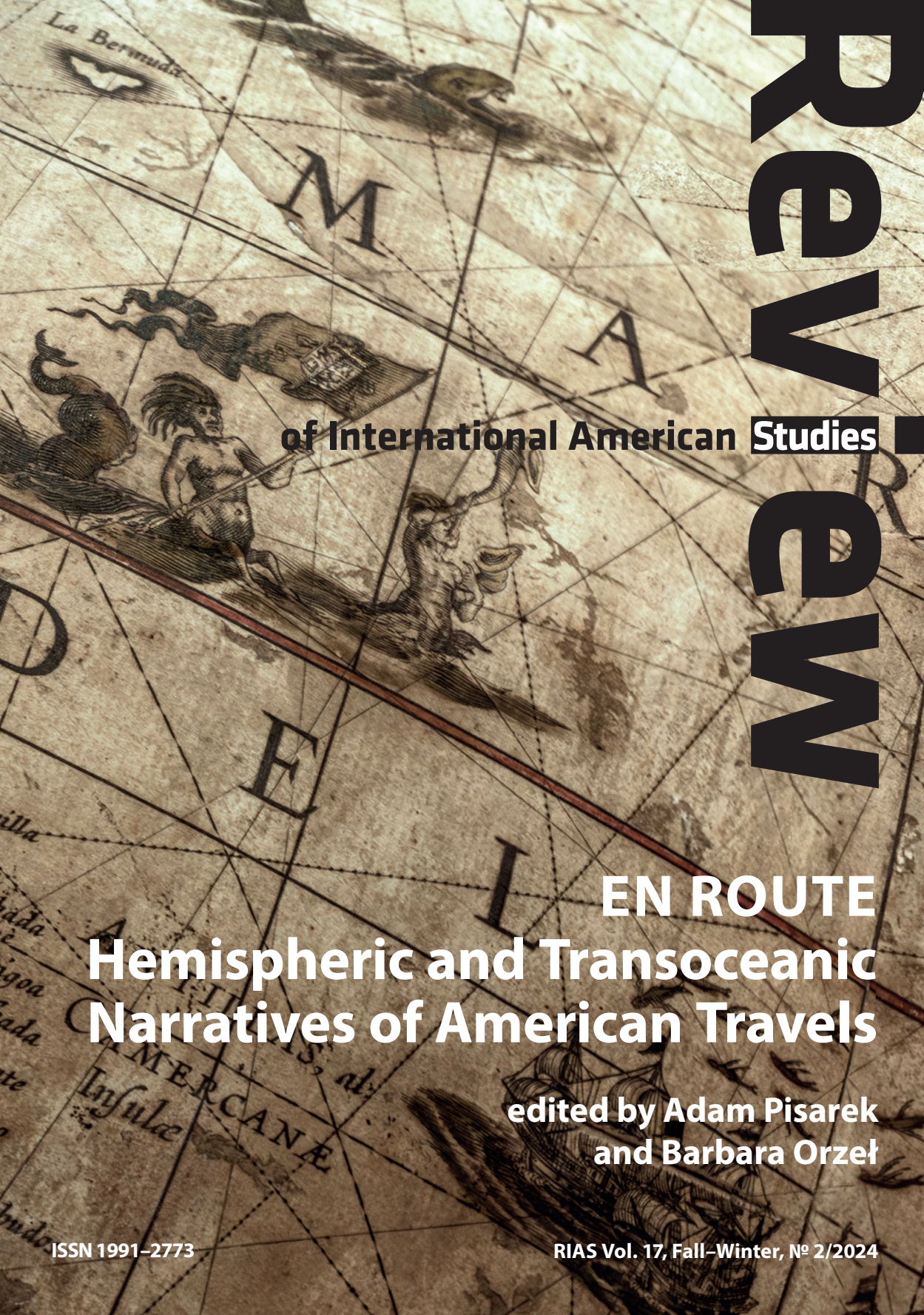

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Hemispheric and Transoceanic Narratives of American Travels

edited by Adam Pisarek
and Barbara Orzeł

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"THE JUSTEST OF ALL VIEWS" Traveling to *Mardi* and Beyond with Agnes D. Cannon

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When Herman Melville returned from his momentous journey to Europe and the Mediterranean in May 1857, his intention, rather than returning to his writing career, was to secure a permanent position at the New York Customs House. The reality, however, dictated a different scenario: following the advice of his mother and John Hoadley, a New York merchant and a close friend of Melville's family, the writer decided to seek his fortune embarking upon a lecture circuit. After the first two lecture seasons (1857–1858 and 1858–1859), in the course of which he delivered speeches on "Statues in Rome" and "The South Seas," he adopted a broader perspective:

> His new subject, "Traveling: Its Pleasures, Pains, and Profits," was possibly suggested by William Hazlitt's essay "On Going a Journey," Hazlitt being a favorite writer of Melville's later years. We travel, Hazlitt wrote, "to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others"; in the lecture Melville spoke of travel as being "a new birth" […]. He referred specifically to Washington Irving's "The Voyage," which opens *The Sketch-Book*, and observed that "one may perhaps acquire the justest of all views by reading and comparing all writers of travels."
>
> *Great men do this, and yet yearn to travel. Richter longed to behold the sea. Schiller thought so earnestly of travel that it filled his dreams with sights of other lands. Dr. Johnson had the same longing, with exaggerated ideas of the distinction to be reflected from it. […]*
>
> In such literary references Melville was expressing his devotion to both reading and traveling. (Sealts 107)

Curious how Melville's truth-seeking mind works: after *Typee* and *Omoo*—novels that (paradoxically) catered to the American

reading public's desire for *facts* about distant lands[1]—comes allegorical *Mardi*, which frustrates many of his readers; after *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* (both of which could, with a bit of good will, be construed as reportages) comes the disconcerting *Moby-Dick*, whose "mad English" brings the writer's antebellum career to the verge of a precipice in 1851, and would have probably marked its actual end, had *Pierre* not sealed its fate a year later. Prominent Melville scholars—including such celebrities as Hershel Parker (1996–2003), Robert Milder (2006), Newton Arvin (1957, 1962), Elizabeth Renker (1997), or Howard Paton Vincent (1969, 1980)—have explored the shift in Melville's narrative approach from realism to allegory, providing interpretations that align with the idea that this transition was driven by Melville's literary ambitions and his urge for philosophical explorations. The writer himself thus explains the change:

> Not long ago, having published two narratives of voyages in the Pacific, which, in many quarters, were received with incredulity, the thought occurred to me, of indeed writing a romance of Polynesian adventure, and publishing it as such; to see whether, the fiction might not, possibly, be received for verity: in some degree the reverse of my previous experience.
>
> This though was the germ of others, which have resulted in *Mardi.* (*Mardi* xvii)

The experiment seems to have backfired. However, while the fates of *Mardi*, whose sales, less than satisfactory, may have convinced the writer to reconsider his lofty goals and write the next two books for money, his 1951 relapse into what Joseph Conrad would later describe as "a rather strained rhapsody with whaling for a subject" (qtd in Seltzer 1969: 101–102) must have been a conscious choice[2]:

> […] *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* [Melville wrote in his letter to Lemuel Shaw of October 6, 1849] are two *jobs*, which I have done for money—being forced to it, as other men are to sawing wood. And while I have felt obliged to refrain from writing the kind of book I would wish to; yet, in writing these two books, I have not repressed myself much—so far as they are concerned; but have spoken pretty much as I feel.—Being books, then, written in this way, my only desire for their "success" (as it is called) springs from my pocket, and not from my heart. So far as I am individually concerned, and independent of my pocket, it is my earnest desire to write those sort of books which are said to "fail." (*Correspondence* 138–139)

1 More on this subject in my article "Traces in the Ocean On Melville, Wolanowski, and Willing Suspension of Disbelief" (Jędrzejko 2015).

2 Howard P. Vincent seems to share this view—see for instance footnote 4 in his seminal work *The Trying Out of Moby-Dick* (6).

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Apparently, in search for "the justest of all views," Melville, combining knowledge derived both from his reading and from his direct experience of travel to streamline "the great Art of Telling the Truth"[3] in his own creative writing, he commits himself to writing books that his contemporaries would find oddly unconventional[4]. Indeed, Hershel Parker confirms Melville's dissatisfaction with the constraints of realist adventure tales like *Typee* and *Omoo*, and argues that Melville, grappling with abstract and philosophical questions that his lived experiences had posed before him, strove to expand his artistic expression, which he felt required a move toward a symbolic mode; Robert Milder sees Melville's turn to allegory in *Mardi* as a critical step in his development as a philosophical writer (27–49), and Newton Arvin stresses that it is with *Mardi* that the writer enters into the realm of more ambitious and more speculative form of literature that allowed him to tackle existential and metaphysical issues through symbolic storytelling (90–101). Elizabeth Renker, likewise, highlights Melville's frustration with the popular adventure and argues that his shift in *Mardi* represents his attempt to create a more sophisticated narrative structure capable of exploring complex ideas (xxi), and all this aligns with Howard P. Vincent's diagnosis of *Mardi* (15). The novel, a crucial experiment, allowed Melville to move beyond the constraints of his earlier, more literal works and to engage with broader philosophical and metaphysical themes, which were soon to (re)surface in *Moby-Dick* and would later flourish in his later prose and poetry.

These and other scholars rightly argue that, rather than being driven by his "earnest desire to write those sort of books which are said to 'fail,'" Melville's transition to allegory was most likely propelled by (a much less suicidal) personal urge to "tell the truth": to address more profound philosophical questions and explore a broader range of human experiences. In light of the writer's tumultuous biography, his turn to the allegorical style in *Mardi* indeed seems to be a deliberate choice to break away from the conventions of realism and venture into the realms of myth, symbolism, and abstract thought. But perhaps even more importantly, it gave him an opportunity to express his own opinions on philosophy, history, and literature, camouflaged as opinions of fictitious characters inhabiting a far-off land which, like

3 "For in this world of lies, Truth is forced to fly like a scare white doe in the woodlands; and only by cunning glimpses will she reveal herself, as in Shakespeare and other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth,—even though it be covertly, and by snatches" ("Hawthorne and his Mosses" 1160).

4 See Charles Roberts Anderson's influential study *Melville in the South Seas* (1939).

Queequeg's Kokovoko, is "an island far away to the East and South […] not down in any map; true places never are" (*Moby-Dick* 55). Such camouflage, often providing a sense of psychological freedom that allows ideas to emerge more openly, creates a layer of separation between the speaker and their subject, which can make observations less personal, and therefore less confrontational. By situating his critical discourse in a fictitious—or "exotically" remote—place (or alternative timeline), Melville can avoid direct judgment (or even ostracism) on the part of his contemporaries, and instead invites the reader to engage with the ideas on their own terms, without the weight of immediate relevance.

At the same time, if tinged with realism, such a distancing technique may prove attractive, as it also taps into the human fascination with the unknown or the unfamiliar—a fascination especially strong in mid-19th century America, hungering for veritable accounts of life in the distant lands. Before *Mardi*, Melville's "track record" is good: with the "truthfulness" of *Typee* officially vouched for by his *Acushnet* shipmate Tobias Greene (Jędrzejko 110), *Mardi*'s publication comes with a "credit of confidence," allowing his complex, and potentially controversial, ideas to be presented as though they were merely descriptive or exploratory concepts, rather than as explicit critiques of inherited conceptual systems, or as personal confessions. Employing the device of historical and geographical displacement, Melville communicates sensitive or subversive ideas while providing an interpretive "buffer zone": the reader is invited into an intellectual space where they are free to draw their own connections, which makes the engagement less "didactic." This strategy may also provide a fundament upon which to argue for the "universality" of the truths proclaimed: philosophically oriented creative fiction, while exploring the essence of human condition, often alludes to the timelessness of experience by projecting it onto other worlds or epochs. In this sense, Melville's method aligns with the belief that by stepping outside the immediacy of one's own reality, we can view our concerns and axioms in a fresh perspective, revealing insights that might be obscured in the heat of the present.

In a way, a distant setting, especially a fictitious one, may serve as a mirror reflecting not only our desires and fears, but also our ideals, allowing a critique of the present without the risk of direct confrontation. And of all of Melville's literary encounters with the South Seas, this particular one sets him *en route* towards the formulation of the rudiments of his own concept of art. Guised as an exotic journey, the novel allows him to camouflage his criticism of generally recognized "disciplinary" distinctions under the mask of an adventure story, to be

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marketed as yet another transoceanic narrative whose setting reminds his audience of his earlier Marquesan and Hawai'ian encounters[5].

The excursion into Melville's *Mardi* (and beyond) that I would like to share with the willing reader in these musings is a thematic expedition in search of the rudiments of the writer's personal concept of art as a medium of truth. Our guide extraordinaire on this trip is Agnes Dicken Cannon, whose work provides the skeleton to this synthesis. Unfortunately, because Melville did not leave behind any artistic manifesto, nor did he formulate a coherent literary theory that could be easily translated into the language of contemporary literary studies, our expedition will depend on interpretations offered by experts who have dedicated their careers to reconstructing the evolution of Melville's artistic program. Melville's correspondence and journals offer only fragmentary suggestions, and, consequently, one must turn to the information regarding Herman Melville's reading and his marginalia, collected and interpreted by scholars such as Jay Leyda, Merton M. Sealts Jr., Walker Cowen, and Douglas J. Robillard, and many, many other Melvilleans, who rose to the challenge.

Thus, inevitably, to demonstrate the main tenets of the insular philosophy of *Mardi*, I resort to the strategy adopted by one of the central characters of Melville's eponymous novel, who, advocating the shared ownership of "true thoughts," heavily depends on citations sourced from many other authors. Unlike Babbalanja, however, I also engage in polemics and supplement their arguments with observations of my own, thus revising, complementing, and hopefully enriching their conclusions. The reconstruction of Melville's vision of literature, as carried out by Agnes D. Cannon, reinforced with insights into of some of the writer's marginalia, justifies interpreting his works as consistent with dominant trends in 19th century Western philosophy of art, thus situating him within a broader tradition of American literary figures whose hemispheric and transoceanic explorations, both literal and symbolic, charted new intellectual territories. More specifically, it is a reconstruction of the part of his journey of philosophical inquiry when he is still *en route* towards the reconciliation of non-verbal *being* and discursive *existence* in a language that could be shared with others.

5 For a detailed study of the subject matter, see Thomas Walter Herbert's *Marquesan Encounters: Melville and the Meaning of Civilization* (1980).

MELVILLE'S CONCEPT OF THE ARTIST

However, at the onset of our explorations, it is worth recalling a particular misunderstanding associated with the writer's use of the notion of "poetry," which, for a long time, would complicate the critical assessment of Melville's works. The confusion arose from his "turn to poetry" around the year 1859 (Sealts 108–109), during which period Melville enriched his library with *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* collected by Francis James Child, and, discovering for himself the poetry of Robert Herrick, George Herbert, and Andrew Marvell—began to write his own verses. Likely, it was also then that his first poetic texts appeared in print. As a result of this coincidence, the critical circles did not immediately recognize that Melville understood the term "poetry" in a broader sense than the word itself might suggest today: to him, poetry clearly signified a general concept of human creative powers, encompassing broadly understood literature, and even art as a whole.

