of a child who may relate to strangers, “Bingo Night” suggests the adoption of a sentiment of comfort toward the unfamiliar.

Indeed, Alice and Earl resemble children in this scene. Alice’s body assumes an infantile position, as she “rolled onto her side to lie with her head on her arm, next to Earl...” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 148). The fetal positions of their bodies suggest a promise for recreation and new beginning. Johnston explains that the little people “did not appear to all children, only to those who lost their way and needed to be brought home and restored to their families” (*Manitous* 152). The appearance of the *memegawens* constitutes a promise of a home and family for Alice and Earl. Alice and Earl revert to a childlike state of inability and need for care, a state that is radically different from their previous fear and feverish desire to maintain guardianship.²² It is in the presence of the *memegawens* and their stories that Alice finally closes her eyes next to her seemingly sleeping husband. Now, their sleep does not constitute their submission to a watchful, paternalistic guardian out of their fear of others but rather their sleep in the mud is the ultimate return to an original mother that is earth and the comfort resulting from the presence of others. Indeed, their body’s fetal positions in the mud signify a type of proximity to motherhood that Johnston defines as

²² Moreover, Alice and Earl’s inability and need for care at the end of the story differs from the type of crisis that Alice describes when she talks about Lisette earlier in the story. The story demonstrates the ways in which the need for care is not to be understood as a moment of crisis according to Native epistemologies, on the contrary, it constitutes an exposure to the interdependent relationships that surround beings.

characteristic to the moment of death: “Men and women recline upon the earth in the final moments of life. It is then, as in birth, that children are closest to their mothers” (Johnston *Ojibway Heritage* 26). The last sentence in this passage from Johnston highlights not only an expansive understanding of motherhood – children have multiple mothers including human mothers and mother earth – but also an expansive understanding of childhood that extends far beyond young age. The text highlights that childhood does not end in adulthood. Rather, Grover’s stories suggest that within an expansive condition of motherhood, in which the mother functions as a teacher, people exist in a permanent condition of childhood, in which they continue to learn from and are taken care of a variety of mothers.

Thus, Grover’s work makes an intervention in the ways in which one may conceptualize Native life in terms of childhood. Native American Studies scholar Andrea Smith explores a legal notion of Native people as non-able children by arguing that federal Indian law defines Indigenous people as non-workers and, thus, in the same way as children and people with disabilities as non-humans. Against this legal definition of perpetual wardship, Grover’s texts expose that Native epistemologies may also define (Indigenous) people as children but according to their definition this state of childhood is not characterized by a lack of self-determination but rather by a perpetual state of learning. Grover’s texts demonstrate that childhood/adulthood is not a binary opposition but adulthood and childhood are complementary: mothers are children and children can be mothers.

When Angie and Bud find Alice and Earl, they adopt the role of the children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren that Earl envisioned earlier with his question,

“who will look for us?” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 147). Angie and Bud instantly address Alice and Earl with kinship terms: “Auntie... Uncle?” and, therefore, they establish a familial relationship between the older couple and themselves (Grover, *Dance Boots* 149). As stated above Earl’s question resonates with the perpetual search for kin and for a conception of home and family that relies on protection of kin through surveillance of the surroundings. However, the text does not provide evidence that Angie and Bud actively look for Alice and Earl; instead they seem to find the couple by coincidence. When they drive down the road, Angie prompts Bud to, “look out!” and to “Stop!” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 148). Here, the story makes clear that a careful observatory approach to the surroundings, an approach that Angie asks Bud to adopt, may open up kin structures. By exposing structures of familiarity rather than difference and unfamiliarity, the observatory approach diverges from the surveilling approach, which is meant to expose dangers in the surroundings. Since Alice and Earl’s rescue is coincidental in the end and the rescue does not result from a search, “Bingo Night” suggests that recreation and survivance do not begin with a search and the act of surveillance as a protective mechanism from dangers but rather they rely on the careful observation of an expansive condition of interdependence and instruction.

At Home in Stories: Picturing Non-Territorial Modes of Belonging

“Bingo Night” provides an alternative version to the nuclear family home, based on property and guardianship, a narrative that is extended to the sovereignty doctrine. While before Alice and Earl seemed to think that going home should ideally mean going home to a place where family members reside, the end of the story and

Alice's exclamation, "[t]ime to go home" suggest that at least after the history of the boarding school it is the process of finding others that allows the couple to finally venture home (Grover, *Dance Boots* 149). Instead of going home *to* their kin, an endeavor that has in part been made impossible by boarding school policies, they will now go home *with* their kin. Though Alice's call to go home clearly suggests that they have not yet reached this home, it does not imply anymore that they do not know how to get to this home. The search for the home is, hence, over and the story suggests that the re-established Native kinship ties ultimately enable the process of going home.

This idea of creating a home under the conditions of unfamiliarity and dispersion is highlighted in "Shonnud's Girl," a story of a perpetually disappearing mother, Shonnud, and her daughters Rose and Violet. At the end of the story, when the whole family is dispersed after the mother's final disappearance and her father's death, Rose outlines a notion of home and place that is utterly social and interdependent with others, yet, not territorially circumscribed:

We have a place where we belong, no matter where we are, that is as invisible as the air and more real than the ground we walk on. It's where we live, here or *aandakii* [somewhere else]: those of us who returned to the old LaForce land allotment, those of us in Duluth, those of us far away. We were there before we were born and we will be there after we die, all of us... It doesn't matter if we leave, or if we think we will never even come back. It's where our grandparents, and their grandparents, lived and died; it's where we and our grandchildren and their grandchildren will, too. I learned it in a dream. Any of us by ourselves, we're just one little piece of the big picture, and that picture is home. We are part of it; we are in the picture. It's home (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98-99).

The place that Rose describes is a social place that is defined by a sense of family. Her reference to grandparents and grandchildren alludes to kinship structures, which in their completion form what she calls "the big picture" (Grover, *Dance Boots* 99).

However, unlike a physical picture, whose separate parts form a complete image through their physical proximity to one another as discussed in relation to Grosz's account on visual, spatial framing in Chapter One, Rose argues that the separate parts of the picture do not have to be in close proximity to each other – they can be “here or *aandaki*” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98). Instead, she outlines a type of understanding of home that, even though parts of it are dispersed, they exist within the picture. Here, Rose revises the type of visual picture that Grosz defines as inherently spatial, an image in which separate elements are unified by the seer's vision. In this image, characters may “leave” and “never ... come back,” they can be “here or *aandakii*,” indicating no spatial enclosure for this picture (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98-99).

Grover's image pleads for the consideration of stories. As Artense suggests in the beginning of the volume: “[A]s Indian people our interactions with society and with each other include the specter of all that happened to those who went before us. As their schooling experiences defined too much of their lives, so that legacy continues to define much of ours. Yet without it, we disappear” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 9). Both Artense's and Rose's statements emphasize a collective “we” as well as a sense of visibility. Artense's stories make the “we” visible and prevents “us” from “disappear[ing]” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 9). Similarly, the home in Rose's picture is described as “invisible,” yet “real” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98). With Artense's stories and the legacy of others, the structures in Rose's picture, structures that the U.S. sovereign/guardian has made unfamiliar and, thus, attempted to destroy, are made familiar and visible. Artense's use of the word “disappear” is notable in this context as it demonstrates that not only does the “we” disappear without the stories and legacies

of others, the “we,” in turn, also appears in light of these legacies (Grover, *Dance Boots* 9). Thus, Rose’s picture is made visible through the stories of others whether they are here or somewhere else, dead or alive. In other words, the stories make the “invisible” “place where we belong” visible (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98). The picture, the visualization of home, *is* the stories and the stories are home: “[W]e are in the picture. It’s home” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 99).

Rose makes clear that this home, the “place” where this “we” belongs, is not anchored in a geography that can be neatly mapped or circumscribed with the help of fences or borders; the location of Rose’s home is pervasive; it is “where we live, here or aandakanii” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98). This home is not affected by departures or return, rather it is defined by those who exist, those who have already existed, and those who will exist in the future, be it “grandparents,” great-grandparents, “grandchildren,” etc. (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98-99). The home is bound to the sum of relations between these beings rather than to an allocated “place” in the Western sense of territory and property (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98).

The relationality implicated in this notion of home challenges Western assumptions that space is necessarily and, as Doreen Massey puts it, as “by its very nature... divided/regionalised” (65). Instead, Rose envisions a non-territorialized notion of belonging that is, though not territorially bounded, localizable as a “where” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98). This “where” is extant only within relations to others (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98). According to natural democracy, these others includes human family members, animals, non-human and non-animal beings that in Western theory would constitute part of a landscape.

“Bingo Night” exposes that the topography of a natural democracy extends far beyond the geography imagined by Western spatial theory. At the very end of the story this place is reflected through the figure of Earl. He is asleep, seemingly dead, but “the old man’s eyes stared at the moon, reflecting the possibilities of the starry night sky” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 149). According to Ojibwe thought, the “we” of Rose’s picture is not bound to physical geography of the globe, as “Sky Woman and other manitous [loosely translated as spirits] ... dwell among the stars and beyond the Earth” (Johnston *Manitous* xxii). Johnston defines “manitous” as “refer[ing] to realities other than the physical ones of rock, fire, water, air, wood, and flesh – to the unseen realities of individual beings and places and events that are beyond human understanding but are still clearly real” (*Manitous* xxi-xxii). Johnston’s words resonate with Rose’s description of the home as “invisible” but “real” (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98).

The manitous represent Ojibwe survivance, knowledge, and stories as the manitous are “endowed ... with immortality, virtue, and wisdom. It is to them that men and women turn in their vision quests and purification rites for betterment of their inner beings” (Johnston, *Manitous* xxii). Rose’s affirmation that she “learned” about the home that she describes in this passage, “in a dream” alludes to this educational mode of the manitous’s sighting and the ways in which Native people can address them for knowledge (Grover, *Dance Boots* 99). The reflection in Earl’s eyes evokes an inherent possibility of the manitous’ “immortality, virtue, and wisdom” (Johnston, *Manitous* xxii). Earl’s eyes as reflective surface also bring to mind the echoes that are reflected by Artense and Shirley and the rhythm of their stories. Though before Earl’s

character functions as a type of disruption of these echoes, his very existence is now a type of nexus of other beings and of Ojibwe knowledge. Thus, the scene captures a presence of a variety of possible relationships and stories within Earl's very ontology.

The collection adopts a similar mode of relationality, a type of echoing and re-echoing, within certain characters' names and in the ways in which these names reverberate in slightly different ways throughout the book. In the preface Grover asserts that it is Ojibwe phonology that creates the different names in the stories:

Ojibwe names at times combine English and Ojibwe spelling and pronunciation. The Ojibwe language does not differentiate between the letters *p* and *f*; the letters *l* and *n* can be interchangeable when English language is spoken, as can the letters *l* and *y* and the letters *r* and *n*. Examples of this can be found in some of the names of characters in these stories: Charlotte is Shonnud, and Helen is called Henen. In every day that passes, this speech pattern is heard less frequently, as elders who spoke both the old Ojibwe dialects and English in the Ojibwe way pass on to the next world. I remember their way of speaking in these stories to commemorate, honor, and thank them (Grover, *Dance Boots* x).