Such an understanding of poetry was not, in fact, an isolated phenomenon within Romantic aesthetics. Although Melville might have streamlined his own version of it independently, he may have drawn inspiration from Romantic critics—such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge (with whose works he was familiar), who applied the term "poetry" to all forms of artistic activity, in all its richness of forms and genres. For Melville, too, the poet is first and foremost a *creator*, a person endowed with artistic vision and sensitivity, but also a truth-seeking thinker, to which the scattered clues the author left behind seem to testify. Admittedly, there are many studies dedicated to Romantic concepts of creativity and the creator. However, indications concerning Melville's understanding of poetry and the poet's role in the world, dispersed across various scholarly texts, rely upon interpretations of hints rather than, as has been noted, upon a formulated manifesto. His own concept of art rarely becomes the subject of separate, monographic analyses: most often, researchers focus on selected aspects of his artistic views "in passing," while discussing other issues, which is why the now largely forgotten work of Agnes D. Cannon, whose main theses I have adopted as the framework organizing the structure of this discourse, deserves a revisit. As an author of one of the few synthetic studies that undertake the challenging task of assembling the dispersed elements of Melville's thoughts on art into a cohesive whole, Cannon is right to observe that in addition to the marginalia and intertextual references traceable in Melville's work (the validity of which many of his commentators emphasize), another, all too often

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unconsidered, source of information about his concept is his own oeuvre, replete with portrayals of poets, philosophers, or scientists.

Embracing this aspect of Melville's work, Agnes D. Cannon focuses on the construction of three characters: Yoomy, a young poet who has not yet achieved emotional maturity (manifest in balance between the fervor of emotion and the coolness of intellect) from the novel *Mardi* (1849), and two mature poets, Rolfe and Vine, from the poem *Clarel* (1867). The way in which these characters are depicted, the individual traits with which the author endows them, and the similarities and differences that exist between them allow the scholar to conclude that

> Melville depicts the poet as gentle, sensitive to beauty, possessing a deep love for humanity and a probing intellect, an unfailing commitment to singing what he sees even though his artistic honesty be misunderstood, a love for good fellowship, but a need for periods of solitude and silence in which the voice of his muse may be heard and, finally, the willingness to accept poetic belief as a substitute for unknowable historical fact or religious faith. (Cannon 320)

This characterization, aptly reflecting the attitudes and functions that the author assigns to "his" poets, indirectly points out to the roles he attributed to literature *sensu largo*, but also sheds some light upon the way in which the American writer might have perceived his own role as a creator. Drawing on Melville's selected works and on the contents of his annotations in the margins of his copies of *Essays and Phantasies* by the Scottish poet and writer James Thomson and of Ralph Waldo Emerson's works, Cannon identifies six social roles of the Melvillean poet, which, as we will see, also align with the indications flowing from the essential works of Romantic literary criticism. Organizing these roles "in the ascending order of social significance," she enumerates them thusly: "the entertainer," "the mouthpiece" through whom "emotions of mankind" are expressed, the "interpreter of ideas and objects," "the seer" who expands the accessible view of the world, the potential "savior" of his fellow men," and the "mythmaker" (Cannon 320). The complexity and complementarity of these functions may suggest the way in which the author intended his own works to be received, thereby pointing out to the characteristics of his model reader.

THE POET AS AN ENTERTAINER

This particular role of the poet—and, by extension, of literature/art in general—emerges in Herman Melville's writing as two-dimensional: the poet indeed may be the author of popular forms of literature,

but such works may simultaneously carry a distinctly philosophical message. Cannon observes that Melville understood poetry primarily as *elevated* entertainment, where ludicity ultimately yields to intellectual pleasure. It is worth noting that Yoomy, the young court poet of the Mardian king Media, when offering his audiences popular entertainment, sings songs authored by others, reserving for his own works, marked by a sense of sublimity, a more serious function. Similarly, Cannon notes, in the songs of Rolfe and Vine—the mature poets from *Clarel*—the joy of life mingles with a note of melancholy. Their poetry bears the weight of an awareness of transience, and what is joyful in their work ordinarily assumes the form akin to a hymn praising the brotherhood of humanity. Poetry, indeed, provides entertainment, but it does so in a unique fashion: celebrating values upon a joyous world could be founded, it conveys a clear intellectual message. Such a vision of a human macrocosm built on brotherhood, if shared with a sensitive audience, brings joy and hope, and by that virtue becomes a unifying factor. It is entertaining because it offers both aesthetic and intellectual pleasure *and* because it brings people together, integrating them into a circle of friends:

> Thus, while Melville recognized the value of cheerful lyrics, he himself was not writing for those who wished to be spared disquieting thoughts but for what he called the "kingly common," that coterie of noble souls who found works that gave them mental stimulation more entertaining than light reading and could be inspirited by meeting a kindred soul in a favorite author. This is further attested to by a passage Melville marked and checked late in life in one of James Thomson's *Essays* sent to him by his British admirer, James Billson, on October 7, 1885. In the "Sayings of Sigvat," the author is asked why, when he is "persuaded of the vanity of all attempts of proselytizing," he still sometimes writes or talks "as if to teach or persuade." (Cannon 321)

Thomson's response, drawn directly from a passage that Melville marked in his own copy, reads as follows:

> [...] first and foremost, because "it is my nature to." But also, though no word of mine will ever convert anyone from being himself into being another Me, my word may bring cheer and comfort and self-knowledge to others who are more or less like myself, and who may have thought themselves peculiar and outcasts; it may be to them a friendly voice revealing that they have a brother in the world, and may thus hearten them to put trust in themselves [...]. (Thomson quoted in Cannon 312–322)

Melville voices similar convictions through the statements of his character, the Mardian philosopher, Babbalanja, whose very name seems to intriguingly fuse the obscurity of the convoluted idiom

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of philosophy with the divine inspiration. Cannon observes that in the "Babbling Angel's" view, the poet's function as the provider of elevated entertainment is intertwined with his role of the "mouthpiece for others"—a medium through which the anxieties and emotions shared by individuals find expression, a voice with which others may identify.

THE POET AS A MOUTHPIECE FOR OTHERS

Cannon illustrates this more complex social role of the poet and poetry with a scene from *Mardi*, in which King Media reprimands Babbalanja for his constant reliance on the thoughts of others:

> "A truce to your everlasting pratings of old Bardianna," said King Media; why not speak your own thoughts, Babbalanja? then would your discourse possess more completeness; whereas, its warp and woof are of all sorts,—Bardianna, Alla-Malolla, Vavona, and all the writers that ever have written. Speak for yourself, mortal!"
>
> "May you not possibly mistake, my lord? for I do not so much quote Bardianna, as Bardianna quoted me, though he flourished before me; and no vanity, but honesty to say so. The catalogue of true thoughts is but small; they are ubiquitous; no man's property; and unspoken, or bruited, are the same. When we hear them, why seem they so natural, receiving our spontaneous approval? why do we think we have heard them before? Because they but reiterate ourselves; they were in us, before we were born. The truest poets are but mouth-pieces; and some men are duplicates of each other; I see myself in Bardianna."
>
> "And there, for Oro's sake, let it rest, Babbalanja; Bardianna in you, and you in Bardianna forever!" (*Mardi* 397)

In this crucial passage, Babbalanja formulates a philosophical thesis about the existence of a "catalogue" of primeval "true thoughts," and about the position of the poet, who, albeit giving them expression through art, is not their owner. The juxtaposition of the philosopher's statement with the passage highlighted by the author of *Mardi* in Thomson's *Essays* suggests that Melville himself probably believed that although the reader's "I" can never fully align with the consciousness of the writer, the former can still identify with the idea expressed by the poet, which then becomes an element shared between both conscious selves.[6] In this context, one could also argue that one of Melville's literary goals was to empathetically build a sense of community with others, as an act of brotherhood and in the name of universal human values: albeit quoting the words of Bardianna, Babbalanja,

6 Interestingly, a similar concept will resurface in the 20th century in the works of the scholars associated with the so-called Geneva School.

who understands literature as the medium making the expression of "true thoughts" possible, speaks *his own language* and, essentially, expresses *his own thoughts*. The above notwithstanding, this does not explain Melville's understanding of the discussed literary function in its entirety. What remains crucial are the conditions under which the poet expresses his thoughts: "in order to give voice to the feelings of others," the poet must address universal issues, but sometimes he is also required to "praise" values contrary to his own axiological system. To support this observation, Cannon provides the example of the poet Yoomy, who, despite his own pacifist beliefs, is compelled to obey King Media's command to sing a Mardian battle chant. Attempting to avoid the hateful task, the poet suggests to the king that "a sonnet would surely be more to his liking," but realizing that the monarch will not change his mind, he prefaces his performance with the proviso that the lyrics of the brutal song are not of his authorship. The scholar notes:

> What is really bothering Yoomy is not the dissonance but the glorification of war, for an examination of Melville's source shows that he deliberately made the song more bloody than its original as a part of his satire on war. Its singing arouses such feelings of belligerence in Media that he questions the moral responsibility of the poet. (Cannon 322)

This is illustrated by the following scene from the novel:

> "By Oro!" cried Media, "but Yoomy has well nigh stirred up all Babbalanja's devils in me. Were I a mortal, I could fight now on a pretense. And did any man say me nay, I would charge upon him like a spear-point. Ah, Yoomy, thou and thy tribe have much to answer for; ye stir up all Mardi with your lays. Your war chants make men fight; your drinking songs, drunkards; your love ditties, fools. Yet there thou sittest, Yoomy, gentle as a dove.—What art thou, minstrel, that thy soft, singing soul should so master all mortals? Yoomy, like me, you sway a scepter."
>
> "Thou honorest my calling overmuch," said Yoomy, we minstrels but sing our lays carelessly, my lord Media."
>
> "Ay: and the more mischief they make."
>
> "But sometimes we poets are didactic."
>
> "Didactic and dull; many of ye are but too apt to be prosy unless mischievous."
>
> "Yet in our verses, my lord Media, but few of us purpose harm."
>
> "But when all harmless to yourselves, ye may be otherwise to Mardi."
>
> "And are not foul streams often traced to pure fountains, my lord?" said Babbalanja. "The essence of all good and all evil is in us, not out of us. Neither poison nor honey lodgeth in the flowers on which, side by side, bees and wasps oft alight. My lord, nature is an immaculate virgin, forever standing unrobed before us. True poets but paint the charms which all eyes behold. The vicious would be vicious without them." (*Mardi* 437)

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Despite the philosopher's reassuring words, which absolve the poet of responsibility for the evil that resides in others, Melville knows that the poetic gesture, a literary verbalization of collective feelings devoid of cool self-censorship, can have dramatic consequences: artistic expression is capable of stirring powerful emotions. Cannon insightfully interprets the writer's concerns when she points to the "cautionary" function of the "Supplement" that Melville appended to his collection of war poetry, *Battle-Pieces*. In this prose, the author expresses his doubts about whether he should have removed—or at least modified—some of the poems, so that the depiction of the hell of the Civil War would not contribute "to bitterness which every sensible American must wish at an end" (*Battle Pieces* 198). The scholar also notes that the glosses that Melville included with selected poems represent an attempt to address a significant dilemma: Melville-the-poet was aware that in his works he dramatized genuine human emotions while also understanding that society had not yet healed its war wounds. He anticipated that the reactions to *Battle-Pieces* might be deeply affective, which is why he chose to supplement certain poems with prose commentaries that could guide the reader toward intended paths of interpretation. It can thus be observed that Melville was guided not only by his belief in the empathetic nature of poetry and the role of the poet as the "mouthpiece" for the feelings of others, or by the notion that poetry could offer the sensitive reader a sense of community or self-awareness. His inclusion of the "Prose Supplement" in the *Battle Pieces* may be interpreted as an act of the acknowledgment of the general fact that, despite all positive values they may potentially transmit, art and literature are also capable of stirring powerful negative emotions in their audiences, the consequences of which could be tragic.

The duality of this function of the artists manifests itself somewhat differently in *Clarel*, owing to the distinction between the role of Melville as the creator of the poem and that of the narrator (also a poet!) who creates the fictional world in it. Within the presented world of *Clarel*, the role of the poet as a "mouthpiece" becomes strikingly evident in the context of the narrative of Agath, an old sailor who tells his story—but, due to the latter's ineptitude in constructing his own artistic narrative, the poet, appreciating its value, chooses to "mediate": he feels entitled to speak on the mariner's behalf, justifying his choice thus:

But, more of clearness to confer—
Less dimly to express the thing
Rude outlined by this mariner,

License is claimed in rendering;
And tones he felt but scarce might give,
The verse essays to interweave. (*Clarel* 234–235)

Cannon does not delve deeper into the consequences of the narrator's gesture, yet it is easy to see that in this case, the poet goes as far in expressing others' thoughts as to "dispossess" the original speaker, and *not* by virtue of the "communal ownership" of true "thoughts"—after all, on the most literal level, the old sailor's narrative does not concern universal issues or even those that might represent a shared value for a particular group. Here, unlike Babbalanja, the poet presents the reader with a version of the narrative that has been adapted to meet the demands of preferred poetic diction, or, in other words, a "perfected" paraphrase of another's story. In fact, the narrator communicates *his own message*, but in doing so, he abides by a different principle than that which allowed the Mardian philosopher to use Bardianna's expressions. Babbalanja, when speaking about the universals of human experience that he discovered through others, employs empathy. Meanwhile, the poem's narrator, being a poet himself, unreflectively assumes that as an interpreter of human thoughts, he has the right to appropriate the sailor's voice and speak "for him." He does so, however, in *good faith*: he believes that his version will be more complete, resonating with tones that Agath would be unable to express. What does not occur to him, though, is that the tones which cannot be woven into poetry are, in fact, not expressible within it at all. By replacing the sailor's "crude form" with refined poetry, the narrator does not fear that he might entirely lose the sense of original message and instead convey his own, inevitably different one, even if inspired by the initial expression. Such a gesture seems tantamount to granting the creator the right to appropriate another's narrative *unconditionally*: the narrator, who in the poem is both a poet and a listener of another's narrative, identifies with the glimpse of "true thought" within it and revises "tones" Agath "felt but scarce might give" by filtering them through the mesh of his own concepts and incorporates a thus processed thought into his poem, thereby giving it a "transpersonal" dimension.

Yet, although, in his own view, the poet remains "unbiased," such a fusion of horizons is nonetheless different from the identification which occurs when he expresses the thoughts of others

[...] on the much larger level of the poem as a whole, which expresses the central Victorian problem of religious doubt engendered by the impact of science, comparative mythology, and textual criticism on inherited faith. [...] By con-

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trast, *Clarel*, when viewed in its entirety, exhibits the poet Melville voicing the thoughts of an entire group of intellectual soul-searchers representing varied approaches to the central Victorian problem of religious doubt. [...] While such British poems as "In Memoriam" or "Empedocles on Etna" were dealing with the Victorian intellectual's reaction to the impact of science and higher criticism on the authority of the Bible together with the subsequent loss of religious faith, *Clarel* is unique among American poems of the period in thorough exploration of this theme. (Cannon 323–324)

If we summarize Cannon's observations thus far, we may notice that writing (and the reception of writing), according to Herman Melville, are both based on the potential of empathetic understanding and mutual willingness to communicate that can lead to a "literary encounter." It also seems that it is precisely this belief that allows the Melvillean poet to trust that the thought expressed in his own language is not an act of appropriation: he believes that a true thought cannot be falsified, although it can take on different forms. The narrator of *Clarel* connects with the speaker by way of "resonance." *Bona fide*, he trusts his intuition, dismissing the idiosyncrasies of the original story as secondary in terms of significance. However, to accept such a stance, it is essential to remember that the presumption of good faith arises directly from the obligation to be honest with oneself, although, aware of poetry's power and its ability to ignite human emotions, the creator may, for the sake of the greater good, practice self-censorship.

THE POET AS INTERPRETER OF IDEAS AND OBJECTS

This role of the poet intrigues Melville the most. Analyzing *Mardi*, Cannon reflects on Yoomy's status in King Media's entourage, and concludes that Melville grants the rule over the interpretation of symbols exclusively to the poet: only Yoomy is able to understand the symbolic text as a clear message. The scholar argues thus:

This belief of Melville that part of the poet's function was to help others see the hidden significance in all objects, coupled with his Coleridgean belief that the imagination refashions what it beholds, led him to use the confrontation of self and object as a recurrent literary method. Knowing that every individual sees differently according to his idiosyncrasies, Melville attempted to show this as well as the multiple symbolic values inherent in any given object. (Cannon 324)

At this point, two (polemic) observations arise, which—as it seems—allow us to supplement, and, in a certain sense, also revise Cannon's conclusions. The first concerns the impossibility of defining categories

by which one could unambiguously define a poet, while the second relates to the symbolic values of objects considered in terms of inherence. As an illustration of her arguments, Cannon references a scene from chapter 70 of *Mardi*, in which a canoe of Queen Hautia's emissaries approaches King Media's boat:

> Here we were overtaken by a swift gliding canoe, which, bearing down upon us before the wind, lowered its sail when close by: its occupants signing our paddlers to desist.
>
> I started.
>
> The strangers were three hooded damsels the enigmatical Queen Hautia's heralds.
>
> Their pursuit surprised and perplexed me. Nor was there wanting a vague feeling of alarm to heighten these emotions. But perhaps I was mistaken, and this time they meant not me.
>
> Seated in the prow, the foremost waved her Iris flag. Cried Yoomy, "Some message! Taji, that Iris points to you."
>
> It was then, I first divined, that some meaning must have lurked in those flowers they had twice brought me before.
>
> The second damsel now flung over to me Circe flowers[7]; then, a faded jonquil, buried in a tuft of wormwood leaves.
>
> The third sat in the shallop's stern, and as it glided from us, thrice waved oleanders.
>
> "What dumb show is this?" cried Media. "But it looks like poetry: minstrel, you should know."
>
> "Interpret then," said I.
>
> "Shall I, then, be your Flora's flute, and Hautia's dragoman? Held aloft, the Iris signified a message. These purple-woven Circe flowers mean that some spell is weaving. That golden, pining jonquil, which you hold, buried in those wormwood leaves, says plainly to you—Bitter love in absence."
>
> Said Media, "Well done, Taji, you have killed a queen." "Yet no Queen Hautia have these eyes beheld."
>
> Said Babbalanja, "The thrice waved oleanders, Yoomy; what meant they?"
>
> "Beware—beware—beware."
>
> "Then that, at least, seems kindly meant," said Babbalanja; "Taji, beware of Hautia." (*Mardi* 215)

Even the philosopher Babbalanja proves unable to decipher the message based on the syntagmatic arrangement of material objects; Cannon rightly observes that when it comes to the interpretation of symbols, it is the poet who becomes the ultimate authority, one whom even the ruler must trust. However, it is not clear what makes a poet a poet; within the context of the entire work, there are no clear indicators

7 *Circe flowers*. This likely refers to the moly flower, the mythical herb black "at the root" but whose "flower was like milk" (Homer, *Odyssey* 10), given to Odysseus by Hermes as an antidote to the potion prepared by the sorceress Circe, which had turned his companions into swine.

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that unambiguously distinguish a poet from a non-poet. Moreover, in the final scene of chapter 137, such distinctions are entirely called into question:

> "Thus ever: ever thus!" sighed Yoomy. "They comprehend us not."
> "Nor me," said Babbalanja. "Yoomy: poets both, we differ but in seeming; thy airiest conceits are as the shadows of my deepest ponderings; though Yoomy soars, and Babbalanja dives, both meet at last. Not a song you sing, but I have thought its thought; and where dull Mardi sees but your rose, I unfold its petals, and disclose a pearl. Poets are we, Yoomy, in that we dwell without us; we live in grottoes, palms, and brooks; we ride the sea, we ride the sky; poets are omnipresent." (*Mardi* 438)

The leveling of the philosopher and the poet (creator, artist, writer) is particularly significant. Babbalanja, listening to Yoomy's words, performs a dual interpretative gesture. Firstly, he identifies with the poet, which is—as has already been demonstrated—a necessary condition for achieving the state of shared consciousness and, thereby, of mutual understanding. Secondly, although initially he only recognizes *the analogy* of their positions, Babbalanja ultimately concludes that their situations are *identical*: although Yoomy is a poet painting what all eyes see, his poetry becomes an *object* visible to all eyes, and, by that virtue, also a *subject* of identical poetic acts—albeit one could see them as acts of a higher order. In both cases, Yoomy and Babbalanja, the select individuals, perform the work of imagination: if Yoomy is a poet, then Babbalanja becomes a meta-poet; the difference between them lies only in the fact that the objects to which they attribute symbolic values are different kinds. Babbalanja is thus entirely justified in his claim: "poets are we."

This directly relates to the second observation, which is significant for the ongoing discussion of the relationship between human beings and objects in Melville's thought. Pointing to the recurring motif of the ambiguity of objects in the writer's work, Cannon speaks of this ambivalence in terms of the inherence of meanings. However, it seems that the continuous interplay of semiotic readings identified by Melville (to which the scholar refers in her article while writing of the Doubloon scene in *Moby-Dick* and Palm scene in *Clarel*), indicates something quite the opposite. Perhaps objects possess *no inherent meaning* until the reflection of the poet—as the interpreter of the object—*assigns meaning* to them.

Thus, the "dull Mardi" will interpret the object literally, in accordance with what is dictated by the immediate context, the general cultural code, and his idiosyncratic traits. Yoomy will elevate the object

to the level of symbolic discourse (in this understanding, Melville grants poets authority over the realm of symbols), while Babbalanja, through his capacity for empathy, will strive to "see" what Yoomy has seen. However, what Yoomy sees and communicates becomes an *object* for Babbalanja, and thus, in engaging his imagination in the same way as the poet of King Media, the philosopher *interprets Yoomy's interpretation*, remaining confined to the limits of symbolic discourse. He is not able to elevate his object (ie.: the interpretation created by the poet) to any higher, "suprasymbolic" level, although inevitably, due to the ontological secondariness of his own interpretation, his own will be a *meta*-artistic reading.

It might be that the ability to perceive the potential advantages of the boundlessness of meanings is what makes a poet the poet, and that "metapoetry" arises from a fear of semiotic fluidity. Perhaps it is this fluid mixture of such fear and fascination that prevents definitive divisions, causing the poet to become a philosopher, and the philosopher turning into a poet. Irrespective of the reasons, however, these and other manifestations of Melville's intuition regarding the "silence" of objects, which enables this fascinating (or terrifying) interplay, will eventually come to form one of the fundamental premises of his own philosophy of existence.

One might argue that Melville assumes that the poet's domain is the world of *signs*, in the function of which he also perceives *objects*. However, one should remember that in his understanding a poet is not merely someone who writes verses. Rather—or primarily—a poet is an individual endowed with a special sensitivity that allows them to interpret perceived reality in terms of true thoughts. Cannon is well aware that her observations, valid for *Mardi*, come into question when one considers the objectification of human beings in *White Jacket*, or the divorce of objects from meanings in the Doubloon scene in *Moby-Dick*. Perhaps the one true thought that our life journey never fails to impart on us is that *objects* that are subject to interpretation do not *possess* inherent meaning; the poet *perceives* objects as *meaningful*, or, more specifically, it is him to *make sense* of the objects—and it is this sense that he voices in his verse. The above notwithstanding, the very fact of granting the poet authority over signs and the belief that poetic words can bring joy, solace, and self-awareness to others who, to a lesser or greater extent, are the creator's alikes, are important features of Melville's thinking about literature, which allow us to connect the previously discussed functions of poetry with another socially significant role of the artist—that of a visionary.

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THE POET AS A VISIONARY

In the context of the above, it becomes clear that Melville's views on the poet as a visionary aligned with the perspectives shared by most Romantics:

> Closely related, then, to the fourth role of poet as interpreter of ideas and objects is his fifth role as the seer who broadens the vision of the world. The function of the poet is not only to help men speak but also to help them see. In Melville's mind, seeing clearly is directly associated with the power of feeling, or empathy, that enables one to see through the eyes of others. (Cannon 325)

To explain Melville's understanding of poetic vision, Agnes Cannon refers to the polemical notes the writer made in the margins of Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "The Poet." He highlighted a passage in which Emerson argues that language is "fossil poetry," whose true nature can only be seen by the poet. Melville comments on this as follows:

> This is admirable, as many other thoughts of Mr. Emerson's are. His gross and astonishing errors & illusions spring from a self-conceit so intensely intellectual and calm that at first one hesitates to call it by its right name. Another species of Mr. Emerson's errors, or rather, blindness, proceeds from a defect in the region of the heart. (Melville quoted in Cannon 325)

Without delving deeper into Melville's ambivalent attitude towards the worldview of the energizer of American Transcendentalism—whom, contrary to appearances, the author of *Moby-Dick* did appreciate—Cannon links the writer's final remark on Emerson's understanding of poetry with the fact that in his copy of *King Lear*, Melville underscored a significant line spoken by Gloucester: "that will not see / Because he doth not feel."

> Melville, taking seriously the poet's role as a seer and believing in the poet's ability to see objects more clearly than others, felt that he was obligated to see everything, both good and evil. From Melville's point of view, Emerson, Goethe, and Wordsworth, among others, were not seers, but half-seers, seeing only the good and ignoring the evil. To Melville, the world, like the tortoise of *The Encantadas*, is both dark and bright with the dark side predominant and uppermost. A true poet must not ignore this darkness of evil or the darkness of the limitations of man's knowledge. […] Poets and philosophers are not gods, Babbalanja tells Yoomy, and hence it is their right to discuss such things as necessity and free will, fate and providence. If they were gods, knowing the answers, they would have no need to puzzle over these questions. But for the poet to claim that he possesses suprahuman knowledge is to affirm that which does not exist. (Cannon 326)

Explaining the premises of Melville's reservations with respect to Emerson's unequivocal assertion of the artist's "knowledge" of the primordial (and ultimate) reasons for all existence, as expressed it in "The Poet," the scholar emphasizes two outstandingly important aspects of Melville's perspective on the role (and qualities) of poetic vision. Firstly, since the poet's mission in the world is oriented toward the good of humanity, he has the duty to perceive and address both *good* and *evil*. In this context, from Melville's point of view, poets like Emerson, Goethe, and Wordsworth were (as Cannon puts it) "half-seers," because in their works they failed to consider the evil in the world as *unconditional*. Secondly, for Melville, it is crucial that the poet *does not* possess superhuman abilities:

> Sure knowledge of why the universe should exist as it does is, to Melville's thinking, beyond man's understanding. The poet's function as interpreter and seer is limited to showing what exists, to indicating the multiple meanings the same phenomenon may have for different individuals or to the same individual under different circumstances, and to suggesting that the profoundest interest the universe holds lies in its mysteriousness, including the mystery of the self and the imagination. (Cannon 326)

Indeed, the poet cannot predict the future, but merely sees the world more clearly than others owing to his unique ability to "perceive with the heart." And thus, irrespective of possible doubts, Melville's insight into mechanisms of perception, by and large, proves to align with Wordsworth's "Romantic epistemology"; in fact, the writer's remark on Emerson's "defect" seems to directly echo the message of the final stanza of William Wordsworth's canonical poem titled "The Tables Turned":

> Enough of Science and of Art;
> Close up those barren leaves;
> Come forth, and bring with you a heart
> That watches and receives. ("The Tables Turned")[8]

Such a perception allows the poet "to see further" and "more clearly" than others. This, along with a uniquely heightened sensitivity to good and evil, and the ability to influence readers' minds and moods, allows one to connect the discussed function of the poet as a seer with his role as a savior.

8 Sealts notes that Melville owned the following edition of Wordsworth's poetry: *The Complete Poetical Works*. Boston 1839 (Sealts 227).

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THE POET AS A SAVIOR

Cannon opens her argument with Melville's analogy between religion and literature, which the writer highlights in Chapter XXXIII of *The Confidence-Man*, commenting on readers' expectations of literature. The author notes that there exist readers who prefer imaginative prose over realistic works that merely replicate life's facts, and suggests that this group of readers is more "forgiving" towards the artist. This allows the creator not only to convey his perceptions to others but also to offer them a broader, and therefore more truthful, vision of the world. Such readers,

> […] sit down to a work of amusement tolerantly as they sit at a play, and with much the same expectations and feelings. They look that fancy shall evoke scenes different from those of the same old crowd round the custom-house counter, and same old dishes on the boardinghouse table, with characters unlike those of the same old acquaintances they meet in the same old way every day in the same old street. And as, in real life, the proprieties will not allow people to act out themselves with that unreserve permitted to the stage; so, in books of fiction, they look not only for more entertainment, but, at bottom, even for more reality, than real life itself can show. Thus, though they want novelty, they want nature, too; but nature unfettered, exhilarated, in effect transformed. In this way of thinking, the people in a fiction, like the people in a play, must dress as nobody exactly dresses, talk as nobody exactly talks, act as nobody exactly acts. It is with fiction as with religion: it should present another world, and yet one to which we feel the tie. (*The Confidence Man* 1037)

If, then, both literature and religion are narratives depicting "another world," and if the narrative of religion leads to salvation, then literature (which is here portrayed as a category encompassing the religious narrative) should, theoretically, also wield a salvific power. This insight allows Agnes Cannon to proceed with her reflections on the symbolic representation of the poet as redeemer in the novel *Mardi*, in the final scene of which, under the order of King Media, the poet Yoomy and the chronicler Mohi attempt to save Taji (the novel's narrator and the writer's enigmatic *alter ego*) from perdition by sheltering him on the island of Serenia, a utopian land of the apostles of Alma (Christ). Serenia, in Cannon's interpretation, is "another world": a realm of divine love and all-encompassing faith, thus offering Taji assistance in his escape, Yoomy, symbolically, offers him salvation. Surprisingly, however, Taji rejects the poet's gesture, choosing instead to face infinity on his own, regardless of the consequences. Evidently, he does not "feel the tie."