Interestingly, characters' names change in different stories, in which they recur, forcing the reader to create the connections between the names either by focusing on the interchangeable Ojibwe sounds, by paying attention to the characters' relationships to one another, or by referring to the family tree in the beginning of the book. Thus, the characters do not only echo their altered name from another story in the collection, they also resonate with the lives of those "elders who spoke both the old Ojibwe dialects and English in the Ojibwe way" whom Grover seeks to "commemorate" in the stories (Grover, *Dance Boots* x). Thus, Grover's work recreates a similar "picture" of "home," in which characters open up a variety of potential relationships and, thus, create a sense of narrative belonging within a multigenerational Ojibwe community

and their stories (Grover, *Dance Boots* 99).

The image of multiple people constituting in their parts a larger picture of home brings me back to Bosse's picture of the Leviathan. Though the home in Rose's picture is "as invisible as the air," and thus not territorial like the commonwealth's home, the members of the community she describes are not deprived of their vision, as is the case for the characters under U.S. guardianship who have their backs turned toward the territory to which they belong (Grover, *Dance Boots* 98). Members of the community in Rose's picture can know and see their home if they turn to others in their surroundings. According to the logic of Grover's *The Dance Boots*, belonging cannot mean submitting the gaze to a guardian who will allegedly watch *for* the person, but it opts for a responsibility to carefully listen to and watch all beings in order to attain familiarity with and knowledge of an expansive community of beings and to be at home in this world.

Though Grover's stories do not reject the idea of the reservation as a part of this home, the movement away from a territorial foundation retracts the reservation from the point of focus for Indigenous belonging. Ultimately, both couples at the end of the story are, in fact, off the reservation and exist as outcasts, to a certain extent, from the reservation community. However, the reservation as a territorial expression of Ojibwe nationhood and, thus, the nation's legal entanglements of Indigenous wardship and U.S. guardianship are not erased from the story's setting. Perhaps, the story suggests that a negotiation of this relationship of wardship needs to be approached with the same type of childlike comfort that Alice experiences at the appearance of the *memegawens*. It is Alice's childlike comfort with the unfamiliar that

eventually allows for familiarity. If approached from an Ojibwe perspective, the nations' legally childlike state as ward may allow Native people to redefine this state of dominion and wardship into one that, if approached with the comfort of a child, may allow for a creative notion of belonging. This notion of belonging, Grover's stories seem to attest, may put an end to the reservation as the site for federal governance and guardianship .

CHAPTER THREE

SCALING “A VERY DEFINITE PLACE OF DEATH”? DETENTION AND HARMONIZED SPACE IN SHERMAN ALEXIE’S *RESERVATION BLUES*

If Grover’s stories presents the reservation as the site of federal guardianship, Alexie’s 1993 short story, “The Trial of Thomas-Builds-the-Fire” takes this critique even further by provocatively alluding to the connections between the reservation system and the prison industrial complex: After being interrogated and convicted for a number of absurd crimes Thomas, a recurring character in Alexie’s fiction and the author’s alter-ego, “looked at the five men who shared his skin color, the white man who shared this bus, which was going to deliver them into a new kind of reservation” (“Trial” 103). In this passage Alexie points to a similar structure within the reservation and the prison that isolates demographic groups according to race and ethnicity. The absurd interrogations of Thomas that occur before this scene suggest that both the reservation and the prison operate according to a legal system that disproportionately convicts people of color. Comparing the reservation to a prison, the story boldly highlights the carceral qualities of the reservation structure and critiques the notion of territoriality that provides the foundation of Indigenous nationhood and, most subversively, Indigenous sovereignty. Moreover, defining the prison as a “new kind of reservation,” exposes a genealogical narrative of the prison-industrial complex as being founded on the reservation, a genealogy that prison scholar and activist Angela Davis also alludes to when describing the reservation system as one of the “great systems of incarceration” in American history (Alexie, “Trial” 103; *Reader* 97).

The carcerality of Alexie’s reservation seems more in line with Agamben’s idea of the camp, an idea that Rifkin investigates in regard to U.S. Indigenous populations’ legal definition as nations within and “domestic dependent nations” (30 U.S. at 1).¹ Rifkin describes the legal construction of Indigenous nationhood in spatial terms: “Their apparent dependency *follows from* their location ‘within the acknowledged boundaries’ of the nation-state...a particular jurisdictional mapping, ‘within’” (emphasis in the original, 99). The emphasis of spatial terms like location, boundaries, and mapping in this quote demonstrates the ways in which the legal construction of Indigenous dependency on U.S. “overriding sovereignty” is made intrinsic to the U.S. American national space, a carefully built geographical construction that Alfred has termed an “architecture of colonial domination” (qtd. in Rifkin 435 U.S. 88; Alfred 37). This chapter explores the relationship between legal colonization and carceral geography of the United States, a geography that spatial scholar Edward Soja terms more broadly “spatial (in)justice” (5). Soja argues that there is a dialectical relationship between geography and the social, or, in other words, that not only social developments affect geography but that the two exist in a reciprocal relationship. In Alexie’s work the U.S. “overriding sovereignty” over Indigenous “domestic dependent nations” – the debilitating relationship of watchful guardian and assumedly helpless ward analyzed in Chapter Two – affects and is affected by the spatiality of the United States settler colonial state (435 U.S. at 191; 30 U.S. at 1). Specifically, this chapter will focus on the ways in which geographical scale as a foundational structure of spatial thinking produces and is produced by

¹ Alexie makes an even more direct connection to Agamben’s camp in his story *Sin Eaters*, in which people with Native American blood are put into camps for medical experiments.

colonial domination and the ways in which it plays a part in the Indigenous characters' confinement.

Particularly, the (im)possibilities of Indigenous mobility in *Reservation Blues* reveal the carceral qualities of this colonial artifact. In the quote above from "Trial," Thomas's captivity on the bus, his "deliver[y]" as the text puts it, foregrounds a very limited type of agency that is, despite the character's movement in space, confined to the bus and later to the prison - i.e. the "new kind of reservation" (Alexie, "Trial" 103). The legal implications of the noun delivery suggesting the transfer of a piece of property from one person to another indicate that in this "delivery" Thomas and his fellow prisoners do not obtain possession of themselves according to a Lockean notion of individual self-ownership ("delivery" *OED online*). These legal limitations do not come as a surprise in the context of lacking prisoner rights but the narrator's remarks connecting the prison to "a new kind of reservation" and the implicit lack of self-ownership on the reservation seem provocative (Alexie, "Trial" 103). This type of formulation of individualism and property is, admittedly, incongruent with American Indian epistemologies of interdependent kinship structures. But, Alexie's description of Indigenous personhood and mobility in this story as detained by a governmental actor suggests that settler colonialism does not allow for any notion of Indigenous subjectivity according to which the Indigenous subject may act and move autonomously. In this setting Native American people are merely "deliver[ed]" as alienated property from one constricted place to the next (Alexie "Trial" 103).

This type of detained mobility challenges the original narrative of U.S. American space as wide open for uninhibited movement, a narrative that is grounded

in one of America's foundational values of individual freedom and the escape from oppression in the Old World to the empty, wild, and vast 'land of the free.' This idea of autonomous mobility dominates narratives of American spatial expansion and appropriation under legal and political programs such as the "Doctrine of Discovery" and the continued westward expansion of "Manifest Destiny," programs that found the juridical legitimation of American political and legal infrastructure.² However, "Trial" makes clear that this type of free mobility is not attainable for people of color and the working class for their mobility is not one of self-possessed choice.

At first glance Alexie's novel *Reservation Blues* seems to be more in line with conventional stories of uninhibited spatial and social mobility on the North American continent: The main plot seems to create a narrative arch that moves from the margins of the reservation to the metropolis in New York City. Thomas and his friends Victor and Junior create the band Coyote Springs with the Flathead Indian women Chess and Checkers; the band becomes increasingly well-known beyond the borders of the Spokane reservation. Ultimately, the record label with the martial name "Cavalry Records" invites Coyote Springs to New York City where they are supposed to record their first album. This faint promise of musical fame and wealth exposes an alleged possibility of mobility within capitalism, a mobility that exceeds spatial, social, and class boundaries. However, the promise fails Alexie's characters quickly, as the band members perform poorly and begin to fight with each other at the record studio.

The fight is framed by the band's previous visit to the elder and teacher Big Mom who lives on a mountain on the reservation. She teaches the group about music's

² For more detailed accounts on the paradox of American freedom and institutionalized oppression, see Morgan; Rana.

healing properties and shares her conviction that “American Indian men have started to believe their own publicity and run around acting like the Indians in movies” (Alexie, *Reservation* 208). When Victor throws a saxophone at one of the label’s agents, he represents the type of Indian aggression portrayed in movies about which Big Mom warns her students. Victor also counteracts Big Mom’s instructions that “the musical instrument is not to be used in the same way that a bow and arrow is” (Alexie, *Reservation* 208). Finally, the record label withdraws their offer and, disenchanted and ashamed, the group returns to the reservation.

Of course, this story of return could be read as a narrative of individual failure, especially when taking seriously the potential of uninhibited social mobility within capitalism and, in fact, some critics do read parts of the novel as such an unsuccessful story.³ However, the framing of the band’s failure around Big Mom’s comments on the misrepresentation of Indian people in popular culture and Indigenous men’s adoption of such images suggests that Victor and the band’s failure is implicated in a history of misrepresentation. Moreover, the record label’s name “Cavalry Records” as well as the agents’ names, Phil Sheridan and George White, names that are identical to the names of the two generals responsible for the 1858 massacre of about 900 Spokane horses – a recurring theme in the text and in “Trial” – reveals that the band’s failure and consequential return to the reservation predominantly stems from a history of Euro-American aggression.

This chapter shows how the spatial narrative in *Reservation Blues* is far from uninhibited and open, instead the novel displays a fragmented notion of land and a

³ See Andrews, especially 137.

carceral geography for the Spokane characters in the novel. This carcerality is generated by an abstraction process that translates Indigenous land – land that, according to Native epistemologies, is considered a social part of the community – into scaled space. This scaling process, as literary and spatial scholar Mary Pat Brady shows, “slot[s] spaces, people, and capital into scaffolded relations with each other” (“Territoriality” 225). Scaling, hence, erases existing social relations such as Indigenous kinship formations and natural democracy and provides the illusion that land is an abstract object, split into fragments according to “affective values” and ownership (Brady, “Territoriality” 225). Hence, scalar space paves the way for a spatial edifice organized according to property relations and territorial affiliations. Therefore, scaling provides the spatial narrative framework for the process of translating land as kin into land as property, a process that Cheyfitz keenly describes in *The Poetics of Imperialism*. Given the abstraction and fragmenting process inherent to scaling, geographical scale constitutes a carceral spatial device; it cuts off and separates beings who live according to reciprocal kinship relations.

In these scaled environments, characters in *Reservation Blues* experience similar constrictions as prisoners: Settler colonialism imposes a notion of detained space-time on the characters, their movement is driven by an outside force, and their

sense of time is dominated by stagnation and a lack of progression.⁴ However, the text also provides an Indigenous, “harmonized” spatial and temporal narrative that is grounded in Native epistemologies of kinship and interdependence. Lastly, I demonstrate that the novel challenges the temporal and spatial limitations of the genre aesthetically and show how Alexie’s text offers an Indigenous response that pushes the boundaries that the genre presumes.