Taji's refusal problematizes the issue under discussion, especially that neither of the ambiguous fragments of the two novels analyzed

by Cannon lends itself to simple interpretations. While Melville might indeed have been convinced of the power of poetry, its moral obligations toward humanity, and its potential to broaden human perspective, the thesis of equating religion and poetry in the context presented by the scholar would seem to require further substantiation. In the cited passage from *The Confidence Man*, Melville clearly states that although the world of the novel, like the world depicted by religion, is "another world," it is a world that humanity may crave and can empathically connect with it, but "transformed," and thus unlike what they encounter every day. Melville's observation in *The Confidence-Man* seems ironic rather than formulated in earnest (especially in light of his experiences with the history of the reception of his *Typee*)—an act of his critique of religion rather than its legitimization. Even as early as in *Mardi* this seems to find confirmation, among other instances, in Taji's "suicidal" gesture of refusal to accept Yoomy and Mohi's offer and in numerous observations formulated by Babbalanja, not to mention Melville's sharp criticism of religious discourses in other works, of which Cannon, a seasoned Melvillean, is well aware. She stresses that Melville was convinced that religion "will save us from aught"; it merely, as Babbalanja says, may save us "from the evil in ourselves." Even if, indeed, poetry should have such a power, the group of individuals who offer Taji salvation includes not only the *poet*, but also the ruler and the chronicler, so the assumption that Melville attributed the "savior" role specifically to the artist requires additional justification. Cannon finds it in the example from the poem *Clarel*, which provides her with solid arguments in support of her claim: as salvific forces, Melville emphasizes poetry and—rather than religion—*faith*.

> Man's salvation, as Melville sees it in *Clarel*, rests upon his ability to accept a poetic faith in lieu of a religious one. Clarel, unlike his counterpart in Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna," does not commit suicide. Having caught a "new sense" from Vine, a poetic sense and a new philosophy of cheerful skepticism from Rolfe, he shoulders the cross that is the burden of all mankind. […] The Epilogue to *Clarel* unites the roles of the poet as the myth-maker and as savior. Having shown throughout the poem that all man's religious myths are created by his poets, the narrator adjures Clarel to accept faith in poetry. All of life is filled with such strange illusions that "Even death may prove unreal at the last/And stoics will be astounded into heaven" […]. (Cannon 329)

THE POET AS CREATOR OF MYTHS

Assuming an equivalence and a certain kinship between the fields of cognitive and myth-making activities in literature and philosophy,

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history, or religion, understood as symbolic narratives, it makes sense to consider Melville's concept of the poet as a creator of myths in light of the dominant philosophical-aesthetic theories of the 19th century, including those of Georg W. Hegel (with whose ideas Melville was familiar, as evidenced in Sealts 53) and, before him, Friedrich Schelling. Although there is no direct evidence that the writer was indeed acquainted with Schelling's thought, it is not difficult to notice certain similarities in their modes of inquiry as reflected in their work. Let us, therefore, focus on the convergence of the vision of the poet in Melville and Schelling's approach to myth, as presented by the philosopher in his *Philosophy of Art* (1859), where we read that:

> Mythology is the necessary condition and the foundational material of all art. Everything prior serves as proof of this. […] The *nervus probandi* lies in the idea of art as the representation of the absolute, of the inherently beautiful, through specific beautiful objects; that is, the representation of the absolute within limitation, without negating the absolute. This contradiction can only be resolved through the ideas of the gods, which themselves cannot possess an independent, truly objective existence except in their complete development into a distinct world and a poetic whole, which is called mythology. […] For further explanation: mythology is nothing other than the universe in a higher guise, in its absolute form—the true universe in itself, an image of life and the wondrous chaos in divine imagination, itself already poetry and yet, at the same time, the material and element of poetry. Mythology is the world and, as it were, the soil in which solely the plants of art can flourish and exist. Only within such a world are enduring and defined forms possible, through which alone eternal concepts can be expressed. The creations of art must possess the same, if not a higher, reality than those of nature—the divine forms which endure as necessarily and eternally as do the human race or the plant kingdom, simultaneously individuals and species, and as immortal as these. Insofar as poetry is the shaping of material, just as art, in the narrower sense, is of form, mythology is absolute poetry, as it were, poetry in its entirety. It is the eternal matter from which all forms emerge so marvelously and diversely. (Schelling 405–406)[9]

9 "Mythologie ist die nothwendige Bedingungund der erste Stoff aller Kunst. Alles Bisherige der Beweis. […] Der *nervus probandi* liegt in der Idee der Kunst als Darstellung des absolut, des an sich Schönen durch besondere schöne Dinge; also Darstellung des Absoluten in Begrenzung ohne Aufhebung des Absoluten. Dieser Widerspruch ist nur in den Ideen der Götter gelöst, die selbst wieder keine unabhängige, wahrhaft objektive Existenz haben können als in der vollkommenen Ausbildung zu einer eignen Welt und zu einem Ganzen der Dichtung, welches Mythologie heißt. […] Zur weiteren Erläuterung.—Die Mythologie ist nichts anderes als das Universum im höheren Gewand, in seiner absoluten Gestalt, das wahre Universum an sich, Bild des Lebens und des wundervollen Chaos in der göttlichen Imagination, selbst schon Poesie und doch für sich wieder Stoff und Element der Poesie. Sie (die Mythologie) ist die Welt und gleichsam der Boden, worin allein die Gewächse der Kunst aufblühen und bestehen können. Nur innerhalb einer solchen Welt sind bleibende und bestimmte Gestalten möglich, durch die allein ewige Beg-

Schelling's beliefs are complemented by the views of Friedrich Schlegel, with whose thought, at least to some degree, Melville was almost certainly familiar (Sealts 53). In his *Rede über die Mythologie* (*Speech on Mythology*, 1800), as noted by Alina Kowalczykowa,

> [Schlegel] synthesized earlier ideas from his *Fragments*, aiming to elevate poetry to the highest philosophical status, equating it with science and religion. [...] Schlegel claimed that the essential can only be known indirectly, through symbol. Mythology, which he regarded as a system of interconnected symbols, provides the means to comprehend the world of history and nature, and its language is true, that is, symbolic art. [...] The future mythology is to be all-encompassing—it is to absorb the mysticism of the Orient and unify science with philosophy. [...] If mythology is indeed the only path to authentic knowledge, then art, as its language, must act as a mediator between man and God. And the poet, who commands this language of symbols, can—according to Schlegel—express his era, understood in the context of the entirety of history, possessing the ability to grasp "that which is highest" and to prophesy the future. (Kowalczykowa 163–164)[10]

These reflections align significantly with ideas present in Melville's work, including the poem *Clarel* and the passages from *Mardi*, as highlighted by Agnes D. Cannon: indeed, in Melville the creation of "enduring" and "defined" forms is the result of the efforts of poet-mystics, who construct the mythological discourses of religion. Unlike them, however, the ever-critical Melville chose to take a step further: like Schlegel, embracing a much broader realm of mythology (and by that virtue also of poetry), having previously integrated it with philosophy and poetic faith, he enmeshed into it the discourse of history as well. Cannon illustrates this with an example from *Mardi*: the royal chronicler Mohi feels resentment toward Yoomy, because King Media, the ruler of Mardi, seeking knowledge about the island of Tupia, prefers to hear the legend from the poet's mouth rather than become familiarized with the chronicler's "factographic" records. Yoomy reacts thus:

> "Old Mohi, let us not clash. I honor your calling; but, with submission, your chronicles are more wild than my cantos. I deal in pure conceits of my own; which

riffe ausgedrückt werden können. Die Schöpfungen der Kunst müssen dieselbe, ja noch eine höhere Realität haben als die der Natur, die Götterformen, die so nothwendig und ewig fortdauern, als das Geschlecht der Menschen oder das der Pflanzen, zugleich Individuen und Gattungen und unsterblich wie diese. Inwiefern Poesie das Bildende des Stoffes, wie Kunst im engeren Sinn der Form ist, so ist die Mythologie die absolute Poesie, gleichsam die Poesie in Masse. Sie ist die ewige Materie, aus der alle Formen so wundervoll, mannichfaltig hervorgehen." Translation PJ.

10 Translation PJ.

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have a shapeliness and a unity, however unsubstantial; but you, Braid-Beard, deal in mangled realities. In all your chapters, you yourself grope in the dark. Much truth is not in thee, historian. Besides, Mohi: my songs perpetuate many things which you sage scribes entirely overlook. Have you not oftentimes come to me, and my ever dewy ballads for information, in which you and your musty old chronicles were deficient?"

"In much that is precious, Mohi, we poets are the true historians; we embalm; you corrode." (*Mardi* 280–281)

And so it is in *Mardi* that we observe that as early as 1849 Melville was verbalizing the same intuition that Friedrich Nietzsche would articulate in his *Daybreak* nearly half a century later as one of the most famous ideas of the 19th century: "Facta! Yes, *facta ficta*!" Melville is aware that historians speak of things that have not emerged beyond the borders of imagination and challenges the "objectivity" and "scientific nature" of history, and therefore its presumed superiority in its claim to Truth in his work (just as Nietzsche would later do in his). Poetry not only "embalms" truth; it is also a source of data for history, which then emerges as secondary to it. History, therefore, chases the illusion of truth, and in its claims to objectivity and factual accuracy distorts it, or as Yoomy suggests, "history corrodes the truth," while poetry immortalizes it in legend.

However, Mohi, fighting to retain his status as a proclaimer of truth, seeks counterarguments that would validate the previously unquestioned meaning of his work. He attempts to appeal to the common, rational judgments of the audience regarding the legend presented by the poet. This appeal becomes the starting point for the philosophical formulation of Melville's intuition of truth, which Babbalanja will later articulate in words. Mohi says:

"Now, I appeal to you, royal Media; to you, noble Taji; to you, Babbalanja;" said the chronicler, with an impressive gesture, "whether this seems a credible history: Yoomy has invented."

"But perhaps he has entertained, old Mohi," said Babbalanja.

"He has not spoken the truth," persisted the chronicler.

"Mohi," said Babbalanja, "truth is in things, and not in words: truth is voiceless; so at least saith old Bardianna. And I, Babbalanja, assert, that what are vulgarly called fictions are as much realities as the gross mattock of Dididi, the digger of trenches; for things visible are but conceits of the eye: things imaginative, conceits of the fancy. If duped by one, we are equally duped by the other."

"Clear as this water," said Yoomy.

"Opaque as this paddle," said Mohi, "But, come now, thou oracle, if all things are deceptive, tell us what is truth?"

"The old interrogatory; did they not ask it when the world began? But ask it no more. As old Bardianna hath it, that question is more final than any answer." (*Mardi* 283–284)

Assuming that myth is the domain of poetry, we must recognize that literary discourse, in shaping myths, also organizes human perception of the world. Moreover, if it is only within such a world that "eternal concepts" are possible, then the concept of truth is also possible only within the realm of literature. For Melville, *truth*—as opposed to the *concept of truth*—resides in *things*, and thus exists outside discourse and is inaccessible to it. On this basis, Melville philosophically equates the status of *objects* and *representations*, as both are perceived as phenomena, and therefore neither—although they are real—can be the truth.

This also sheds light on the ambiguity of the question posed by Mohi. Addressing the king, the philosopher, and the guest, Mohi the chronicler questions the credibility of Yoomy's story. If the chronicler uses the word "history" in the sense of a narrative, he cannot evaluate it in terms of truth or falsehood. However, if he believes that Yoomy treated the task of the historian "unprofessionally," then he undermines the unequivocalness of history in two ways. First, by saying "this […] history," Mohi allows for the possibility of multiple histories coexisting; the use of the demonstrative pronoun presupposes a situation of choice. Second, by questioning credibility, Mohi asks whether one can believe in a given history, and thus the ultimate judgment of the historian's work rests on placing faith in its results. The issue, then, is to establish the criteria for selecting one of the available *histories* or *versions of history*, none of which, in any case, can be based on the "silent" facts, mentioned by the thinker Bardianna: discursive categories belong to myth—that is, to poetry. In myth, then, poetry and history merge into one.

MARGINALIA

Thus, the journey of Mardi, guided by Agnes D. Cannon, comes to an end—but it is certainly not the end of the aesthetic wanderings of Herman Melville. Before I summarize my observations on Herman Melville's approach to literature, it is worth pausing to consider how his imagined voyage to *Mardi* reshapes our understanding of the poet's role and the nature of textual creation in 19th century America. Melville's notes—found on the margins of the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the *Critical Essays* of Victorian thinker and poet Matthew Arnold, Richard Hooper's commentary on Chapman's translation of the *Iliad*, the essays of William Hazlitt and Madame de Staël, as well as the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Friedrich Schiller—help us understand the multidimensionality of his lifelong philosophical journey and serve

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as windows into the values that shaped the artistic reflection. These annotations, supplementing Cannon's detailed discussion, illuminate the interplay between Melville's philosophical inquiries and his literary ambitions, underscoring his persistent engagement with art as a means of navigating existence. Having charted the mangled realities of Mardi and crafted its allegorical landscapes, the writer continues his explorations—and the marginalia he left behind may well be treated as an important part of his artistic logbook, suggesting that he viewed the poetic act as both a gesture of imaginative freedom and an existential necessity. Agnes Cannon's analysis of these notes allows one to assume that:

1) Melville shared Matthew Arnold's belief that "poetry is the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things, and hence its importance" (Arnold quoted in Cannon 330). He also leaned towards the stance of Richard Hooper's, who believed that poetry has "a subtle influence" upon "the rising spirit of the age," and that reading "noble" literature could transform readers into not only "a more poetical class [...] but a finer order of human beings in respect of energy, love of nature at first-hand, and faith in their own impulses and aspirations" (Hooper quoted in Cannon 330). Like them, he held the conviction that engaging with poetry can unleash in a person creative energy and natural genius, which "would have shown in their character the largeness of heart and depth of thought that Melville associated with the poetic nature" (Cannon 331).

2) Like Hooper and Hazlitt, Melville was convinced that the "arts hold immediate communication with nature, and are only derived from that source" (Hazlitt quoted in Cannon 331)— and that through poetry, an individual can acquire "a love of nature at first-hand." The effect of the connection between nature and art is twofold, as the artist "through the closeness of his contact with the creative force of nature, can release the latent creative energies of his reader. Simultaneously, the reader can gain the necessary understanding of nature that will enable him to reap the third benefit of poetry, its power to inspire faith in one's own impulses and aspirations" (Cannon 331). Melville's vision would also concur with the viewpoint of Matthew Arnold, who claimed that

> [t]he grand power of poetry is its interpretative power, by which I mean, not a power of drawing out in black and white and explanation of the mystery of the universe, but the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them. (Arnold quoted in Cannon 331)

Therefore, Melville could attribute to literature the power of elevating a person to a level at which they are capable of interpreting for themselves the unsolvable mystery of the universe. He clearly shared Emerson's belief that a person should be a nonconformist, that they owe themselves authenticity, and thus, by rejecting falsehood, must seek their own truth. This is confirmed, among other passages, by Ishmael's epitaph for Bulkington in the novel *Moby-Dick*. Only a bold and honest, individual vision of the universe and reality, to which literature also contributes by stimulating human self-awareness and energizing original philosophies, can become the foundation for everything else. Only "this reality," according to Emerson, "is the foundation of friendship, religion, poetry, and art" (Emerson quoted in Cannon 332). Cannon observes that Melville added his own comment to this passage: "True & admirable! Bravo!" (332).

3) Herman Melville, believing that one of the essential qualities of poetry is its ennobling effect on the human spirit, also identified with Matthew Arnold, who in his essay *On Translating Homer* wrote that the poetry of the Greek master is "steadfastly noble," and that it "has the power to shape human character, and ennobles man" (Arnold quoted in Cannon 333). Agnes D. Cannon notes that Melville may have believed that this function of poetry stems directly from beauty, which is its highest *raison d'être*. This, as the scholar stresses, is indicated by the quotes from the works of French essayist and poet Joseph Joubert, which Melville highlighted in Arnold's essay, particularly the idea that the existence of literature is meaningless unless it is "more beautiful than reality. [...] the sole purpose of art is beauty" (Arnold quoted in Cannon 333). The combination of the idea of beauty as the essence of poetry's existence and its moral significance in Melville's concept of art crystallizes, as Cannon points out, in the words of Emerson that the author of *Moby-Dick* underscored: "All high beauty has a moral element in it, and I find the antique sculpture as ethical Marcus Antonius: and the beauty ever in proportion to the depth of thought" (Emerson quoted in Cannon 333).

This emphasis is no coincidence: the writer himself expressed a similar view through references to antiquity. Cannon recalls that even in his lectures on Roman statues, Herman Melville placed special emphasis on the ethical value of ancient sculpture. Douglas J. Robillard also points this out in his *Melville and the Visual Arts: Ionian Form, Venetian Tint*, noting that the subject of Melville's lectures included busts of such significant figures of antiquity as Demosthenes, Socrates, Julius Caesar, Seneca, and Plato, as well as the statues of emperors Nero and Tiberius, and that the writer, reportedly, concluded one

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of his presentations by stating that "The deeds of the ancients were noble—and so was their art" (31). Yet, the connection between beauty and ethics is especially evident in Melville's remarks on the *Apollo Belvedere* and *Laocoön*. Robillard notes that:

> The *Apollo Belvedere*, much admired in the nineteenth-century guidebooks and art criticism, drew enthusiastic praise from Melville: "There is a kind of divinity in it that lifts the imagination of the beholder above 'things rank and gross in nature'." [...] The *Laocoön*, "the very semblance of a great and powerful man writhing with the inevitable destiny," made a deep impression upon him, partly because he saw clearly that "half of its significance" came from "the fable that it represent; otherwise it would be no more than Paul Potter's *Bear Hunt*." [...] This is a clear-headed assessment of the way in which Melville and his contemporaries viewed art, finding much of its compelling power in the literary narrative attached; this is true of the Laocoon and of such paintings as Guido's *Beatrice Cenci*, which, without its pathetic story of murder and execution, is merely a very pretty portrait of a pretty girl. (31)

The combination of such elements as beauty-tinged-with-doubt, depth of thought, and the significance of a work of art, clearly points to the concept of the sublime, for which, as Marek Wilczyński notes, "Melville had a keen eye" (Wilczyński 210). Commenting on the conclusion of Melville's lecture *Statues in Rome*, in which the writer presents works of art as "realizations of the soul" of "visionaries and dreamers" and "representations of the ideal" (and not—in a Platonic sense—of reality), the scholar highlights the writer's interest in sculpture as a "possible vehicle of the supersensible" and poses questions about the relationship between ideas, art, and life in the context of Melville's artistic choices (209). He observes that:

> It seems rather striking that just as in "Ligeia" and "Morella," in Melville's lecture the romantic question of representation hinges on the marble human figure whose beauty (not sublimity [...]) unmistakably matches the "supernal loveliness" of Poe. Transcending history, the Roman relics made the American traveler contemplate the relation between ideas and their correlatives in a way that conformed to the aesthetics of *das Erhabene* and shed some light on the perplexing textual riddles that brought the first turbulent phase of his literary career to an end. (Wilczyński 210)

Wilczyński points out that the understanding of the sublime in the America of the period oscillated between the early, eighteenth-century, notion of the sensory sublime of Edmund Burke's and the Kantian concept of *das Erhabene*, a painful yet thrilling experience of the limits of imagination, which, having already arrived at the ultimate limit of its capabilities, still struggles to reach the unattainable realm of ideas

that lie at the source of reason.[11] Although beauty and the sublime, on whose dynamics scholars focus in their analyses of Melville's concepts of art, often go hand in hand, the "supernal loveliness" of Edgar Allan Poe's, the capture of which would be akin to capturing what is beyond the senses, refers not to the classical concept of beauty but is intellectually related to Kantian *das Erhabene*, a traumatic failure in the struggle to grasp ideas at the level of representation.

This distinction is crucial as it largely explains the dynamics of the specific roles of the poet and art at which Melville has arrived in his multidimensional peregrinations. It is easy to see that in fulfilling each of these functions, Melville's poet provides his audience with an experience of simultaneous delight and disarray: the artist does not create *pure beauty*, he does not provide *pure pleasure*—even as an "entertainer." Struggling for access to the world of ideas, he makes others aware of the opacity of the world and the ungraspability of the self. Art vanishes if no subjective discourse envelops it, if it fails to frustrate the individual work of imagination. This is also confirmed by Wilczyński's observation, who asserts that among the writers of the American Gothic, the preferred metaphor of subjectivity is that of an unexplored "crypt" of the subconscious—or what he dubs psychological *camera obscura*—which choice points to the particular significance of the ungraspability of mind in relation to the perceived object, rather than to the particular importance of the objects themselves. Analyzing the intricacies of this relationship (manifest in the dichotomy of sensibility and supersensibility in Melville's *The Piazza*) the scholar concludes that:

> Marble and mist are two correlated extremes that exclude *das Erhabene*; one too hard to match the supersensible, the other too rare to give it any definite, even if elusive, shape. Of course, the very endeavor to bring together ideas and forms is teleologically of no avail, yet, since the fuzzy logic of the sublime has its roots in the desire to comprehend, on the one hand, representations must be substantial enough to sustain hope, while on the other, they must not compulsively harden into beauty. (Wilczyński 213–214)

Wilczyński's observations indicate that Melville's understanding of beauty and the sublime defies definition: it depends on the projection of individual imagination. If the sublime lies between substance and transience, and can "harden into beauty," the reverse process is also possible: the marble Apollo, representing the "hardened"

11 See Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Second Book, "Analytic of the Sublime," paragraphs 23–29 (Kant §23–§29).

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canon of beauty, serves Melville as a starting point for an insight into the sublime, in the lens of which the sculpture acquires ephemeral qualities. However, the ambiguity of the dynamics between beauty and sublimity does not change the fact that, in Herman Melville's view, beauty/sublimity and ethics are common attributes of poetry and the other "liberal arts." The writer inclined towards the belief that at the foundation of all religion, philosophy, and all art lies a common creative force, "closely allied with nature that Shelley hymned as 'intellectual beauty,' and Schiller praised in 'The Artists' [...]" (Cannon 334).

In this very poem, which Melville came to know through the English translation by Sir Edward George Bulwer-Lytton (whose version deviated significantly from the German original) in 1844, Melville marked the stanzas in which Schiller/Lytton defined the role of poetry and the poet in terms of the highest spiritual values underscoring them multiple times, denoting a particularly emotional effect the poem must have had on the American writer. In "The Artists," the poet is entrusted with the care of human dignity and freedom, whose domain is art:

O Sons of Art! Into your hands consign'd
(O heed the trust, O heed it and revere!)
The liberal dignity of human kind!
With you to sink, with you to reappear. (Schiller quoted in Cannon 334)[12]

4) Art is also a treasury of spiritual values, even "in a materialistic age subservient to the claims of science" (Cannon 334); in art, as indicated by the lyrical subject of the stanza from "The Artists" which Melville underscored, lies Truth.

Truth, when the Age she would reform expels;
Flies for safe refuge to the Muse's cells.
More fearful for the veil of charm she takes,
From Song the fullness of her splendour breaks;
And o'er the Foe that persecutes and quails
Her vengeance thunders, as the Bard prevails! (Schiller quoted in Cannon 334)[13]

12 In the German original, the poem Melville knew from Bulwer-Lytton's translation, reads as follows: "Der Menschheit Würde ist in eure Hand gegeben, / Bewahret sie! / Sie sinkt mit euch! Mit euch wird sie sich heben!" (Schiller).

13 In the German original, the verses read as follows: "Von ihrer Zeit verstoßen, flüchte / Die ernste Wahrheit zum Gedichte / Und finde Schutz in der Kamönen Chor. / In ihres Glanzes höchster Fülle, / Furchtbarer in des Reizes Hülle, / Erstehe sie in dem Gesange / Und räche sich mit Siegesklange / An des Verfolgers feigem Ohr" (Schiller).

However, the concept of poetic truth adopted by Melville differs somewhat from that of the German poet:

> While Schiller's concept of truth seems to be that of an absolute, with a capital "T," Melville, like Madame de Staël, envisions poetic truth as momentary, for Yoomy's statement that "poetry is truth" carries with it the recognition that this truth is limited, and ordering of experience conceived by the poet and confined to his cantos. Yet within these limitations it does open up the boundaries of existence, as Madame de Staël phrases it, and converts the dreams of man into actuality. (Cannon 335)

5) Truth understood in this manner becomes a link between the abstract and the concrete. Cannon observes that for Herman Melville (who, in this respect, shared the views of Madame de Staël and Matthew Arnold), art is a bridge between reality and idea, a force that unifies the finite with the infinite, enabling the perfect unity of what Emerson described in his essay *Worship* as "extraordinary confusion of heaven and earth," and—as Richard Hooper expressed it in the passage of the introduction to Homer's *Iliad* that Melville highlighted—a power that enables one to discern order within absurdity (Hooper quoted in Cannon 337).

Agnes D. Cannon summarizes her observations on Melville's "theoretical" position as follows:

> Both in his favorite metaphors for the poet and poetry, the fountain and the rose, and in his comments on poetry, whether in his writings or his markings, Melville shows himself to be strongly within the romantic tradition that sees poetry as self-expression, and the poet as the mediator between the world of the mind and that of the senses. His emphasis on passion or feeling in poetry is equal to that of Shelley or Byron. [...] For like Shelley and Schiller, Melville believed that the beauty of poetry radiates an uplifting spiritual influence necessary to man's well-being. [...] Poetry, to Melville, as to Schiller or Shelley, is, together with the other arts, the creative power that underlies all civilization. Melville would agree with Keats, whom he deeply admired, that, properly applied to poetry, beauty is truth and truth is beauty, or beautiful. Whether or not that is all man needs to know, to Melville, as to Keats, the limits of man's poetic imagination do mark the boundaries of his knowledge. (Cannon 337–339)

Such a vision of art reflects characteristics typical of Romantic epistemology, combining the irrational and mystical with that which can be subjected to rational analysis. This way of thinking finds fuller expression in the writings of Friedrich Schlegel, whose formulations often correspond with Melville's intuitions, expressed in both his texts and in the marginalia he left for us to decipher. In his *Fragments* of 1798, Schlegel writes:

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[116] Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry. Its aim isn't merely to reunite all the separate species of poetry and put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. It tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature; and make poetry lively and sociable, and life and society poetical; poeticize wit and fill and saturate the forms of art with every kind of good, solid matter for instruction, and animate them with the pulsations of humor. It embraces everything that is purely poetic, from the greatest systems of art, containing within themselves still further systems, to the sigh, the kiss that the poetizing child breathes forth in artless song. It can so lose itself in what it describes that one might believe it exists only to characterize poetical individuals of all sorts; and yet there still is no form so fit for expressing the entire spirit of an author: so that many artists who started out to write only a novel ended up by providing us with a portrait of themselves. It alone can become, like the epic, a mirror of the whole circumambient world, an image of the age. And it can also —more than any other form—hover at the midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer, free of all real and ideal self-interest, on the wings of poetic reflection, and can raise that reflection again and again to a higher power, can multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors. It is capable of the highest and most variegated refinement, not only from within outwards, but also from without inwards; capable in that it organizes —for everything that seeks a wholeness in its effects —the parts along similar lines, so that it opens up a perspective upon an infinitely increasing classicism. Romantic poetry is in the arts what wit is in philosophy, and what society and sociability, friendship and love are in life. Other kinds of poetry are finished and are now capable of being fully analyzed. The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. It can be exhausted by no theory and only a divinatory criticism would dare try to characterize its ideal. It alone is infinite, just as it alone is free; and it recognizes as its first commandment that the will of the poet can tolerate no law above itself. The romantic kind of poetry is the only one that is more than a kind, that is, as it were, poetry itself: for in a certain sense all poetry is or should be romantic. (*Fragments* 31–32)

Juxtaposing the findings of our exploratory expedition spanning Mardi, the Holy Land, the Mediterranean cradle of Western civilization, and the "long Vaticans" of the world with the above quotation, we may state that Melville's views on literature both coincide with those of Schlegel and supplement them. In the writer's conception, "poetry," "literature," and "art" (in its broader sense) are synonyms, because all of them are forms of creative thinking rooted in unrestrained imagination; they constitute a domain of freedom where the finite and the infinite unite. Since they arise directly from the unrestrained nature of humanity, they are also the domain of truth, which, though limited by form, transcends the boundaries of existence and transforms human dreams into reality. Art operates in the language of symbols, which is the only medium of human perception, and each of its forms bears a trace of the poet's imagination. It also stimulates

poetic sensitivity and the imagination of the recipient, which, in turn, define the limits of individual knowledge. Art has mastered the use of symbols to the highest extent; it is, therefore, the most magnificent form of expression: it has the power to awaken dormant creative energy and, as a result, to make humanity better and nobler. It is thus moral—and its aesthetic and ethical values stem from each other, they are an indivisible unity.

Literature and art are synonymous with philosophy and history, for at the root of the liberal arts lies the same ennobling and liberating force, "intellectual beauty." Each of them operates with the same symbolic medium and relies on the same work of imagination: facts remain silent because truth lies within things. Art that employs symbols holds power over intuition, feeling, and emotion; it is, therefore, closest to the "silent truth," because it directly arises from the untamed nature that is unbounded by principles and social norms, offering an inroad into the "epistemology of the heart," which does not articulate truth or attempt to categorize it, but has the capacity to allow one to feel it.