The Indigenous Blues: Harmonizing Colonial Space-Time within an Indigenous Present

A couple of pages into *Reservation Blues*, a short passage about Big Mom alludes to a spatial and historical narrative in the novel that is different from scaled understandings of space-time. The scene begins with Big Mom hearing “the Indian horses scream[.]” (Alexie *Reservation* 9). The horses’ squeal that drifts across the reservation brings to mind a similar type of speech-filled space that Glancy’s *Fort Marion* depicts. The horse figures allude to the United States army’s slaughter of hundreds of Spokane horses mentioned above. The narrator emphasizes that the horses’ musical screams are only imaginable under colonialism: “The song sounded so

⁴ My work on space-time is in conversation with Rifkin’s most recent account on Native temporal sovereignty. Rifkin argues against an inclusion of Native temporalities in the normative settler temporal constructs of modernity and instead asserts a notion of “temporal sovereignty” (2). The possibilities of “temporal orientation... as potentially divergent processes of becoming” that Rifkin describes in *Beyond Settler Time* are present in *Reservation Blues* (2). Rifkin writes, “[m]ore than a question of relations in space, orientation involves reiterated and nonconscious tendencies, suggesting ways of inhabiting time that shape how the past moves toward the present and future” (2). This chapter will demonstrate how the orientations “as divergent processes of becoming” described by Rifkin cannot be described as primarily temporal, which, as Vine Deloria has argued, is a Western prioritization of time over space. Though Deloria defines Indigenous thought as a type of “spatial thinking,” I would argue that the very act of prioritizing either space or time disregards the reciprocity of spatial and temporal thought (73).

pained and tortured that Big Mom could never have imagined it before the white man came, and never understood it later, even at the edge of the twenty-first century” (Alexie *Reservation* 9). The utter violence of colonialism articulated by the horse’s scream creates a tortured idiosyncrasy that goes beyond any understanding. Resonating with Grover’s spatial echoes, this tortured song continuously recurs throughout the novel and functions as a type of background noise on the reservation.

Immediately after hearing the first scream, Big Mom, pays careful attention to the painful song in order to learn it: “She [Big Mom] listened carefully to the horses’ song, until she had memorized it, and harmonized” (Alexie *Reservation* 9). The three steps that Big Mom undertakes to learn the song encapsulate a more general approach toward the colonial history that the horses represent: Careful listening, memorizing, and harmonizing. Like the Ojibwe characters in Grover’s stories Big Mom is a teacher figure who consistently learns by listening carefully and memorizing the stories she has heard. The third step – harmonizing –brings to mind Witherspoon’s accounts on the Navajo notion of *hozho*, meaning “*balance... beauty, happiness, and wholeness*” (Cheyfitz “Just Society” 296). Witherspoon explains: “The Navajo concept of ‘hozho’ refers to that state of affairs where everything is in its proper place and functioning in harmonious relationships to everything else” (in Cheyfitz “Just Society” 296-7). According to this principle of balance, Big Mom (and Alexie’s narrative) harmonizes and integrates the horses’ song into the present moment. Though the verbs listening and memorizing are followed by “the song” as their grammatical object, the verb “harmonize” does not carry a direct object even though “harmonize” is a transitive verb: “She [Big Mom] listened carefully to the horses’ song, until she had memorized

it, and harmonized” (Alexie *Reservation* 9). Thus, Big Mom’s action of creating harmony moves away from the insular narrative of the horses’ song. Rather, since there is no explicit object attached to the act of harmonizing, Big Mom creates a harmonized condition, bringing to mind the balanced “state of affairs” to which Witherspoon refers (qtd. in Cheyfitz “Just Society” 297).

After a mourning ceremony, Big Mom buries all of the horses and collects the most beautiful horse’s bones, which she then turns into a flute. Alexie writes, “Big Mom played a new flute song every morning to remind everybody that music created and recreated the world daily” (*Reservation* 10). Big Mom demonstrates that the horses’ songs, songs that now haunt the reservation and its inhabitants, do not merely have to be interpreted as bothersome disruptions as they are by most characters. Instead, they can become creative forces that exist in harmony with “everything else” in the current moment (Witherspoon in Cheyfitz “Balancing” 297).

Thus, the novel is in conversation with postcolonial contrapuntual reading techniques, which, as Edward Said suggests, provide “a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts” (Said 51). Big Mom suggests that in addition to careful awareness and knowledge of Native voices there is a need to incorporate these voices harmoniously into the narrative present and, thus, to “recreate[...] the world” (Alexie *Reservation* 10).

Particularly, the text alludes to the recreative potential of blues music.⁵ After being chased by the so-called “Gentleman” to whom he had sold his soul, Robert

⁵ For an insightful analysis of *Reservation Blues*’ adoption of formal blues elements, see Moling.

Johnson, the iconic African American Delta blues musician from the 1930s, leaves his guitar with Victor and finds refuge at Big Mom's house on a mountain next to Wellpinit on the reservation (Alexie *Reservation* 6). Finally, Johnson begins to heal and to sing the blues again. The narrator states, "[t]hose blues created memories for the Spokanes, but they refused to claim them. Those blues lit up a new road, but the Spokanes pulled out their old maps. Those blues churned up generations of anger and pain: car wrecks, suicides, murders. Those blues were ancient, aboriginal, Indigenous" (Alexie *Reservation* 174). Drawing a line of connection between the history of colonization of both African Americans and Native Americans, the text makes clear that the blues is just as much Indigenous as it is African American. The reference to the cotton plantations that Thomas begins to smell when he listens to Johnson's blues makes the intersections between the African American and the Indigenous colonial experience in United States history all the more clear. Thomas's ability to smell the cotton exposes the type of simultaneity and harmonious co-existence of distant places and past memories in the present moment. This memory becomes notable in more than the acoustic sense, as Thomas can smell the cotton as if it were present. This connection – the shared memories of African Americans and Indigenous people – the narrator asserts, may be potential forces of recreation and they may "open up a new road" guided by the shared emotions of anger and pain (Alexie *Reservation* 174).⁶

However, against Big Mom's teachings to acknowledge the existence of such memories in the present moment and to see their creative potential, most reservations' inhabitants do not address these memories. When Robert Johnson's blues drifts over

⁶ A large part of the scholarship on *Reservation Blues* deals with this issue of multiculturalism and transcultural interactions. See Chadwick; Arnold; Ford; Tsosie.

the reservation, only “Thomas listened closely, but the other Spokanes slowly stretched their arms and legs, walked outside, and would not speak about any of it. They buried all of their pain and anger deep inside, and it festered, then blossomed, and the bloom grew quickly” (Alexie *Reservation* 175). The reservation residents fail at harmonizing the colonial trauma that the horses represent and attempt to repress the horses’ existence as well as their “pain and anger” (Alexie *Reservation* 175). The burial of negative emotions is described as resulting in a type of physical infection; pain and anger “fester[...]” inside the characters’ bodies and grow like an infectious disease (Alexie *Reservation* 175). The image of a spreading infection that “bloom[s] quickly” gestures toward the body’s ultimate destruction under colonialism (Alexie *Reservation* 175). As a way to forego this mode of self-destruction the text suggests that music has the potential of “churn[ing]” or moving these retained emotions to the surface (Alexie *Reservation* 174). Thus, the blues may light “up a new road” and, like Big Mom suggests, the reservation’s inhabitant may see the possibility of recreating the world by interacting with the past. However, the reservation’s residents “pulled out their old maps,” maps that were drawn by the colonizer (Alexie, *Reservation* 174).

Scalar Boundaries and the Temporality of Enclosure

The novel illustrates that the Spokane people’s “maps” constitute a part of the rationalization of space according to scalar categories (Alexie *Reservation Blues* 174). This becomes clear in one of Thomas’s frequent dream sequences. The scene occurs after Thomas, Victor, and Junior perform their first show during which they meet Chess and Checkers. At the show Chess comes on stage and sings a duet with

Thomas. After Chess's intimate narration about her life, the loss of her baby brother Backgammon, and Thomas and Chess's first kiss, Thomas falls asleep. Thomas's dream begins with a scene from a stereotypical cowboy and Indian film on television and shifts to a childhood memory involving Thomas, Junior, and Victor. Though the subject matters of both scenes appear entirely disparate, both are linked in their immediate succession and each of them thematizes a form of electrocution. In the first scene the Sioux Nation encounters a group of cowboys, who are installing a telegraph wire in the Great Plains. Three of the Native Americans approach the cowboys and "grabbed hold of the telegraph wire. *We come in friendship*, the cowboys said, cranked the generator, and electrocuted the three Indians. Those three Indians danced crazily, unable to release the wire, and the rest of the Sioux Nation rode off in a superstitious panic" (70-71).

This scene of Westward Expansion in United States history comments on the ways in which the newly acquired territory is incorporated into the nation-state. The telegraph wire fulfills an important function for the project of manifest destiny, as it enables communication over great distances and, thus, works as a tool for settler colonialism and for the dispersion of U.S. sovereignty across space. The wire enables the panoptic spatial gaze, which Michel de Certeau critiques as a disciplining mechanism of the narrative of space. According to de Certeau, space is imagined in a totalizing way, as if seen from a gods-eye-perspective, a perspective that differs from the ways in which people experience and practice space on the ground in everyday life. By distributing information across great distances, the wire graphs a similarly totalizing image of the nation as a spatial formation. Benedict Anderson describes this

image of the nation in temporal terms and argues that it is the feeling of existing simultaneously despite spatial separation and anonymity that causes a sense of belonging within a national community. He states that this feeling is created by the swift distribution of information and texts over great distances through the print media. In the same way, the telegraph wire is foundational in the creation of the American nation's simultaneity and because of this function it constitutes a tool for writing space as it transcribes land into territory, scaled to the contours of the nation-state.

Native tribes are not included in the American nation's simultaneous forward movement as suggested by the Sioux Nation's "confront[ation]" of the cowboys, implying that the two parties are facing opposite directions (Alexie Reservation 70). The Sioux's' exclusion from the movement of the American nation alludes to a major critique of scalar thought that was first raised by geographer Sally Marston and her colleagues in their essay "Human Geography Without Scale," and that points to the oppressive hierarchical structures inherent to systems of scale. This system slices space into segments labeled neighborhoods, cities, regions, nations, the globe, etc. and simulates a logical account of spatial organization. Thus, it assumes a vertical, all encompassing and allegedly objective, "God's eye view" of spatial organization and privileges the large scale of the globe while attributing little to no value to small local scales, such as the gendered home (Marston et al. 422). In this way, scale classifies places according to difference in value (N. Smith 64).

When the three Indians' "grab hold" of the wire, they are immediately punished for this attempt at seizing the tools for settler colonial nation building and an

interruption of this process (Alexie Reservation 70). Alexie describes the punishment of or the results of this Indigenous resistance as an “electrocution,” which, with its implications of capital punishment and the law, alludes to the violently punitive ways in which the law has been instrumentalized to colonize Native Americans and their lands (*Reservation* 71). The cowboys’ harsh reaction to the Sioux’s intervention marks an “aggression” at play in the “small-large imaginary” of scalar rationality discussed by French spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre 289; quoted in Brady 171). With its “domestic dependen[ce]” on the more powerful and more valued U.S. American nation-state and the reservation as the territorial expression of this hierarchical relationship, the Sioux Nation and their territories are deeply implicated in the hegemony and aggression of scalar thought (30 U.S. at 17).