Melville's poet is a person who wields imagination, subtle and sensitive to beauty, endowed with a keen intellect, noble, and righteous. He is honest with himself and others, despising hypocrisy. He is also a nonconformist: true to himself, he builds his poetic expressions based on his own feelings; he writes "himself" and "with himself." He is aware that he risks being misunderstood by others, yet he does everything to lend voice to artistic truth. Melville's artist needs other people and creates for them, but he also needs the silence of solitude and moments of self-reflection. The poet, like in Coleridge, can willingly "suspend disbelief" and accept the truth of art in place of religious faith or an unknowable fact.

As a creator, he also provides entertainment, but the entertainment he provides is demanding. The writer is not a comedian but a bard: he stimulates the intellectual satisfaction of his readers, provoking them to reflect and ponder deeply. For this reason, he creates for a select audience: his audience belongs to the "kingly" group of ordinary-extraordinary people, with noble souls sensitive to beauty and inclined toward profound thought. The artist hopes that his audience is more or less like him; that by identifying with his art, they will be willing to see themselves in it and discover their own, previously unarticulated intuitions. He is also aware, however, that such identification will never be complete; he understands this rapport rather in terms of mutual willingness to communicate, a two-sided *effort* to attempt at identification. The poet creates in the name of brotherhood and for the good of humanity; he is the voice for the thoughts

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of others and a medium through which "true thoughts"—thoughts that "no one owns" but everyone harbors—become accessible. He thus reveals to humanity issues of a universal dimension; he allows other to name what "already lies within them," giving them a glimpse into their own selves.

To remain true to himself and honest with others, the poet conveys moral messages even in works with whose ideology he cannot agree, but is compelled to create or perform by a higher force. Literary "camouflage" becomes then his duty. The poet does not bear responsibility for the evil in others, but he is aware of *his own responsibility*, because he knows that, having power over human emotions, he is capable of eliciting reactions leading to either magnificent or outright tragic consequences.

In creating, the artist identifies with his material: both with the symbolically interpreted external world and with the narratives of other speaking subjects, which are also *objects* in his perception. He thus has the right, in good faith, to transform them through the means of his own artistic expression into a more perfect and, paradoxically, truer creation. The poet has control over the world of symbols and serves as their interpreter for others. He is aware that "truth is silent": meanings are not inherent in the objects themselves but come to life through the audience, changing depending on context, time, and the observer.

The artist is a visionary but does not predict the future; he merely "sees with the heart," revealing the truth to others, thus broadening the human vision of the world. He also possesses a redemptive power because, through art, he offers humanity poetic faith—a belief in the myth he creates, with which people feel connected and in which they recognize their own reality; mythology is the world where humanity resides, and outside of which self cannot exist. The concepts of the "artist," "philosopher," and "historian" are thus synonymous.

Melville would likely agree with Schlegel's assertion that only poetry can critique poetry, as the only poetic creed he seems to have left behind is a short poem titled *Art*:

Art
In placid hours well-pleased we dream
Of many a brave unbodied scheme.
But form to lend, pulsed life create,
What unlike things must meet and mate:
A flame to melt-a wind to freeze;
Sad patience-joyous energies;
Humility-yet pride and scorn;
Instinct and study; love and hate;
Audacity-reverence. These must mate,

And fuse with Jacob's mystic heart,
To wrestle with the angel-Art. (*Selected Poems* 144)

That art is capable of fusing the opposites is not a new thought. However, it is worth noting that for Melville, this process requires a fight. Creativity is a struggle: for art to be born, the artist must reject the passivity of idle dreaming. A "living" work demands sweat. Hennig Cohen writes about Melville's reflection on creative effort as follows:

> To embody [his dreams], he must bring together opposing elements, active and passive, male and female. Such words as "pulsed life" and "mate" give a biological tone to the process of artistic creation. […] The poem moves from a state of passivity to intense activity, the pace increasing as the number of opposing elements in the lines increases. When these opposing elements are reconciled, they must become part of patriarch Jacob whose victory over the angel gained him a blessing and a new name but also an injury in the hollow of the thigh (Genesis 32:24–32). Because this wound is symbolically an emasculation, the ironical aspects and exactions of creativity are made evident. The importance given to the "unlike things" that must be brought together stresses Melville's idea of the fundamental complexity and variety inherent in all objects and concepts. (Cohen 236–237)

However, it is difficult to escape the impression that Cohen's commentary offers a rather one-sided interpretation of the poem. The critic, focusing more on the psychoanalytical elements of the work rather than the character of the writer's literary *credo*, says little about Melville's concept of art, despite the title of the poem suggesting otherwise. What seems particularly important is hidden in the last two lines, where all the mentioned elements merge with Jacob's mystical heart in his struggle with the art-angel. Cohen sees in these lines only a suggestion of symbolic castration, presumably intended as Melville's ironic (self-)commentary on poets and the claims of art.

It seems, however, that besides all the underlying subconscious content, the introduction of the biblical patriarch from the Book of Genesis into the poem offers the interpreter many other hints, and it stands to reason that it should serve some artistic purpose. Let us, therefore, analyze the role of this reference in the context of the relevant fragment of the Bible.

> And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob,

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but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. (KJV Genesis 32:24–31)

Jacob wrestling with the angel is wrestling with God—but not as His enemy: the patriarch seeks God's blessing, which becomes the stake of his struggle. Paradoxically, the struggle with God brings Jacob *closer* to God. Only by risking defeat in the confrontation with divinity can Jacob achieve his goal: the victorious encounter grants him the desired blessing and a meeting with the Almighty, who rewards his steadfast faith. Jacob becomes Israel, "one who struggles with God," and at the same time, the patriarch of a nation that will bear the same name. However, the price of victory is a mark: the injured hip becomes a metaphor for the irreversible change that occurs as a result of the confrontation with the divine.

Similarly, the poet: in creating a poem—struggling to irrationally unite what cannot logically be reconciled (things unlike)— fights with the divine element of art (angel Art) to gain the blessing, the name that will give birth to a new person: the artist, offering others "poetic faith," the medium of "true thoughts," holding sway over souls. Intimate contact with art can only be achieved through an unequal struggle with it, and engaging with art is a mystical experience: it is an experience of truth that wounds and leaves a scar.

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Melville's metaphorical and literal journeys we have explored with Agnes D. Cannon obviously transcend the boundaries of mere travel; they become odysseys of the mind and spirit, deeply intertwined with the pursuit of truth, art, and, most of all, self-awareness. Just as Melville's protagonist embarks on a voyage across seas, whether charted or uncharted, the journey is always dangerous. The writer—both "mariner and mystic," as Raymond Weaver called him—in his struggles to come to terms with reality, epitomizes humanity's eternal quest to grapple with the mysteries of existence, to interpret the manifold signs of the world. Navigating the tensions between beauty and sublimity, through the poetic lens, the traveler emerges as not only an observer but also a *creator*, molding experience into meaning and imparting a broader vision to those who would willingly follow. This learning experience, colored with both delight and disarray,

reflects the paradoxical nature of truth itself—voiceless yet omnipresent, elusive yet transformative. It is through these journeys, both external and internal, that one may begin to cultivate the "justest of all views," a perspective born not of certainty but of a profound openness to the world's infinite complexities—if only one musters the courage to embark. Melville's narratives invite us to embrace the duality of travel as both a physical endeavor and a metaphorical process of self-discovery, ultimately affirming that the greatest voyages lie not only in crossing oceans but in expanding the horizons of our understanding, and they are worth the effort, even if they should brand us for life.

Abstract: Herman Melville's *Mardi* emerges as a pivotal work that bridges the domains of narrative realism and philosophical allegory, reflecting the writer's evolving artistic ambitions and his quest for truth. This article examines Melville's exploration of the poet's role and literature's potential as a medium for conveying profound philosophical insights. Drawing on Agnes D. Cannon's critical framework and Melville's marginalia, the analysis highlights how the writer constructs a multidimensional vision of the artist as entertainer, mouthpiece, interpreter, visionary, savior, and mythmaker. Melville's poetic philosophy integrates Romantic notions of art's transformative power with a critical stance on truth, emphasizing the poet's duty to grapple with both beauty and the sublime while navigating the moral and existential ambiguities of human existence. By reimagining narrative as an epistemological journey, Melville challenges his contemporaries' aesthetic expectations and affirms literature's capacity to inspire intellectual and spiritual growth. This article situates *Mardi* within 19th-century debates on aesthetics and truth, shedding light on Melville's literary aspirations and his enduring contributions to the philosophy of art.

Keywords: Herman Melville, *Mardi*, concept of art, true thought, Romantic aesthetics, Agnes D. Cannon

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HEMISPHERIC AND TRANSOCEANIC NARRATIVES OF AMERICAN TRAVELS
An Introduction

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Out of many Early Modern narratives of the voyage to America, one text affected the European imagination—and its subsequent literary expressions—more than others: the 1493 letter of Christopher Columbus to Luis de Santángel. This document is often regarded by literary scholars as the holotype underpinning the modern genre of travel writing (Campbell 166). Echoing the narrative structures of Arthurian romance[1], and inspired by Mandeville, Marco Polo, Pierre d'Ailly, Ptolemy, and Seneca, Columbus's letter is perceived both as a herald of new times and a relic of an earlier era. The narrative conventions employed in this letter have endured through the centuries: the rhetoric of discovery, patterns of conquest, acts of possession through naming, and the dream of reaching the *locus amoenus*—the Earthly Paradise—continue to resonate strongly in the travel narratives ever since.

In Columbus's letter, blending fiction and reality, biblical metaphors materialize as the author invokes religious imagery while bearing witness to his observations. This formula allows the narrator to reinforce his authority through references to personal travel experiences and emphasis on his unique social position (Livingstone 132). As the dominant intellectual paradigms evolve throughout the Early Modern Period, travelogue and fieldwork diary—relying upon analogous concepts of authority—became the primary models for narratives that would be acknowledged as "objective" representations of the reality of "the Other," while "being somewhere"—the physical experience of one's presence in a particular location—came to be recognized

1 —especially with regard to the construction of its narrator's character.

as an argument attesting to the objectivity of cognition. Consequently, new perspectives on the relationship between metaphor, writing, and the world—perspectives that would increasingly eschew analogist thinking (Descola 276)—came to influence the formulas of cognitive procedures, thereby affecting the understanding of the nature of acquired knowledge (Pisarek 98).

Michel de Certeau designed a study of the intricate interplay between science, fiction, imagination, and research, demonstrating how travel and writing co-constituted modern modes of cognition (de Certeau 221–26). However, what he failed to fully address were the limitations of his project, which relied upon the accounts of a relatively narrow, albeit numerous, group of literate travelers, administrators, missionaries, merchants, and researchers—individuals, who collectively produced a naturalistic *episteme* amidst an almost infinite, multidirectional, transoceanic mobility of people, goods, and lifestyles. Accompanying this movement was the ephemeral—uncontrollable and unrecordable—circulation of stories.

Such multiplicity, impossible to reduce to a few organizing principles, defies confinement within any single explanatory framework. To meet this challenge, therefore, we open *RIAS* to this abundance, taking a step toward the decolonization of the narrative(s) of hemispheric and transoceanic American travels and of thereto related research. Embracing the non-homogeneity of the plethora of the scattered, and sometimes incoherent narratives—whose functions (and functionalizations) change, and whose perspectives vary—we emphasize the polyphony of voices. To decolonize such a multifaceted discourse, it is necessary to decentralize the conceptualization of travel narratives as necessarily bound with the idea of representation, and thereby to take a step beyond the perception of the whole genre as determined solely by the dichotomy of "truth" and "fiction" (de Certeau 221–26), which is why the articles populating this issue discuss poetry, prose, cartography, YouTuber accounts, performance arts, and other areas whose scope extends far beyond textuality. Directly or indirectly, their authors problematize the role of the medium in narrating the experience of displacement, and, sensitive to the entanglement of the accounts with colonial discourses, the scholars follow narratives that dismantle dominant forms of travel imagination regarding the Americas. By doing so, they demonstrate that a cognitively fertile field of freedom exists within—and in-between—both textual and extra-textual testimonies.

Disentangling the intertwined perspectives from which transoceanic narratives emerge is crucial to the ongoing decolonization efforts. Journeys begin in diverse places, are driven by varied motivations

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and goals, and involve different bodies—bodies affected by colonial relations and entwined in a web of dominant modes of perception. The hopes and fears of those who travel vary, too. With this in mind, each article in this issue of *RIAS* brings into light marginalized stories and subjects, depicting "the journey" as "exile," "incapacitation," "identity transformation," "myth-following," or as a politically propelled movement (wartime expeditions). Hence, the reflections in this issue focus not only on journeys *from* other continents to the "world" that was not "new" at all, but also encompass land-locked journeys *within* the Americas, raising the question of how individual travel can reshape the narratives of the Americas both within and beyond the dual continent, and how it may affect the American representations of the world outside. Unsurprisingly, voices from India, Central-Eastern Europe, and Indigenous peoples of the Americas resonate in this volume.

Underlying the insights signaled above is the fundamental question: What does it mean to travel?—a question extending beyond how travel narratives are constructed to the nature of the travel experience itself. Is travel linked exclusively to movement to and from home, or is it a concept built upon the structures of radical identity transformation? Is it a way of navigating a mapped world, or is it a continually revised method of engaging with a world in motion? Is it, essentially, moving along a line (Ingold 45), or is it a process of constant weaving and unweaving of ties with places, beings, and things encountered? Can travel be seen as a form of protest, or would it always be a form of escape? These questions inspire our authors to seek, and provide, answers that turn out to transcend the triad of knowing—discovering—experiencing. The journey may emerge as an outcry, an uprootal, an attempt to recreate perceptions, or a method of shattering them; it may be familiar, but it may also involve exclusive engagement with strangeness.

Transoceanic travel narratives are intrinsically linked to the creation of authorial identity and involve the building of the relationship with the traveler's body. For these reasons, attention to how the body influences the narrative—and the story—is crucial. New and old media connect bodies to places, but it is also these embodied differences that, reciprocally, influence media use. In this respect, the authors of the studies collected here allow us to understand *how* the body of a soldier and the narrative built around it will differ from those of an enslaved person or of a woman, but also explain *why* such a difference calls for different means of expression. In an attempt to account for the complexity of these phenomena, this issue of *RIAS* demonstrates how

deeply intersectional bodies resonate in transoceanic travel narratives, with the explorer's body becoming one of many.

The opening contribution to our issue, "Voyage of Paradoxes: Reconstructing Indian Indenture in the Caribbean" by Anjali Singh, scrutinizes the nearly century-long British indenture system that forcibly relocated 1.3 million Indians to Caribbean plantations. Singh focuses on the pragmatic, survival-driven transoceanic voyages across the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, which starkly contrast with the romanticized myths traditionally associated with indenture. These journeys, far from being adventurous odysseys, were crucibles of communal identity formation and the genesis of diasporic narratives. Singh explores a rich tapestry of poetry, fiction and prose that reinterpret these arduous experiences, allowing subsequent generations to reclaim their forebears' intricate legacies. By bringing to light the often overlooked "his" and "her" stories, Singh's study illuminates the inherent paradoxes of the indentured experience. Significantly enriching our understanding of hemispheric and transoceanic narratives within American travel literature, Singh offers a profound, often disconcerting, insight into the socio-cultural dynamics of migration and identity formation in the Americas.

In "Where Stories Are Alive: Traveling into Wolverine's Territory in Eowyn Ivey's *To The Bright Edge of the World*," Małgorzata Poks delves into the profound moral dilemmas and conflicting duties that characterize Lieutenant Colonel Forrester's 1885 expedition into Alaska. Ivey's narrative, inspired by the historical explorations of Henry Tureman Allen, diverges from factual accounts to explore the intricacies of colonial ventures and the personal transformations of those navigating these terrains. Integrating anthropologist Viveiros de Castro's concept of Amerindian perspectivism, Poks argues that *To the Bright Edge of the World* transcends traditional travel literature norms and redefines the interaction with (and comprehension of) diverse realms, advancing the decolonization of narrative techniques. This feature seamlessly merges personal experiences with political realities, shedding light on the complexity paradoxes that enhance and define the field of American Studies.

In her insightful analysis, Beata Gontarz explores Jan Józef Szczepański's 1971 collection of reportages, *Koniec westernu* (*The End of the Western*), which chronicles his observations of America during his stay from October 1968 to June 1969. Having previously visited the US on a Harvard scholarship a decade earlier, Szczepański offers a comparative perspective on the societal shifts of the late 1960s. The title, *The End of the Western*, symbolizes the decline of the pioneer

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ethos that once defined America. Szczepański examines the cultural and moral upheavals of the "kiddie revolution" and its negative impacts on American society, drawing parallels to the youth movements of 1989 in Europe, particularly in Poland. He also documents the emancipation struggles of black Americans and the passivity of Native Americans in claiming their rights, highlighting systemic injustices and marginalization. Through his perceptive lens, Szczepański predicts the decline of the "white conqueror" narrative. Gontarz's article underscores Szczepański's keen insights into a transformative period in American history, capturing a society on the brink of profound change as seen through the eyes of a discerning Polish writer.

The author of the next article, Sabina Sweta Sen-Podstawska, investigates the dynamic relationship between Indigenous spatial practices and counter-mapping as expressions of cultural identity and sovereignty across North America, often referred to as Turtle Island in Indigenous creation stories. Gwilym Lucas Eades's research underscores how Indigenous communities utilize spatial imagination, maps, and digital media not only to navigate but also to reclaim land, assert sovereignty, and transmit cultural knowledge while challenging colonial impositions through counter-mapping. This approach, defined as activism against dominant power structures, restores Indigenous voices and perspectives, questioning Western notions of space and boundaries. By integrating decolonial cartographic methodologies and Indigenous perspectives on land and mapping, these acts of walking and performing are theorized as powerful counter-mapping practices that contribute to the decolonization of Turtle Island and facilitate embodied healing.

The resurgence of Indigenous theatre in Canada exemplifies a similar, powerful movement of anticolonial resistance, cultural reclamation, and intellectual sovereignty. Eugenia Sojka examines the contributions of Floyd Favel (Cree), Monique Mojica (Kuna/Rappahannock), and Kim Senklip Harvey (Syilx/Tsilhqot'in/Ktunaxa/Dakelh), whose land-based and community-engaged practices redefine Indigenous theatrical sovereignty. Drawing on frameworks by Ric Knowles, Lindsay Lachance, and Jill Carter, the study highlights their use of Indigenous philosophies, relational worldviews, and ceremonial traditions. The article posits Indigenous theatre as a vital knowledge-building practice that bridges ancestral and contemporary worlds, offering profound insights into decolonization, community-making, and environmental ethics. As these artists engage with the land as collaborators and archives, they generate a uniquely sovereign theatre that reanimates Indigenous ontologies while addressing global crises

of alienation and ecological disconnection. Sojka's study situates their work as an urgent call for re-indigenization—an embrace of pluriversal perspectives and relational ethics essential for the cultural and spiritual resurgence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities alike.

In "País de las Amazonas: Una Delimitación Imaginada en la Cartografía Francesa Colonial del Siglo XVIII," Daniel Esteban Unigarro examines the portrayal of the Amazon River in 18th-century French colonial maps. Unigarro traces the cartographic evolution from the initially accepted labels (like Santa María de la Mar Dulce and Río de Orellana, postulated after Francisco de Orellana's 1542 expedition), to the eventual dominance of the mythical appellation of the "River of the Amazons." This name not only reshaped the river's identity but also redefined its vast basin in the collective geographical consciousness of Europe. Unigarro proposes that the maps under study represented the area as the "Country of the Amazons" as a deliberate act, one rooted in colonial imagination, and aligning more with French territorial aspirations than with any recognized administrative reality. No European power of the time acknowledged "Amazon" as a formal jurisdiction in America, highlighting how these cartographic exercises were less about accuracy and more about asserting dominance in a region fiercely contested by Spanish and Portuguese interests. His examination eloquently reveals how myth and colonial aspirations intertwined in the cartographic crafting of the New World, particularly in the strategic and symbolic carving out of the Amazon basin.

In "New American Grand Tours and Travel Narratives of Video Bloggers: Leisure, Cultural Myths and Crisis Management in Visual Storytelling," Anna Maj inquires into the digital reinvention of the Grand Tour through the work of Polish video bloggers. Equipped with cameras and with YouTube channels at their disposal, these modern explorers present the Americas as both familiar and foreign. Their journeys challenge both media-shaped myths of America and their own preconceptions. Maj's analysis goes beyond geographical exploration and focuses on cultural repositioning, where bloggers act as narrators and connectors, creating cohesive virtual communities. By examining audiovisual content and conducting a netnographic analysis of popular Polish travel vlogs, Maj reveals how these narratives manage crises, debunk myths, and invite viewers to see the "real America." Her study highlights how digital storytellers transform leisurely journeys into acts of cultural myth-making, offering a wry commentary on the new lore of a continent.

The article "Visualizing the Other: Media Representations of Nina Khrushcheva During Khrushchevs' State Visit to the United States

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in 1959," authored by Mariya Doğan, explores the pivotal role of the gender discourse during the Cold War. She examines how American media portrayed Soviet women as both symbols of the communist threat and as a means to alleviate America's post-war gender anxieties. Focusing on the Khrushchev Thaw and the Soviet leader's 1959 visit to the US, Doğan highlights how Nina P. Khrushcheva's presence allowed the American press to humanize Soviet women, easing international tensions. This reconfiguration shifted the portrayal of Soviet femininity, creating a lasting change in the American public sphere. The study shows how media representations can reflect—and influence—international relations, contextualizing these changes within a broader historical framework.

Christopher E. Koy examines Saul Bellow's literary depiction of the Eastern Bloc, shaped by his 1978 trip to Ceauşescu's Romania to support his ailing mother-in-law. Direct exposure to the repressive Securitate influenced his narrative in *The Dean's December* (1982), where Bellow's anxiety-induced self-censorship softened his critique of the Romanian regime. Revisiting these themes in *Ravelstein* (2000), Bellow adopted a sharper tone, weaving in the fascist past of his colleague Mircea Eliade and the murder of Professor Ioan Culianu. This shift from reserved observations to a pointed critique emphasizes the significant influence of geopolitical and personal experiences on a writer's work, as Koy illustrates how Bellow's perspectives evolved into a profound moral censure of the conditions he encountered.

The thematic section of the issue closes with Angelo Arminio's "Geographies of Terror: Homecoming and Displacement in GWOT Literature," which delves into contemporary War on Terror literature, showcased by Elliot Ackerman's *Places and Names* (2019) and Phil Klay's *Missionaries* (2020). Arminio scrutinizes the spatial dynamics, cultural encounters, and dislocations engendered by the interwoven conflicts defining the early 21st century. These narratives underscore the nebulous and perpetual nature of the Global War on Terror, depicting soldiers not as returning heroes but as nomadic figures endlessly seeking a semblance of home in successive conflicts. Drawing on Achille Mbembe's concepts of contemporary warfare and Deleuze and Guattari's notion of war machines, Arminio illustrates how war zones are depicted as economically pivotal, self-replicating hubs of global power and violence. The characters in these narratives are portrayed as itinerant beings, forever bound to the war machine, perpetually traversing global conflict zones. This portrayal weaves a complex tapestry of ceaseless, interconnected skirmishes, reflecting the relentless cycle of modern warfare.

The features included in this issue offer inspiring insights into the socio-cultural dynamics of migration, identity formation, and the issues of physical and mental nomadism, exploring a variety of problem areas, ranging from Indigenous spatial practices to the contemporary media conquest of new territories. Analyses offered by the authors guide the reader through experiences concentrated in diverse types of narratives, encompassing text and image, history and memories, the rediscovered past and the flickering present. Drawing new paths in the interpretation of travel, the scholars participating in this issue redefine space as unlimited and fluid, thus setting new directions in the understanding of real and virtual travel, and thereby profoundly enriching the field of hemispheric and transoceanic American Studies.

Abstract: Hemispheric and transoceanic narratives of American travels originated amidst an almost infinite, multidirectional, transoceanic mobility of people, goods, and lifestyles. Such multiplicity, impossible to reduce to a few organizing principles, defies confinement within any single explanatory framework. To meet this challenge, therefore, we open *RIAS* to this abundance, taking a step toward the decolonization of the narrative(s) of hemispheric and transoceanic American travels and of thereto related research. Embracing the non-homogeneity of the plethora of the scattered, and sometimes incoherent narratives—whose functions (and functionalizations) change, and whose perspectives vary—we emphasize the polyphony of voices. To decolonize such a multifaceted discourse, in this issue of *RIAS* we gathered articles which decentralize the conceptualization of travel narratives as necessarily bound with the idea of representation, disentangle the intertwined perspectives from which transoceanic narratives emerge and answer again to the question what it means to travel.

Keywords: *Review of International American Studies*, introduction, travel narratives, decolonial studies, socio-cultural dynamics of migration, narrative history

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A VOYAGE OF PARADOXES
Reconstructing Indian Indenture in the British Caribbean through the Lens of Narratives

> Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
> Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
> in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
> has locked them up. The sea is History.
> Derek Walcott, "The Sea Is History"

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In the opening stanza of his poem, "The Sea Is History" (2007), Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott suggests that History is a tangible document of memory preserved in the great vault of the sea. He compares the idea of the journey of the African slaves to the Caribbean to that of the journey of the Israelites to the Promised Land. Walcott challenges the idea that history only exists when memory and events are recorded and thus accepted as historical. Did the Promised Land referred to in his poem really exist, or was it a myth? While it finds reference in the Holy Bible, the book itself remains at the center of debates as to whether it is a religious or a historical text; with many terming it "interpreted history." In the Indian indenture discourse, the Promised Land alludes to the land of promises, or the land of dreams, which was "sold" as a pull factor to the Indians to convince them to indenture. To the hapless Indians, living under deplorable conditions owing to droughts and famines in British India, the British-owned plantation colonies in Mauritius and the Caribbean were projected as Paradise.[1] The paradox, however, is that *Hesperus*, which carried the first lot of indentured Indians to the American continent in 1838, was not sailing towards paradise. Instead, its deceived cargo was being sent to work on the sugarcane plantations of British Guy-

1 For a detailed list of factors inducing Indians to indenture, see Kumar 2014; Gillion 1973.

ana in the Caribbean. Shan Razack informs that *Hesperus* sailed from Calcutta on January 29, 1838, and over the next four months, "13 immigrants died during the voyage including two persons who fell over-board. Out of the 152 immigrants that came on board the Hesperus, were 135 men, 6 women and 11 children!" (2013). Did American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow have the same ship in mind while composing his narrative poem, "The Wreck of the Hesperus" in 1840? Was he perhaps inspired by the great blizzard of January 1839 that had destroyed twenty ships of the north-east coast of the United States? While it is open to interpretation, it does seem plausible that Longfellow may have known about *Hesperus* and its precious human cargo. However, contrary to the title of his poem, *Hesperus* was not wrecked during the blizzard, and Longfellow's account was admittedly fictional.

During the almost century-long period of indenture (1833–1920), *Hesperus* made several transoceanic voyages, ferrying indentured Indians to the British plantation colonies in the Caribbean. Madhavi Kale reports that "Between 1845 and 1917, approximately 450,000 Indian indentured migrants left for the British Caribbean, the majority going (in steeply descending order) to British Guiana, Trinidad and Jamaica" (121). In his book, *Girmitiyas,* historian Brij Lal informs, "[B]etween the years 1838 and 1916, a total number of 238,909 Indians were indentured and sent to British Guiana. Trinidad received 143,939 indentured emigrants between 1845 and 1916" (13).[2] Following the abolition of slavery, the period between 1833 and 1920 witnessed many transoceanic migrations under the capital labour system of indenture devised by the British.[3] The British had been engaged in transporting African slaves to their colonies in the Caribbean and in North America before slavery was outlawed in all the British colonies by the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 (Asaolu 67). The apprenticeship system, which was brought in to replace slavery, was largely unsuccessful, and the British felt the urgent need to compensate for the shortage of labor felt on their plantation colonies. This led to large-scale recruitment under the system of indenture, which displaced close to 1.3 million Indians, who were sent as indentured labor to the British, French, and Dutch plantation colonies across the globe. Colin G. Clarke reveals, "About 1.3 million indentured Indian workers migrated to the following colonies/countries: Mauritius, British Guyana, Natal (South Africa), Trinidad,

2 For more information on the numbers of indentured Indians sent to the British colonies, see Sen 2016.

3 Tinker 1974 and Saunders 1983 have detailed the entire system of Indian indenture and its immense global outreach.

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Fiji, Guadeloupe, Kenya, Uganda, Jamaica, Dutch Guiana/Suriname, Martinique, Seychelles, St. Lucia, Grenada and St. Vincent" (9).

In *Voices from Indenture,* Marina Carter induces that with a few exceptions pertaining to specific colonies, the rudiments of the indenture agreement (termed *girmit* by the unlettered Indians) were largely the same. Once a person agreed to indenture and became a *girmitiya* (someone who agreed to *girmit*)[4], they would be entitled to free transport to a plantation colony in exchange for a stipulated period of labor: "[A]n indentured migrant was an individual who had not paid his or her passage but had entered into an agreement to receive transported assistance to a colony in return for a fixed period of labour" (101). A ten-year labor term came with the promise of a free return passage to India, whereas a five-year *girmit* would entail the migrant paying his own return fare to India once the indenture was over. The contract also allowed for re-indenturing or working elsewhere on the colony if the migrant did not wish to return to India. In some colonies, migrants could also choose "[T]o receive a piece of crown land on the colony in lieu of the fare were also offered a piece of land in lieu of the return fare" (Carter 108). Briefly, the indenture process comprised five steps—recruitment, transportation to the depot, boarding the ship and undertaking the voyage, disembarking and quarantine in the colony upon arrival, and finally, being sent to work on a plantation. On paper, the process seemed simple enough. What it did not consider, and what in fact remains largely underrepresented in literature, is the inhumane treatment meted out to the migrants throughout the process. Their identity was erased, and they were dehumanized, with the colonists addressing them as *coolies* (a pejorative term for low-wage unskilled labor). Ahmed Ali informs that on paper, the indenture contract stipulated working for nine hours, five consecutive days of every week, with five hours on Saturday, in return for less than a shilling for a day's work (*Girmit* 7). In reality, the work hours were longer and arduous, with minimal wages amounting to barely ten cents per day. Further, if ration was supplied to the migrants, as it would be initially, it would entail a deduction of almost one-third in the payable wages (Klass 14). The migrants also learnt that a week's ration barely lasted five days, and hunger was a common occurrence.[5] They could be tried for any offence deemed proper by the British authorities,

4 I have used *girmitiya/s* in the article to refer to the Indians transported to the plantation colonies under the system of indenture. It is the accepted gender-neutral term of reference for the Indian indentured diaspora.