The consequence of this electrocution is that some Native characters dance “crazily” while others retreat in “superstitious” fear (Alexie, *Reservation* 71). The image of the three dancing people who are unable to let go of the torturing device demonstrates that the interruption of American nation-building causes severe immobility. Even though the characters dance and thus move, their mobility is deranged and hence not bound to any reason or order or oriented towards a certain goal. In contrast to the progressing nation-state that the cowboys represent, the dancers personify stagnation in their sheer failure to advance. The description of each group’s reactions as either moving “crazily” or as moving in “superstitious panic” constitutes a certain type of delusion that generates their stagnation or backwards movements (Alexie, *Reservation* 71). The Sioux’s regression emphasizes the temporality of the scalar value system, as larger scales are understood to be advanced, progressive, and

to belong to the present or future as opposed to the backwards temporality of smaller scales.⁷ Moreover, their withdrawal positions the Sioux in a time corresponding to what Indigenous political theorist Kevin Bruyneel calls “colonial time” (*Alexie Reservation* 71; Bruyneel 2).⁸

Bruyneel defines colonial time as the condition of forcedly living in the past, which is imposed on Indigenous people in North America by being forced into legal and political dependency on the federal government. This condition neither fully incorporates the tribes into the United States nor does it acknowledge their full sovereignty.⁹ Bruyneel highlights the existence of boundaries in this condition of incomplete inclusion – temporal boundaries that retain Indigenous peoples in the past and spatial boundaries that inscribe them in an ambivalent place that is both inside the United States as “domestic dependent nations” and outside of it according to what legal scholar Charles Wilkinson calls “measured separatism” (qtd. in Bruyneel 4). Wilkinson states, “[t]his separatism is measured, rather than absolute, because it contemplates supervision and support” (qtd. in Bruyneel 4). Chief Justice Marshall creates this ambiguous state describing the tribes as both “domestic” and “dependent”

⁷ Mary Pat Brady argues that scale determines a dogmatic notion of linear time, as the movement along spatial scale coincides with an advancing temporal movement (“Metaphors”186). According to this scalar logic, larger scales such as the city or the globe and smaller, regional scales are not simply spatially constructed as located at the center and in the exterior. See Brady “Metaphors.”

⁸ Developing the concept of “settler time,” Mark Rifkin expands on Bruyneel’s notion of “colonial time.” In addition to the portrayal of Indigenous people as backwards, Rifkin critiques academic and activist endeavors to insert Native American people into the present, endeavors that ignore the existence of multiple temporalities and that normalize a Western linear temporality. See Rifkin. *Beyond Settler Time*.

⁹ Bruyneel argues that claims to Native sovereignty remain rooted in a notion of Indigenous independence that, as he argues, existed before 1871 and in a condition that is entrapped in a static and premodern temporality. He locates its beginning in 1871 when the federal government stopped signing treaties with Native tribes and henceforth kept Native nations in a condition of legal and political dependency on the federal government. I do not agree with Bruyneel’s timeline for it puts too much emphasis on treaties and ignores the ways in which Indigenous nations were forced into a state of dependency before the end of the treaty era.

and as “distinct” and territorially circumscribed (30 U.S. at 17; 31 U.S. at 562). In 1831 Marshall declares in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* that an Indian tribe is “domestic” and “not a foreign state” (30 U.S. at 17; 20). A year later, in *Worcester v. Georgia* he stresses the Indian nations’ distinct character. He writes, “[t]he Cherokee nation... is a distinct community occupying its own territory, with boundaries accurately described” (31 U.S. at 562).¹⁰

By focusing on what Bruyneel understands as a productive aspect of these ambiguous boundaries, as the types of negotiations that occur on the boundaries of space and time, his argument undermines to a degree the detaining impact of settler colonialism and its imposition of spatial and temporal confinement on Indigenous communities. In *Alexie*, the outcome of these types of negotiations is made uncomfortably clear when the Sioux members grab the telegraph wire and are violently electrocuted.

The second scene in Thomas’ dream sequence jumps forward about a hundred years. Thomas, Junior, and Victor sit next to an electric fence circumscribing a white family’s homestead on the Spokane reservation. Victor and Junior kill water snakes on the fence and try to make Thomas touch the fence with the simple purpose of hurting him. Purportedly, the fence around the homestead property is meant to keep livestock inside its circuit and away from the surrounding woods. However, the text suggests that the enclosure of the cows is superfluous and thus seems to imply that the fence mainly functions by keeping Indigenous people out of the homesteaders’ property or, perhaps, inside the reservation: “[B]ut the cows ignored the pines anyway. The fence

¹⁰ Piatote’s concept of foreign domesticity also highlights the paradoxical state of unified separatism in federal Indian law.

burned on and on” (Alexie *Reservation* 71). The needless and continuous burning of the fence references the temporality of infinite stagnation. The verb “burn” also poses the threat of violence if this boundary were to be overstepped.

The electric fence signifies temporal and economic development for, as Cheyfitz suggests, the fence represents the frontier between civilized settlers and uncivilized natives (*Poetics* 55). This distinction of civilization is a temporal distinction between those who are within the fence and in the present, civilized moment and place and those in the unadvanced temporality of the past. This distinction, of course, underscores Bruyneel’s idea of colonial time and marks the Native Americans outside the fenced area as uncivilized and premodern in contrast to the civilized space of the homesteaders.

Victor and Junior’s brutal behavior stands in a clear relationship to the cowboys’ violent acts in the previous scene and exemplifies a form of mimicry. But, unlike Homi Bhabha’s analysis of mimicry – the foundation for Bruyneel’s negotiations on the boundaries – the characters’ mimicry is far from being subversive. Victor’s command to Thomas to “[g]rab the fence” mimics the same action of grabbing that leads to the electrocution of the three Indian characters in the cowboy scene (Alexie *Reservation* 71). The repetition of the verb “come” and its synechdochical relationship to the cowboys’ declaration of their friendship towards the Sioux suggests that the young “friends” mimic the type of aggressive relationship the cowboys exemplify – a relationship that is expressly friendly and intimate but utterly violent (Alexie *Reservation* 70-71). The water snake and Thomas represent Native American knowledge, Thomas being the storyteller who continuously tries to

create a sense of community and tribal memory and the water snake being a creative figure in original American Indian narratives. Thus, the text presents its Spokane characters as mimicking a violent sense of community that punishes those who live according to or represent Native American philosophies. Thus, Alexie's text highlights the appropriation of hegemonic and aggressive social structures by the Native American characters.

The characters' mimicry of violent actions at the electric fence is accompanied by an adoption of scalar thought. Here, the rules of scale are exemplified by the scale of the homesteader's property and its advanced, civilized temporality and the poor and backward reservation. The incessant burning of the fence that divides the two highlights the violence that this partition brings about and the continuity of this violence in linear time as it "burns on and on" (Alexie *Reservation* 71). However, the scene does not present mimicry as involving an attempt to stop or inhibit progress much less the settler colonial nation-state as suggested by Bruyneel. Instead, it demonstrates how Junior and Victor have internalized both a certain idea of temporality and property ownership as well as their own exclusion from these temporal and spatial concepts.

Notably, the characters do not attempt to cross the fence, i.e. the marker of linear temporality that identifies them and Indigenous space as premodern. However, it is this forward movement that Bruyneel considers a part of the colonial condition. He bases his argument on anticolonial writer Aimé Césaire's description of the colonized: "[I]t is the colonized man who wants to move forward, and the colonizer who holds things back" (in Bruyneel 1). Césaire's wording of moving forward and

holding back underscores the same linear notions of progress that are at play in the scalar production of space. Thus, both Césaire and Bruyneel reiterate Western notions of progress and linear time and space, which end up punishing those who live according to different notions of space-time. Victor and Junior in *Reservation Blues* demonstrate the ways in which the scalar spatial-temporal partitions involved in Western linear temporalities continue to function as a torturing device for those who represent a non-Western worldview, a worldview that Western standards deem uncivilized and entrapped in the past. Victor and Junior adopt the violent idea of divided, scalar space, an idea of space that is deeply confining for those who will continue to remain inside the fence. Thus, the scene exemplifies a moment of inertia, in which the mimicry that Bruyneel sees as a form of resistance, progression, and sovereignty becomes instead an incorporated form of confinement.

Instead, Victor and Junior's brutal imitation constitutes an enactment of their role as "pupil" to the colonial guardian – a type of "pupilage as mimicry." Thus, their behavior alludes to the ways in which representations of Native American space-time as scalar, and hence as backwards, follows the legal logic of Indigenous pupilage that has been assigned to tribes in the 1831 Supreme Court Case *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* discussed in Chapter Two. The temporality of the perpetual pupilage arising from this case is a static condition that is explained by reverting to the purported necessity to assist Indigenous people in their progress, as the case draws from a treaty in which the United States expressed "an ardent desire... to lead the Cherokees to a greater deal of civilization" (30 U.S. at 6). Moreover, the "doctrine of discovery," which Marshall had declared in 1823 before *Cherokee Nation* in *Johnson v. McIntosh*,

poses this alleged uncivilized condition as the reason for Native American submission.

Like Earl and Alice in Grover's "Bingo Night," this type of paternal relationship is mirrored in Junior and Victor's adoption of a colonial vision of the world in *Reservation Blues*. The cowboys function as a model for this worldview that values progress, property, and the nation-state. This model is consistently broadcasted on TV and reenacted by the juvenile Native American characters in a different kind of "state of pupilage" (30 U.S. at 17). However, as Andrea Smith demonstrates, federal Indian law's firm categorization of Native people along with children as dependent non-workers and, thus, as non-humans, closes off possibilities of leaving the state of pupilage for Native people. The linear temporality of progression that is ascribed to the white, abled child fails to apply to the legal status of Native people. Thus, the law defines Indigenous temporality as a stagnant, infinite state of pupilage.¹¹

"The End of the World is Here:" Scaling Colonial Time

Most of *Reservation Blues* describes a type of spatial isolation and temporal inertia that is similar to what philosopher Michael Hardt describes as "prison time," a deathlike temporal condition that is marked by the experience of suspended life, of existing as a sort of outcast to life. The experience of incarceration is typically imagined to include the subject's death and rebirth, which literary scholar Caleb Smith traces across American history and culture. Hardt also explores this condition of quasi-death through imprisonment and argues that the prisoner experiences time as a type of

¹¹ Robin Bernstein provides a detailed account on the ways in which people of color were excluded from the category of the child as innocent in the nineteenth century. She writes, "[a]t stake in this split was fitness for citizenship and inclusion in the category of the child, and ultimately, the human" (36).

suspension of life, in which his time in the prison feels void of substance. It is the moment of release that is imagined as the reintroduction into “the time of living” (Hardt 66-7). This condition is described by sociologist Erving Goffman and adopted in Hardt’s notion of “prison time”: “... the inmate tends to feel that for the duration of ... his sentence ... he has been totally exiled from living” (in Hardt 66).

However, the detained space-time that Alexie describes offers clear limitations to the possibility of rebirth or liberation that is the common theme of the classic American texts Caleb Smith explores or the moment of release that seemingly ends Hardt’s prison time. The temporality that characters in the novel experience, a condition that I call “detained time” is marked by radical stagnation - a temporal, deathlike suspension of life, which Hardt identifies during the time of incarceration - and the colonial condition of being trapped in the past, which is at the center of Kevin Bruyneel’s notion of “colonial time” (2).¹²

This condition of detained time is clearly delimited by scalar boundaries and is, hence, temporally and spatially defined. In a scene that depicts the seeming monotony of reservation life, one of the characters, the-man-who-was-probably-Lakota, who continuously announces what appears to be end of time, states once again: “[T]he end of the world is near” to which Junior says mockingly: “When is that going to happen?”

¹² This notion of temporal exclusion brings to mind anthropologist Johannes Fabian’s work on the “uses of Time” in anthropological work (1). Fabian argues that anthropology has assumed a notion of universal, linear time according to which it places its object of study in a previous temporal location. Thus, Western anthropologists, because of their own positionality, create distance between the West and those whom anthropologists consider backwards on the allegedly universal timeline. See Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. Columbia University Press, 1983.

... I need to set my alarm clock” (Alexie, *Reservation* 16).¹³ The necessity to set an alarm clock highlights that the alleged end of the world would pass unnoticed, implying either that the end of the world may not have a great impact on the individual, which seems doubtful, or that the end of the world may already exist. That Alexie’s text makes a case for the latter condition becomes clear when considering the preceding passage; a comment by Thomas that locates the reservation in a marginalized area of the world: “Thomas looked around at the little country he was trying to save, this reservation hidden away in the corner of the world” (Alexie, *Reservation* 16).

By linking the temporal “end of the world” to a spatial “hidden away corner of the world,” Alexie positions the Spokane reservation in a state of temporal and spatial exile and perpetual ending (Alexie, *Reservation* 16). A response to the-man-who-was-probably-Lakota’s warnings in an earlier scene demonstrates that this state of exile seems delimited by the reservation’s borders as: “[T]hey already knew the end was just around the corner, a few miles west, down by Turtle Lake” (Alexie, *Reservation* 11). Thus, the reservation is depicted as a clearly circumscribed place of difference: Spatially it is located in a “corner of the world” and temporally it exists in a state of perpetual ending (Alexie, *Reservation* 11). This portrayal underscores the small/large logic of geographical scale and its attachment to a perpetually primitive, backwards state within the imaginary of linear time. This spatial and temporal condition renders

¹³ Native American Studies scholar Lawrence Gross affirms, “American Indians in general have seen the end of our worlds” (449). Gross argues that Native Americans endure what he calls “Post Apocalypse Stress Syndrome,” a condition that the Anishinaabe treat with the “comic vision” inherent to their traditional stories (450). This “comic vision” is, of course, also visible in Sherman Alexie’s work.

the reservation different from the “rest of the world”, which is large and advanced.

This state of perpetual ending and the condition of being exiled from living, of detained time, is expressed through the leitmotif of the living dead in the novel.¹⁴ For instance, the threat of suicide plays a critical role in reservation life – Junior ultimately fulfills this threat by killing himself – but the condition of deathlike everyday life is not merely restricted to the place of the reservation in the novel. The text portrays characters who leave the reservation and continue their lives in the city as “brown zombies”, a hotel in an urban area is called “The Tomb,” and the novel repeatedly engages in word plays describing characters who leave the reservation as the departed (Alexie, *Reservation* 99; 221).¹⁵ Thus, the exile from living expands across the boundaries of the reservation and characters remain in a state of “deathlike captivity,” which the word “tomb” demonstrates particularly well (C. Smith 3; Alexie, *Reservation* 221). However, characters’ movements across boundaries are not transcendent or liberating in a way that enables them to surpass and break with confinement but they move in a circumscribing manner. By presenting characters within and outside of the reservation in this way, Alexie’s novel blurs the binary of

¹⁴ The figure of the zombie derives from Haitian narratives and, thus, is a colonial appropriation. Film Scholar Kyle Bishop argues that zombie movies have no literary predecessor and demonstrates how the origins of zombie movies in the 1930s were driven by “imperialist anxieties” of black unrest (13). Though they are not gothic by origin, zombie movies employ typical gothic modes of storytelling and, thus, function within the American gothic history. As literary scholar Theresa Goddu demonstrates, America’s colonial history of slavery and genocide provide the foundations for the emergence of the gothic genre. The portrayal of black and Indigenous people as savage beasts typical for American gothic fiction provides a strong point of connection to the “imperialist anxieties” Bishop analyzes in twentieth century zombie movies (Bishop 13).

¹⁵ This notion of the departed is juxtaposed by the first scene of the novel in which Robert Johnson arrives on the reservation and the text highlights this unusual moment of arrival: “In the one hundred and eleven years since the creation of the Spokane Indian Reservation in 1881, not one person, Indian or otherwise, had ever arrived there by accident” (3). Thus, the arrival of Robert Johnson and the fact that he is cured on the reservation can be understood as a movement away from the state of colonial prison time and a gesture towards new beginnings and hopefulness.

incarceration and freedom for his Indigenous characters.

The dragged bodies, zombies, and people trapped in tombs are located in the city, the place to which the federal government relocated American Indian people in the mid twentieth century in the hope that Native people would assimilate to the individualized life of mainstream America and finally terminate tribal affiliations.¹⁶ Alexie's depiction of this failed attempt at assimilation as a condition of being exiled from living underscores not only the destructive effects of this type of policy and the forced disconnection from a vital community but it also suggests the occurrence of a violent split in the Indigenous characters that produces souls and bodies instead of tribal members who exist in interdependence with their surroundings.

Particularly a passage about Victor, Thomas, and Junior's trip to New York alludes to the Cartesian split of body and mind. Alexie describes the characters as, "those whose bodies were dragged quickly and quietly into the 20th century while their souls were left behind somewhere in the late 19th century" (Alexie, *Reservation* 219-220). Again, the reservation where the soul remains is portrayed as stuck "somewhere in the late 19th century" in colonial time (Alexie, *Reservation* 220). The Indigenous subject's living essence, regardless of her body's physical existence outside the reservation and in the twentieth century, continues her existence on the reservation and in the past and remains disjointed from the temporal and spatial environment of the present. The division between mind and matter and subject and object is undoubtedly one of the foundational ideas of Western theories of subjectivity and individualism. According to Descartes, it is the existence of a soul and the ability

¹⁶ For an insightful exploration of Alexie's urban American Indian as a figure of interstice, a figure existing in no place, See Mariano.

to think that distinguishes humans from animals, an idea that differentiates his thought radically from Native American epistemologies. In fact, Cajete explains, “most Native languages do not a specific word for ‘animals.’... The fact that there are no specific generic words for animals underlines the extent to which animals were considered to interpenetrate with human life. Animals were partners with humans even when humans were abusive” (qtd. in Cheyfitz, “Balancing” 145).¹⁷

According to the logic of interdependence the material matter of the body cannot be associated with an individual subject or even distinguished from this person’s immaterial mind but it is rather in constant exchange and relationality with everything in its surrounding. Thus, the left behind soul and the dragged body in *Reservation Blues* denote the destruction of this interdependence between people and the environment and a certain invention of a violently split Indigenous body and soul. In fact, it denotes the invention of the Indigenous body and soul as distinct categories, categories that, according to Native epistemologies, cannot exist as single entities or in a binary opposition to the mind or soul but only in relation to other living beings.

Moreover, the text suggests that it is the act of crossing the border between the reservation and the rest of the American nation that creates an Indigenous body split from its soul. Thus, the novel incorporates the divided body within a scalar structure that inhibits Indigenous mobility and agency. In other words, it is the scalar boundary, the border that separates the reservation and the territory under the sole sovereignty of the United States that creates the separation between body and soul and, thus, creates the body as its own entity. Hence, Alexie’s text critiques the sovereignty discourse

¹⁷ For extensive discussion on Native epistemology and the body and mind see Cajete especially pp. 20-45.

attached to the space of the reservation by alluding to the ways in which the imposition of Western binary categories such as scalar boundaries, national space and territory, body and soul, etc. refuse to give Indigenous characters more autonomy or mobility. The verb “drag” describes the bodies' forced movement of progression along the spatial scale from the rural reservation to the metropolis and from the past into the present moment (Alexie, *Reservation* 219). This movement implies a violent removal in space and time, a removal that again evokes the types of displacements forced onto Native tribes throughout the nineteenth and into the mid twentieth century. Instead of offering tribal sovereignty, the text suggests that the reservation and its existence within boundaries and Western categories separates Indigenous characters from their kinship relations and imprisons them within Western categories of opposition.¹⁸

This condition of detachment and isolation is also extended to other colonized characters. The character Robert Johnson stands in as a victim of African American colonization and is connected to the plight of American Indians. Like the American Indian characters who are exiled from living and are forced to leave behind their souls, Robert Johnson suffers from the Cartesian split and a “left behind soul” as he has famously sold his soul to the devil (Alexie, *Reservation* 219). His condition is described as a “disease” highlighting the physical effects of his faulty deal (Alexie, *Reservation* 6). In another instance the deal with the devil is described as Johnson’s relinquishment of his freedom, alluding to the limited mobility and agency experienced by the Indigenous characters (Alexie, *Reservation* 264).

¹⁸ In some ways Alexie’s text echoes critiques of sovereignty as a Western concept that is not only incompatible with Indigenous thought but its rootedness in Western political thought and its ideas of domination and domestication delimit Native autonomy. See Taiaiake. “Sovereignty”; Reyes and Kaufman.

Alexie portrays the alleged mobility of Native subjects across reservation boundaries not as the result of individual agency, of negotiations, or even of sovereignty but as a detained mobility, a movement stemming from outside violence and force. The outside force implied in Alexie's portrayal of Indigenous mobility underscores his depiction of settler-colonial space not only as colonial space, which is dominated by the overriding sovereignty of the United States, but as a carceral space that retains Native American subjects within its temporal and spatial constraints and highlights the kind of dependency that the law has created since the early nineteenth century.¹⁹

"Creat[ing] and Recreat[ing] the World Daily:" Harmonizing Spokane Space-Time

While depicting the carceral consequences of adopting Western geographies of scale, *Reservation Blues* offers a creative understanding of an interrelated body that is not confined by linear temporality or spatial scale. This interrelated quality of the body is present in the text when Big Mom plays the flute made from a massacred horse's bones. Alexie writes, "Big Mom played a new flute song every morning to remind everybody that music created and recreated the world daily" (*Reservation* 10). The song that Big Mom plays is the product of an interaction: Big Mom – her breath – and the remnants of the dead horse's body create something new every day. In reference to

¹⁹ Alexie's description of the reservation as located "in the late 19th century," brings to mind the carceral reservation politics of the time. As Luana Ross points out, at the end of the 19th century reservations in Montana, for instance, were placed under a so-called pass system. Ross writes, "under the pass system Natives were not allowed to leave unless they obtained legal permission. According to Francis Amasa Walker, commissioner of Indian Affairs during the 1870s, this system was a way to prevent Natives from violating white settlements. The pass system, thus, was developed and effectively operated to imprison Natives on their respective reservations" (38). The characters' detained mobility and the reservation's stagnation in time suggest the continuation of the carceral politics of the reservation that were legally enforced in the late 19th century.

American Indian kinship relationships with other beings and their value of a variety of life forms, Cajete argues that “[c]reativity is the universe’s ordering principle and process. Creativity in all forms is part of the greater flow of creativity in nature” (15). Big Mom’s interactive song and its creative outcome of potentially (re)creating the world allude to this inherent principle of interdependence and creativity in Native ontology and a specific “sense of timing” attached to this principle of the eternal transformation of natural creation (Cajete 49).

According to this understanding of the world as inherently creative and transformative, the body does not exist within a linear and carceral notion of space-time, or even as its own scalar category, for the body interacts and transforms within an ongoing creative environment.²⁰ Cajete stresses this notion of interaction, stating that the “metaphor of the body,” as it is often used in Native politics and other social contexts, describes not just the physical body, but the mind-body that experiences and participates in the world: “Indeed, humans and the natural world interpenetrate one another at many levels, including the air we breathe, the carbon dioxide we contribute to the food we transform, and the chemical energy we transmute at every moment of

²⁰ Western phenomenological theorists, beginning with Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, have challenged this notion of separation and pose the body and human sensation in the center of their thinking. Though some Native American scholars (e.g. Gregory Cajete in *Native Science*) see links between Western phenomenological thinking and Indigenous epistemologies, Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of the human body is deeply entangled with Western notions of individualism, which are in complete opposition to Native notions of corporeality. For instance, Merleau-Ponty describes the concept of shame and embarrassment in relation to the naked body. He asserts that this experience of shame expresses a master-slave-dialectic that results from a sort of psychological battle over self-property between the self and the other. His assumption that the other’s gaze at the self’s naked body renders the self “defenseless” and “reduced to servitude” alludes to the individual’s fears that another individual may take away her sovereignty as an individual (193). First, this focus on the individual is radically different from a Native American notion of a self that is communal and interdependent. Second, the binary opposition between the self and the other clashes with Indigenous notions of interdependence and restoring balance. For an insightful account on Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of the body, see chapter 2 of Elizabeth Anker’s *Fiction of Dignity*.

our lives from birth to death. In the words of Abram (1996:47), ‘the body is a creative, shape-shifting entity’” (Cajete 25). Simply by being alive, the body is naturally infiltrated by other bodies and entities and likewise infiltrates others. Thus, Native conceptions of the body are defined by reciprocal interrelations.

Reservation Blues depicts the creative potential of these infiltrations, of interdependent relationships through music. In the novel Alexie describes song not merely on a discursive level but as innately physical, material, and spatial. In a scene when Robert Johnson’s guitar “play[s] itself,” the novel makes clear how music bears the potential for a sensual engagement with the environment (Alexie *Reservation* 23). In the text the guitar’s music takes on a material form and has a sensual impact on a variety of beings in its surrounding: “The guitar’s song drifted through the truck’s open windows, fell down on the two Indians [Victor and Junior], and worked its way into their skins...Music rose above the reservation, made its way into the clouds, and rained down... Thomas felt the movement, the shudder that passed through tree and stone, asphalt and aluminum” (Alexie *Reservation* 23-24). Here, music adopts a similarly “dissipated” form as the travelling sounds in the prairie that Black Horse describes in Glancy’s *Fort Marion* (19). In *Reservation Blues*, the song literally dissipates into vaporized water and eventually rains down on Victor and Junior’s bodies. Hence, like the prisoners’ voices, song in *Reservation Blues* does not disappear, rather it has a strong impact on characters as it enters their bodies through their skin – ultimately music wakes Victor and Junior from their hangover sleep. This depiction of song and stories as permeating and affecting both the person’s physique and their state of mind challenges the body and mind opposition and scaled form in

general. Moreover, the movement that Thomas feels is the same that affects parts of the environment, such as trees and stones, and demonstrates how every being in this natural environment is (literally) moved by the music. Eventually, it is music that lures Victor and Junior to Thomas's house to join the band. Here, the text highlights the creative and collective outcome of these sensual interactions caused by the guitar's music.

Alexie uses this notion of creativity to draw attention to the tension arising from the difference in thought between Native American epistemologies and their value of life and creation and Western thought that brings about colonization, legal impositions, and the characters' experience of quasi-death. The novel's first sentence references the word "creation" together with a specific date on which the reservation was established (Alexie *Reservation 3*). Thus, Alexie highlights the Western notion of linear time in its understanding of creativity that is oriented toward the future and progress. The novel begins with the lines, "In the one hundred and eleven years since the creation of the Spokane Indian Reservation in 1881, not one person, Indian or otherwise, had ever arrived there by accident" (Alexie *Reservation 3*). The sequential arrangement of the words "creation" and "reservation" generates a tension between Cajete's sense of creativity and life and the deathlike stagnation caused by "the creation of the reservation" and its geographical and juridical incorporation into United States territory (Alexie, *Reservation 3*). While the entirety of the novel places a lot of emphasis on the colonization of Native life, at the end of the novel kinship relations, music, and creativity provide the possibility for agency and liberation from detained space-time.

In the last scene Thomas, Chess, and Checkers, drive off the reservation, surprised that “[n]othing happened. No locks clicked shut behind them” (Alexie *Reservation* 305). Thomas, Chess, and Checkers are convinced that the reservation would wall itself off behind them, demonstrating their adoption of scalar thought according to which the reservation is its own carceral fragment. As soon as they cross “the reservation border” and realize that this scalar enclosure is a fiction, shadow horses appear and Thomas, Chess, and Checkers drive off with them into the darkness (Alexie, *Reservation* 305). The horses – the haunting remnants of the violent massacre of Spokane horses by American soldiers mentioned earlier – allude to the shadows inherent to Native Studies scholar Gerald Vizenor’s notion of transmotion.²¹ Vizenor sees transmotion as foundational to survivance – Native active presence – and, thus, it stands in opposition to the stagnation prevalent in the rest of the book. He argues that shadows embody the idea of transmotion and haunt colonial discourse and its silences as a type of trace: “Shadows and oral stories arise in tribal silence and are heard in that aural distance to the chance concept, that reach of lonesome silence between the signifier, the signified, and their signs; the trace and *différance* of meaning are dashed and deferred to the silence of other texts in the literature of dominance. Shadows are that silence and sense of motion in memories” (70-71). The shadow horses exemplify Vizenor’s transmotion and open a possibility for a temporality that makes room for haunting and movements across spatial and temporal boundaries. Leaving scalar thought behind, Thomas, Chess, and Checkers are able to move alongside these “shadows and oral stories,” away from the boundaries of linear time, progress, and the

²¹ Mary Pat Brady provides a thorough analysis of linear time, haunting, and scale, see “Metaphors to Love By.”

repression of past events (Vizenor 70).

Alexie's shadow horses who represent the suppressed memory of the massacre exemplify the silences that Vizenor traces in American literature. The novel's ending does not merely make these silences visible as shadows, the horses begin to sing with their human companions and, hence, the novel fills the silent gaps, which Vizenor describes, with sound and music. Therefore, this ending constitutes an ultimate movement toward Big Mom's act of harmonizing that occurs earlier in the novel and that I mention in the beginning of the chapter.

The final scene highlights a sense of harmony that resists the hierarchized scalar politics that initially founded the reservation and form the category of the scalar body. By placing the contemporary characters and the nineteenth century horses side by side or as Alexie writes "alongside" each other, the text challenges the notion of progress and linear time and the type of temporal and spatial incarceration on the reservation described above (*Reservation* 306). Like Big Mom, the characters now see and engage with the temporal dimensions of the present, "the future and the past" at once and are able to move "alongside" characters from earlier times instead of being passively "dragged" toward or "left behind" in one temporality and place (Alexie *Reservation* 10; 219).

Though many readers may interpret Thomas, Chess, Checkers, and the horses' border crossing as an act of separatism and escape from the Indigenous community, as does, for instance, Cherokee scholar Scott Andrews, I propose that their departure

constitutes a releasing movement that expresses Spokane autonomy.²² A separatist reading relies on the scalar opposition between reservation and city. However, the scene does not highlight such oppositions. Instead, it concentrates on connections between those who leave and those who remain on the reservation. This connection is made apparent by the repeated use of the conjunction “while”: “Those horses were following, leading Indians toward the city, while other Indians were traditional dancing in the Longhouse after the feast, while drunk Indians stood outside the Trading Post, drinking and laughing. Robert Johnson and the-man-who-was-probably-Lakota played a duet. Big Mom sat in her rocking chair” (Alexie *Reservation* 306). The recurrence of the word “while” and the ongoing actions of different characters in numerous places suggests a sense of simultaneity that relies on a temporal similarity, the characters are acting *at the same time*, despite their location according to scales. In addition to this temporal focus, Alexie’s use of the word “alongside” when referring to the characters’ coinciding movement with the nineteenth-century horses suggests a spatial reading of the passage.

Though this notion of simultaneity brings to mind Benedict Anderson’s ideas on the origins of the nation, the simultaneity that is present in *Reservation Blues* is not

²² Scott Andrews understands the novel as full of despair and as “sett[ing] for surviving rather than imagining success for its protagonists” (137). Though Alexie’s vision of the reservation is certainly not hopeful and characters do not succeed in a neoliberal understanding of the term, I do not agree with Andrews suggestion that the ending proclaims separatism or forecloses the possibility of cross-cultural exchange. For instance, Andrews argues that, though the novel proposes the possibility of new affiliations through music, “none of these possibilities are realized in the novel” (145). This argument ignores the existence of multiple new affiliations that are created through music. For instance, after being guided to the reservation by his guitar, Robert Johnson stays on the reservation with Big Mom. Moreover, the Flathead Indian couple, Chess and Checkers Warm Water, remain with Thomas after having played together in a band. Lastly, Andrews’ reading of the novel as proclaiming anti-mixed-blood views reduces the novel to the view of one of its characters and largely ignores the ways in which the notion of blood is in itself a colonial paradigm (c.f. Cheyfitz “What is an Indian?”).

bound to the idea of territorialized space and linear temporality. Anderson finds his notion of simultaneity on Walter Benjamin's idea of "homogenous, empty time" that is ultimately the temporal equivalent to geographical territoriality (quoted in Anderson 24). As Brady argues, "territoriality ... suggests ... the primacy of abstracted space, space as rationalized, made everywhere the same, emptied of specific content, abstracted from affective and cultural relations..." ("Territoriality" 225). In the same way that territoriality assumes a type of emptied *terra nullius*, which can be filled by the settler, Benjamin imagines time as an empty slate that lies flat ahead and that can be filled by the community's progression. Anderson links this movement through time to the ways in which the members of a national community imagine themselves and each other as existing and moving at the same time and in the same direction. He writes, "[t]he idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (26). Though a scalar reading would suggest that Thomas, Chess, and Checkers undertake a journey from colonial time toward the more advanced temporality of the city and, thus, move up history, this reading overlooks the ways in which the scene challenges conventional understanding of temporality and nationhood.

As the characters ride through the darkness, the text highlights a notion of harmonized space. Alexie writes: "They sang together with the shadow horses: we are alive, we'll keep living. Songs were waiting for them up there in the dark" (*Reservation* 306). The waiting songs on their route suggest a landscape that is always already filled with songs. Similarly, the text mentions the reservation as filled with

songs, as “Robert Johnson and the-man-who-was-probably-Lakota played a duet” and Big Mom “sang a protection song” (Alexie *Reservation* 306). In this last scene like in Glancy’s work, visible markers retreat from this dark landscape while sound comes to the forefront. The waiting songs become a sort of directional device toward which Thomas, Chess, and Checkers appear to move. Thus, it is not the city and its progressive temporality – the future – is not the destination of their journey but rather the journey leads towards the waiting songs. The passage functions as a type of assurance that the state of balance and interdependence, in which the characters currently exist, will persist along the way where new songs anticipate them. The waiting songs echo the act of harmonizing, in which Big Mom engages in the beginning of the book. Alexie creates a harmonized narrative space where, as Witherspoon describes the condition of *hozho*, “everything is in its proper place and function[s] in harmonious relationships to everything else” (in Cheyfitz “Just Society” 296-7).

This notion of time and space brings to mind anthropologist Basso’s accounts of Apache place worlds. Basso describes the ways in which in Apache culture past events are not referred to by using temporal markers but, rather, they become embedded in memory via the landscape. Thus, places and their names convey stories from the past and are used to express relationships between community members. Alexie’s notion of community and characters’ movement towards waiting songs is not a movement through an empty notion of time but, rather, the novel suggests a motion through “filled space,” a type of spatiality that is always already filled with the memory of the land and the potential for creativity. Hence, the end of the novel

describes a notion of time and space that is in line with Indigenous notions of interdependence and relationality. It describes a movement that does not leave things behind but that instead moves alongside and towards others.²³ Here, Alexie depicts the type of speech-filled space analyzed in Chapter One. Like the soldiers in *Fort Marion* who on their pursuance of the buffalo are part of an ongoing conversation between multiple beings, Thomas, Chess, Checker, and the horses – in a similar motion of pursuance – follow the waiting songs and move through a space that is filled with beings and speech.

Within this filled space characters do not exist within the exile from living, as this last scene suggests a sense of interdependence between dead and living beings. The alliance of the dead horses and the living characters constitutes the driving force

²³ This scene in *Reservation Blues* can be thought about in terms of Agamben's notion of potentiality. Agamben, borrowing from Aristotle, uses the idea of darkness to exemplify his concept of impotentiality: "The principle of sight 'in some way possesses color,' and its colors are light and darkness, actuality and potentiality, presence and privation...Human beings see shadows, they can experience darkness, they have the *potential* not to see, the *possibility of privation*" (181). In darkness Agamben also conceptualizes the possibility of freedom. Agamben writes, "To be free is not simply to have the power to do this or that thing, nor is it simply to have the power to refuse to do this or that thing. To be free is, in the sense we have seen, *to be capable of one's own impotentiality*, to be in relation to one's own privation. This is why freedom is freedom for both good and evil" (183). Thus, freedom for Agamben is not decision-based. A subject is not free when they make a decision for or against something but rather they are free when they act in regard to the lack of their capacity. This notion of freedom is articulated by the characters in the last scene of the novel. They ask themselves questions: "What did they think would happen in Spokane? Would Thomas be ignored in the city, would those Urban Indians try to hurt him? And what about Victor? Would he still be trying to drink himself to death when he was eighty years old, a complete failure at everything he ever did?" (305). The text lists potentialities that may actualize when the characters begin their new lives in the city. Due to the colonized position of the Indigenous characters, the potentialities are quite negative – there is more potential for their lives and social relations in the city to remain unchanged than there is for a happy ending. However, the text does not provide an actuality; the reader is deprived of the knowledge of what actually happens to the characters in Spokane and they are forced to face the question of potentiality and impotentiality that the novel raises. The shadow horses as a representation of genocide are perhaps the most extreme expression of Agamben's impotentiality, or, as he puts it, of the possibility of privation. The characters face the possibility of absolute privation by moving alongside genocide. When the horses leave the reservation with the characters and they touch each other, the text evokes "the possibility of privation" of the potential things listed above. The characters' touch of the horses suggests an ambivalent sort of reconciliation with the violences and the trauma of colonization and in its ambivalence it holds potentiality.

in the characters' movement, as they are being lead toward song. The agent of this movement is not entirely obvious as the horses are both following and leading the characters. The horses are both positioned behind the human characters, following them and accepting their guidance, and in front of the characters, leading them in the direction of the city. In this way, all characters, human and non-human, are described as agents of the group. This suggests that an alternative to the detained mobility described above is located not in the individual and their individual sovereignty and choice to resist but in a type of collective agency that derives from interdependent relationships. Moreover, the idea of horses leading overturns Western notions of the relationship between human beings and horses, in which the human being has authority over the horse and leads it. The scene highlights Indigenous kinship relationships and the ways in which these kinds of familial relationships between all beings do not exist in a hierarchical order but derive from an idea of interdependence with the natural world. The end of the novel, hence, suggests an idea of liberation from the colonially imposed confinement that is not rooted in Western notions of individual or national sovereignty but in the sense of interdependence rooted in American Indian thought.

This type of interdependence is best exemplified by Big Mom's movement in the rocking chair, a movement that sheds more light on the temporal and spatial politics of the novel: Big Mom is "measuring time with her back and forth, back and forth, back and forth there on the Spokane Indian Reservation" (306). The back and forth movement suggests an existence in the present moment that does not merely move forward into the future but rather moves between several temporalities at once.

Big Mom's movement in the chair is balanced; her movement does not value one direction over the other, as would be the case in linear time, but she creates an equally balanced oscillation between two directions. Moreover, the rocking chair movement refutes scalar rationalizations of space by proposing a sense of space that is not fixed according to a scalar system but that is in constant movement and exchange. While scales exist in vertical, enclosed, and hierarchical relationships to one another, the two end points of the rocking motion exist in a reciprocal, interdependent relationship, as both points can only be reached to the same degree. In the same way, the characters who are moving alongside the horses are re-enacting this complementary relationship with the past by acknowledging and living the existence of past life and past trauma in the present moment and place.

Big Mom's rhythmic movement and the musical depiction of the landscape add another audible dimension to the "picture" of "home" described by Rose in Grover's story "Shonnud's Girl" (*Dance Boots* 99). While Rose portrays this image in the visual terms of an "invisible" "picture," *Reservation Blues* foregrounds the rhythms and harmony of Indigenous belonging in its depiction of space. Alexie's speech-filled, or rather, its song-filled space "echo[es] and re-echo[es]" with stories and song (Grover, *Dance Boots* 8).

Reservation Blues proposes a revision of spatial thought that does not imagine space and time according to geographical scale but one that envisions space and time as constituent of a variety of relationships. The novel's revision, a type of "space-making," is closest to what Basso has termed "place-making" (7) – the cultural act of creating, imagining, and revising historical and spatial narratives of a particular place.

Reservation Blues invites us to rethink not only the narrative around the singular place of the reservation but also around the confining ways in which Indigenous space and time can be imagined and narrated.

Harmonizing the Novel: Toward an Interdependent Aesthetics

Aesthetically, *Reservation Blues* adopts interdependence as the main characteristic of its narrative form and challenges a Benjaminian, or what I call a scalar conception of the genre. Though Benjamin suggests that novels generally center around the idea of death and the respective story's eventual end, *Reservation Blues* resists such a focus and positions the reader in a stance of waiting for interdependent acts of (re)creation, acts that take place beyond the end of the book. Benjamin describes the common purpose of a novel:

[T]he reader of a novel actually does look for human beings from whom he derives the 'meaning of life.' Therefore he must, no matter what, know in advance that he will share their experience of death: if need be their figurative death - the end of the novel - but preferably their actual one. How do the characters make him understand that death is already waiting for them - a very definite death and at a very definite place? That is the question which feeds the reader's consuming interest in the events of the novel (Benjamin 373).

The juxtaposition of this quote by Benjamin with the end of *Reservation Blues* demonstrates most clearly how an American Indian interpretation of Alexie's novel challenges the limitations of Benjamin's definition of the genre. According to Benjamin, the genre of the novel focuses on endings for it poses that death is always already waiting. In *Reservation Blues*, on the other hand, it is not death that is waiting for the characters but song. The book is accompanied by a soundtrack that gives an acoustic dimension to the blues lyrics, which open each of the chapters, and includes

four additional songs that expand on the text printed in the book. When the narrator suggests in the very last paragraph, “songs were waiting for them [Thomas, Chess, Checkers, and the shadow horses],” she also alludes to the songs on the CD that are waiting for the reader even after the end of the book is reached (Alexie, *Reservation* 306).

Unlike Benjamin’s account of narrative’s anticipation of death and its more or less strict linear movement towards this end, Alexie’s text and its anticipatory “non-ending” with the additional songs on the CD open a trajectory of (re)creation.²⁴ Because the novel is not quite complete at the end of the printed text, the awaited experience of death – neither figurative nor actual – that Benjamin describes as one of the genre’s major characteristics is never quite accomplished. Instead, *Reservation Blues* continues with awaiting songs on a different medium. With the songs on the CD, which are written with and performed by Jim Boyd, the novel highlights the narrative’s interdependence with other stories and other storytellers and, thus, puts into question the confines created by the genre’s dependence on the isolated individual (Benjamin 365).²⁵ The CD literally harmonizes the text as it adds an audible melody to the lyrics that are printed in the novel. In light of Big Mom’s comments on music’s

²⁴ This trajectory of (re)creation is extended even further to other texts as one of the songs is part of Alexie’s later movie *Smoke Signals*. Moreover, the notion of non-ending is also present in Alexie’s adoption of the blues, as Martin Moling demonstrates. Moling asserts that in the epigraph to *Reservation Blues*, Alexie cites Robert Johnson’s famous “Crossroad Blues” by providing only the repetition of the first two lines “I went to the crossroad/fell down on my knees” and omitting the resolving and redemptive last line “Asked the Lord above, ‘Have mercy, now save Bob, if you please’” (Alexie and Johnson qtd. in Moling 8). Moling reads this as an “improvisational gesture” (10).

²⁵ Peter Brooks discusses subjectivity and closure in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Building on Benjamin’s focus on death, Brooks analyzes the death drive inherent in the narrative plot. As I have shown in Chapter One, a narrative analysis on Indigenous literature according to Brooks’ psychoanalytic understanding of subjectivity is not very productive in an American Indian context because psychoanalysis centers on radically different structures of subjectivity than Native epistemologies, i.e. the individualist subject v. kinship relations, the nuclear family v. natural democracy, etc.

ability to “create[...] and recreate[...] the world” earlier in the novel the promise for more songs at the end of the book offers the assurance of harmony and renewal through other texts and storytellers rather than the Benjaminean annihilation (Alexie, *Reservation 10*).

Moreover, the characters’ last song in the book, “we are alive, we’ll keep living”, does not put any emphasis on ending but on continuance and Vizenorian survivance – sovereignty through an active presence and the enduring survival despite colonialism (Alexie, *Reservation 306*). This prominence of survivance challenges the notion of “definite death” that Benjamin identifies as a novel’s ultimate outcome, an outcome that also seems inevitable throughout *Reservation Blues*. Like Benjamin’s discussion of the novel, *Reservation Blues* poses the question of the meaning of life but to answer this question the reader is not asked to “share” the characters’ “experience of death” but rather to share their experience of survivance (Benjamin 373). It, thus, suggests an alternative reading of the stagnation that is depicted in earlier scenes of detained time and puts the persistence of multiple Indigenous temporalities in a more hopeful light. The novel’s non-ending stresses that if one reads space, time, and literary narratives not in scalar and hierarchical ways, there is the possibility of continuity, active presence, and survivance.

The fact that the novel’s ending does not help the reader understand their “very definite death ... at a very definite place” further provides for a rethinking of spatial narratives and a rethinking of the need to define “the place of death” in a (post)colonial context (Benjamin 372). Benjamin’s comments on the reader’s desire for the characters’ death – either their actual death or their figurative death marked by

the end of the book – suggests that the end of the novel represents what he calls “a very definite place” of death (372). In Benjamin’s definition, the novel progresses within linear time. Its focus on delimiting, or defining the location of its end, suggest that this understanding of the narrative genre bears strong similarities with the narrative of scalar thought. Like spatial scale, Benjamin’s novel is concerned with circumscribing its boundaries. Perhaps, in many ways the novel operates according to the same logic as scalar thought. However, *Reservation Blues*’s indefinite ending with “songs” that “were waiting for them up there in the dark,” an ending that is not localizable at the end of the book but rather unclear and invisible, challenges the Benjaminian reader’s efforts to understand life through the place of death (Alexie 306). By refusing to provide a definition of this place *Reservation Blues* confronts the scalar categories of the novel as narrative form.

While the majority of the novel describes the deathly consequences of colonization and scalar incarceration, it is the end of the novel – or the lack thereof – that resists defining the meaning of Indigenous life according to a “place of death” or according to delimited formal boundaries (Benjamin 372). This formal resistance to an end – or to “a very definite death” – also constitutes a refusal to define Indigenous life according to the literal experience of death through genocide or according to territorial and legal boundaries that often define the state of Indigenous sovereignty (Benjamin 372). With the narrative’s dependence on others for creation and renewal, Alexie highlights that to answer the question about the meaning of Indigenous life, it is futile to focus on binary oppositions and look for death, rather one needs to focus the attention precisely on what is at stake in this question: life and interdependence.

CONCLUSION:

WITNESSING CARCERAL SPACE

*Dear Washington,
Me love you. Me want to go home, see my little sister. Me and my
people here all time three years. Me tire now. My mother's name
Peonte; my father's name Black Horse, Comanche Chief; my name Ah-
kah.*

- qtd. in Lookingbill 118

After three years at Fort Marion, Richard Henry Pratt, the jailor at Fort Marion and founder of the American Indian boarding school system, sent seventeen of the former prisoners to the originally all African American Hampton Institute in Virginia.¹ In addition to the former prisoners, Pratt took 49 Native children along with him to Hampton. Pratt was quite exhaustive in selecting these first students, traveling from Kansas to North and South Dakota, and into Northern Nebraska. Interestingly, he initially considered “fifty boys and girls from the Nez Percés under Chief Joseph, who were then being held as prisoners of war at that point” (Pratt 195-96). In his autobiography, Pratt makes sure to point out that he had acquired consent from the children’s parents before taking them to Virginia.² When Pratt and his colleagues approached the children’s parents in Leavenworth, Kansas, where the Nez Percés were imprisoned, Pratt explains that he could not convince the incarcerated parents who “persisted in refusing their children until they knew their own fate” (196).

¹ For more information on the American Indian program Hampton Institute, see Lindsey.

² Parental consent officially became an obligatory part of American Indian boarding school policies in 1893. However, different sources indicate that parents who did not provide permission to send their children to boarding school were severely punished. See Adams (65); Reyhner and Eder (157).

Pratt's first turn to imprisoned Native adults and their detained children marks the multiple stages of incarceration in the prison, the boarding school, and later on the reservation that this dissertation investigates. Ironically, for Pratt detainment at the boarding school is a necessary form of disciplining to escape the "imprisoning on reservations" (269). Thus, Pratt sees this kind of containment, indeed imprisonment, as a crucial means for liberation from imprisonment. In a chapter on so-called "Self-Evident Truths" Pratt claims that the introduction to "civilized life" that the Native students would receive at Hampton and later at Carlisle "was the only way to tranquilize our differences" (269). Though Pratt's use of the first person plural pronoun seems to suggest that American Indians *and* Euro-Americans will both have to "tranquilize" their respective "differences," it is clear that his policies are fairly one sided, as the differences of Euro-Americans are not submitted to this process of alteration (Pratt 269).

As perplexing as Pratt's assimilative approach may be, his notion of "tranquilizing" in this passage is particularly interesting, for it comprises a significant part of the U.S. carceral politics illustrated in the works I have discussed in this dissertation. It not only makes reference to Pratt's actual "tranquiliz[ing]" methods, exemplified by the soundless, lined-up plaster casts and the silenced voices of the prisoners discussed in Chapter One in Glancy's *Fort Marion* (Pratt 269). The implied sedation in his use of "tranquiliz[ing]" also brings to mind the settler colonial strategies of forcing Native persons into the state of sleep I explore in Chapter Two, in which Grover's characters' are forced into a type of anesthetic custody when their children are taken away and the federal government assumes guardianship over

Indigenous children and adults (Pratt 269). In this regard, too, both Pratt and Grover's short stories seem to suggest that the boarding school is meant to have a kind of calming (i.e. silencing) effect on previously anxious (and noisy) Native subjects. Similarly, Pratt's comment resonates with Alexie's description of the muffled soundscape of the reservation investigated in Chapter Three.

It seems, then, that American Indian policy aims at this sort of "tranquiliz[ation]," a form of silencing that is meant to bring about a certain notion of peace that is, certainly, only bearable for the settler (Pratt 269). Thus, while Indigenous people are being strategically removed from their homelands, it is the isolation and enclosure that prevents detained Indigenous people from exchanging stories and knowledge, from hearing the language and song and wisdom of their cultures. This is what ultimately creates the "tranquiliz[ing]" effect Pratt has in mind (Pratt 269).

In light of recent carceral politics of "zero tolerance," when children are once again strategically separated from their families and detained, Pratt's notion of "tranquiliz[ing]" resonates with a 2018 audio recording of violently sobbing children who, imprisoned at a child detention center, plead with a border control agent to be reunited with their families (Pratt 269). The viewer of this clip sees a black video screen and hears only the wrenching sounds of several crying children when the border control agent states in Spanish: "Well, here we have an orchestra... What's missing is a conductor" (qtd. in Thompson). The recording went viral in mid-June 2018 after being released by the nonprofit news agency *ProPublica*. In the article accompanying the released video, *ProPublica* journalist Ginger Thompson writes: The

“audio recording ... adds real-life sounds of suffering to a contentious policy debate that has so far been short on input from those with the most at stake: immigrant children.”

In a similar way that federal Indian law allocates Native people to carceral space and, therefore, makes them in many ways invisible and inaudible – seemingly disappeared from public attention – the voices of recently arrived immigrant children to the United States have been inaccessible until footage like the *ProPublica* audio recording was made public. It is these “real-life sounds” combined with the darkness of the screen (a seemingly unnecessary visual dimension of the recording) that makes the children’s invisible suffering even more present (Thompson). The black screen confronts the viewer with the limitations of vision, which Grosz refers to as the Western “spatial sense,” as a sensory experience that fails to provide spatial representation when people are deliberately hidden from sight and enclosed in carceral spaces (97). In the case of the crying children, as in the texts discussed in the previous chapters, it is sound that makes knowledge and awareness of this carceral space something attainable to the world outside of the confines in which such scenes are taking place.

The border control agent’s comment about the need for a conductor renders the already petrifying recording even more gruesome. In a way, the border patrol agent echoes Pratt’s stated goal to “tranquilize” these voices and the experiences of colonial violence (Pratt 269). A conductor of an orchestra would attempt to force the cruel sounds of the crying children into a certain harmonic order – tranquilizing the piercing sound so as to make the suffering less tense, more bearable, and peaceful for the

listeners: harmonious. The sarcasm with which the border agent delivers his comment underscores, however, that no conductor could provide this sense of tranquility and produce harmony out of these painful “real-life sounds” (Thompson). Also implied in this comment is the need for an authority for the children, who are presented as unaware of their actions and unable to create order in the chaos they collectively produce. Here, the prison guard calls for the figure of the guardian, the self-assigned role that the federal government embodies for Native tribes and for the tortured children in the recording.

Similar to the children in the video asking for their relatives, it is the figure of the guardian – personified respectively but perhaps interchangeably by Rutherford Hayes and Donald Trump – whom Ah-kah addresses in the letter constituting the epigraph to these concluding remarks.³ Disturbingly, both in the video and the letter, the addressed guardian does not respond to the children’s request for care; in fact, because it is his very guardianship that created the absence of care that made the children cry out for their families in the first place.

It is this notion of guardianship that in turn defines Native people as “wards” and as existing in an endless “state of pupilage,” a numbing condition that, as Grover’s stories depict it, renders characters in a state of narcotized sleep (30. U.S. at 17). Alexie’s *Reservation Blues* describes this state of pupilage as an infinite temporal condition of detained time, in which characters are endlessly stuck in the death-like exile of the past. In her blog post entitled “Inmate #A-93223: In the San Quentin of My Mind,” Esselen/Chumash writer Deborah A. Miranda deliberates on the carceral

³ In Glancy’s *Fort Marion*, the girl is referred to as Ah-kes.

effects of growing up with a violent, imprisoned father, wondering if under a forced, careless, and violent guardian one can become a good parent. She talks about being the child of a father who was a rapist in connection with the allegations of numerous instances of sexual assault against Sherman Alexie and writes, “I wish I didn’t know how much hard work is in front of them [the children and wife of a father who hurts women]. I wish I could say: Look, nobody gets to choose their parents. We *do* get to choose how *we* parent. Even if the only child we ever parent is ourselves.”⁴

At the end of this doubtful passage, Miranda proposes a notion of parenting ourselves as children that brings to mind the extensive state of childhood, which I discussed in Grover’s stories in Chapter Two. The first person plural in Miranda’s last sentence suggests that the “self” is not the Western, individualized self that Pratt wanted to create beginning with the Indigenous prisoners at Fort Marion. As a part of this communal self, the “we” is both parent and child; the “we” is both teacher and student.

Her statement “I’m listening” points to the listening and learning children in Grover’s Ojibwe home (Miranda). As shown in Chapter Two, the notion of childhood in Grover’s stories as an extensive condition is similar to the notion of motherhood that Witherspoon identifies in all kinds of beings in Navajo culture. In Ojibwe culture, Grover shows, many different types of teachers are considered mothers. The children who learn from this wide variety of mothers occupy many subject positions, ranging from beings of young and older ages. Miranda’s direct question “[a]re you [listening]?” asks the reader to be a student, as well, and to learn from the story that is

⁴ Public allegations were first made by writer Litsa Dremousis. See Neary.

shared, including her own story of her rapist father. The implied choice in this question suggests that “you” get to choose to whom you listen and from whom you learn. If one understands this act of listening in the same extensive way as Grover describes the Ojibwe practice of listening to a variety of beings, Miranda’s “you” ultimately “gets to choose” her “parents.”

Along with the texts of this dissertation, Miranda’s post provides the beginning of an answer to the question about how to be both child and parent under a guardian who “tranquilize[s]” and refuses care (Pratt 296). Miranda’s answer takes seriously the role of the witness that Glancy describes in the speech-filled space of *Fort Marion*. Like the speaker in *Fort Marion*, Miranda asks the reader to pay attention to sounds that are typically “tranquilized” (Pratt 296). At the end of her post, she states that since now the assaulted women share their stories, “I know that nothing can contain this story now. The women are speaking. I’m listening. Are you?” (Miranda). Here, Miranda’s text exposes how the communal engagement of speaking and listening decarcerates the women’s story. Her singular use of “story” is reminiscent of the story of multiple speakers in Glancy’s speech-filled text, the echoes and re-echoes heard and shared by Grover’s characters, and the waiting songs in Alexie’s work. It is the collective endeavor of speaking and listening – of moving the singular story towards the story of others – that promises disclosure of the carceral constraints that confine Native people, space, and testimony.⁵

⁵ Spokane writer Gloria Bird states, “the act of witnessing and ... testimony... become a decolonizing strategy” (47). Comparing writing to a vision quest, Mohawk writer Beth Brant also understands the act of witnessing as part of her task as a writer: “Witness to what has been and what is to be. Knowing what has transpired and dreaming of what will come. Listening to the stories brought to us by other beings. Renewing ourselves in the midst of chaos” (295).

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