5 For more information on rations for the indentured on the plantations, see: Lal 1991.

and the fine would mean a further deduction in their daily wages. Punishments included being thrashed and beaten, with the women facing double marginalization and remaining vulnerable to sexual assault by the overseers. Further, the indentured Indians were not allowed to take recourse to legal measures.[6] Sudesh Mishra laments that "The act of becoming an indenture became an "atemporal ontology of suffering, hardship and deceit" (14). He further adds that the act of deception by the colonists began with the indentured Indians boarding the "[W] rong ship, to undertake the wrong voyage, to disembark at the wrong destination" (22). Madhwi informs, "Some recruits were not even aware about the exact location of the colonies, which they took it to be part of, or some land close to, India" (55). Thus, their voyage to the Promised Land turned out to be a sinister journey.

All journeys undertake two simultaneous movements, inward and outward. The voyage on the ships forms an essential component in indenture history, with the crossing of the *Kala pani* (black water of the oceans) becoming metonymical for the arduous transoceanic journey. This life-changing voyage is so crucial in the indenture process that all narratives on the subject devote considerable time and space to discuss not only the physical nature of the journey, but also its psychological dimension, including the loss of cultural and social identity owing to the crossing, the resultant state of inbetweenness, and finally, the origin of a new identity on the ships. Since crossing the oceans is a fundamental process in indenture, the ship became a metaphor for the process of migration; the site where identity was renegotiated. The indentured voices that chronicle these transoceanic crossings highlight the crucial importance of the voyage.[7]

Likened to the Middle Passage for the erstwhile slaves, the *Kala pani* crossings are seen as a symbol of social and cultural death for the indentured people. The reason for this is the construct of the concept of *Kala pani* for a Hindu. Bates and Carter have minutely researched the concept and found it "[T]o derive from long-held notions that sea crossings were antithetical to Hindu culture, entailing a separation of the traveler from the holy Ganges, thereby breaking the reincarnation cycle and engendering a loss of caste" (37).[8] Researchers and scholars of indenture have long believed that loss of caste owing to excommunication was among the chief reasons why Hindus did

6 For more information on the features of indenture, see: Kumar 2017.

7 For more literature detailing the voyage, see: Mohabir 2019; Kabir 2021; Dabydeen, Kaladeen and Ramnarine, eds. 2018; Phukan 2022; Singh 2022; Lal, ed. 2022.

8 For more information on the Hindu concept of *Kala pani*, see: Bindra 2002.

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not willingly choose to indenture. Crossing the highly contested *Kala pani* would close all avenues of return to the homeland. As a result, the journey came to be looked on as punishment, with the ship being likened to a prison. However, it is pertinent to note that losing one's caste, and being excommunicated owing to the crossing would have negatively impacted only the high-caste Brahmins, who formed the elite and privileged class in India, and whose number in indenture was already very low. Daniel Bass notes, "[M]any Indian migrants would have been more than happy to lose their caste position, since caste was one of the many factors supporting their low-status and poverty in India" (27). This gives rise to another paradox about the voyage, since, instead of acting as a deterrent, loss of caste proved to be a pull factor, encouraging large numbers among the lower caste Hindus to indenture. To contest the "loss-of-caste narrative" that was associated with crossing the *Kala pani,* the indentured Indians belonging to the non-Brahmin castes launched a counter narrative, one which found many followers in India. Madhavi Kale quotes George A. Grierson, the British Collector in Gaya, who noted: "About caste, the people have invented a curious theory regarding ship-board life … a man can eat anything on board-ship. A ship is like the temple of Jagannath, where there are not caste restrictions" (128). This counter narrative found favor among the indentured, as is evident from the large number of returnees (Indians who re-migrated to the plantation colonies after the end of their indenture period) to British Guiana. K.O. Laurence informs that 5826 Indians re-indentured to British Guiana and 2619 *girmitiyas* re-migrated to Trinidad between the years 1875 and 1894 (127–28).

It is also noteworthy that, while in their writings, the successive generations of the Indian indenture diaspora extrapolate the experience of dislocation experienced by their ancestors, they also lay considerable emphasis on the new identity of *jahajis* ('voyagers' in Hindi) that was forged during the crossing. They reimagine the voyage as being both traumatic and liberating for the indentured, with the ship becoming the site of the initial transformation and reconstruction of identity. In their paper, historians Crispin Bates and Marina Carter refer to the *Kala pani* crossings as: "[P]hysical and spiritual dislocations – the journeying into feared encounters and the erasures of past attachments, a suspension of existence and an absence of belonging" (55). Almost as if choosing to indenture were an act of transgression, prior to boarding the ships bound for the Caribbean, the upper-caste Hindu men symbolically removed their *janews* (sacred thread worn around the upper torso by *Brahmin* boys as a rite of passage upon entering their youth), and immersed them in the waters

of the *Hoogly* river in Calcutta. Some of them changed their given names and chose a new name for identification on their agreement paper. Once on board the ships, they were met with a different social order than the one they had been accustomed to since birth. The ships were a remnant of the past of slavery, and even the clothes handed out to the *girmitiyas* had previously been worn by the manumitted slaves. They were all housed in cramped quarters in the cabins below the deck, where the social mores of caste hierarchy and cultural norms witnessed a complete breakdown.[9] Gaiutra Bahadur in *Coolie Woman* refers to a folk song sung by the indentured people in British Guiana:

> When we reached Calcutta, our miseries increased.
> We were stripped of all our beautiful clothes,
> Rosary beads and sacred threads.
> Bengali rags decorated us now.
> The sadhu's hair was shaved.
> And sadhu, Dom, Chamar and Bhangi,
> All were thrown together in a room (44).

In *Jahajin,* Peggy Mohan provides a description of the layout of the ships carrying the indentured migrants to Trinidad: "The single men's quarters were in the front of the boat, under the main deck, the married couples' quarters were behind that, and the single women's quarters were in the back, below the poop deck and the main deck" (53). Communicable diseases, such as typhoid, smallpox, dysentery, and cholera were common, and lack of proper sanitation facilities expedited their spread across the ship.[10] Deaths on board were a common occurrence. In their journal, the Swintons reveal that *Salsette,* a ship carrying 323 indentured Indians to the Caribbean, witnessed the death of 38 per cent of its human cargo due to an outbreak of cholera (10). Oral testimonies recounted by the indentured people refer to the dehumanizing experience of indenture; they were made to sit with animals on the ship, and were given "dog biscuits," which had to be "soaked in water" before they could be eaten (Sanadhya 36). Bates and Carter examine these writings as a "[D]iscourse on the liberation of borderlessness and a loss-of caste-that is paradoxically a gain" (56). In their anthology, *Coolitude*, Torabully and Carter see the voyage as an essential component of indenture and explore "[T]he concept

9 For first-person narratives detailing the experience of the voyage, see: Sanadhya 1991; Khan 2005.

10 For medical conditions of the *girmitiyas* on board the ships, see: Brown and Mahase 2009.

of the ocean as a nodal moment of migration, a space for destruction of identity, yet also one of regeneration, when an aesthetics of migration was created" (17). Drawing upon Afro-Martiniquan French poet Aimé Césaire's concept of "Negritude," Mauritian poet, Khal Torabully, conceptualized "Coolitude" to disclose, "The coolie's story which has been shipwrecked ('erased') in the ocean of a Western-made historical discourse as well as a world of publication and criticism" (*Coolitude* 15).[11] In indenture literature, the voyage has come to be seen as a symbol of an interstitial site, where the loss of caste, paradoxically, is seen as a gain for the indentured people belonging to the lower castes. The transoceanic voyage managed to loosen the anchor of the homeland and allowed it to drift closer to the adopted land. In a sense, the ship became the site where the past was cremated and a new beginning was made. Almost all indenture voices agree on the ship becoming their point of origin.[12] In *Coolie Woman*, Gaiutra Bahadur marks the origin of her family genealogy thus: "In our beginning there was a boat" (64). A celebrated Caribbean poet of the indenture diaspora, Mahadai Das has titled her seminal poem "They Came in Ships" (1977) to mark the ship as the focal point of the origin of her forbears. "They came in ships / Far from across the seas" (25). In writing "They Came in ships" instead of "They came from India", Das negates the homeland, which witnesses an erasure in her poem. Instead, she focuses on the leitmotif of the voyage in the indenture history of the Caribbean. Her poem incorporates various "sites of memory" (from Pierre Nora's 1989 term "Lieux de Memoire") and serves as a poetic historical lesson on indenture to remind the generations that follow of their center of origin. Das suggests that the origin of identity for the present-day indenture diaspora in the Caribbean is the ship and not the homeland[13].

The ship thus became both the place of rupture as well as of alternate identity building for the Caribbean-bound indentured Indians. In *Girmit*, Ahmed Ali focuses on the life-changing journey, referring to it as a space where "Those recruited had ceased to be individuals, they were all labourers together, that was the only recognized common denominator; caste, religion and status by birth were of little or no consequence" (3). In *Chalo Jahaji*, historian Brij V. Lal hails

11 For more information on the concept of Coolitude, see: Torabully and Carter, eds. 2002.

12 For more information, see: Misrahi-Barak 2017; Soares 1994.

13 While the scope of this paper is limited to select narratives, the belief that the ship was the of origin their identity, has also been expanded and advanced in the poetry and fiction written by the successive generations of the indenture diaspora. Also see: Ballengee 2022.

the voyage as "[A] great leveller of hierarchy and status," and one where "[E]veryone is equal in the denial of their individual humanity" (13, 29). The ship, and, by extension, the long voyage itself, became "the third space," which provided the indentured Indians with a new cultural hybrid identity. "The Third Space" is defined by postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha as a space of hybridity that resists cultural domination and authority, and instead gives "[R]ise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation." He further adds that "[T]he importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges." Instead, he refers to it as "[T]he 'Third Space', which enables other positions to emerge into one cohesive whole" (211). Lal views the voyage as the "in-between" space from where a hybrid identity emerged from a "shared sense of servitude," and consolidated itself into becoming part of a cohesive cultural and social group (*Chalo Jahaji* 47). The ship, called *jahaj* in Hindi, bound the Indians together as *jahaji bhais* (ship brothers) and *jahaji behens* (ship sisters), and created the essence of jahajihood, which was born in that liminal space, and which continued to impact the later generations of the indenture diaspora. Peggy Mohan extrapolates, "Those on the same boat were looked on as apanpalwaar (our family) and they started addressing each other as *jahaji bhai* and *jahajibehen*. Their new identity, the one they chose for themselves, was *jahajis* (shipmates)" (*Jahajin* 83). Although signing the agreement to indenture had given power to their colonizers to turn the Indians into *coolies,* calling themselves *jahajis* can be seen as a subtle wresting of control by the migrants.[14] It was also their first simple act of resistance. In *Coolie Woman*, speaking about her great-grandmother, Gaiutra Bahadur writes, "She was one individual swept up in a particular mass movement of people, and the perceptions of those who controlled that process determined her identity at least as much as she did. The power of her colonizers to name and misname her formed a key part of her story" (xxii). Bahadur may have written this for her great-grandmother, but it holds equally true for all Indians who undertook the transoceanic crossings under the system of indenture. Literary critic, Stuart Hall refers to cultural identity as "[P]oints of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture,

14 The term 'Coolie' carries multi-layered meanings. There is an ongoing debate over its use for addressing *girmitiyas*; some authors of the indenture diaspora shun it, while others advocate to reclaim it, and give it a new lease of life. For more information, see: Mahase 2020.

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which are made, within the discourses of history and culture" (226). He further opines:

> […] as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather—since history has intervened—'what we have become'. We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about 'one experience, one identity', without acknowledging its other side—the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean's 'uniqueness' (225).

Mariam Pirbhai views the ship as: "[A] unifying symbol for indentured peoples just as it did for those who endured the middle passage." Their new *jahaji* identity, apart from being a reconstitution, became a counter discourse of cultural reconfiguration, which would serve, "[T]o counteract the assimilative forces of life overseas, far from the protective bail of their ancient homeland" (55). Pirbhai also suggests that "[W]hile the individual's sense of identity is destabilised, both in the process of transplantation and the moment of contact, there is a counter impulse toward a transcendent spiritual fraternity" (57).

Another paradox that was witnessed during the voyage pertains to the transformation of the indentured people owing to their new *jahaji* identity. Their homogenous identity provided a much-needed anchor during the long and arduous transoceanic journey. Not only did it fill the vacuum caused due to loss of familial ties in India, it also grew roots, strengthened, and endured, allowing for Indians of different castes, cultures, and religions to find common ground, and be seen by their colonizers as a united and cohesive group.[15] Poet Sudesh Mishra informs, "[…] [M]any things were lost during that nautical passage, family, caste and religion, and yet many things were also found, chamars found Brahmins, Muslims found Hindus, biharis found marathis, so that by the end of the voyage we were a nation of *jahaji bhais*[…] all for one and one for all[…]" (12). Just as the ship became their new origin, the new hybrid identity of *jahajis* became their cultural identity, one they identified with during their entire period of indenture in the plantation colony. Bahadur states, "The moorings of caste had loosened, and people who had left behind uncles, sisters, husbands and mothers substituted shipmates, their jahajis, for kin. Unraveled, they began, ever so slowly, to spin the threads of a novel identity" (62).

15 These ties were lasting and endured through the long years of their indenture. For more information, see: Samaroo and Dabydeen, eds. 1987.

Women in indenture constituted a complex paradigm in their transcolonial migration and remained marred in complexities during the entire period of their indenture. Already marginalized as the weaker sex in the homeland, their vulnerability was heightened on board the ships.[16] Just like the men, they too had become outcastes in Indian society owing to their crossing the *Kala pani*. While the patriarchal society of India would still find ways to welcome their sons back home, the "motherland" would never accept its outcaste women. Instead, it would treat them as *pariahs* (outcaste) and deny them a return. Whether they had come willingly, or by force through abduction, the women were aware of this fact when they came aboard the ships. It was the single women that suffered more than women who had indentured along with their families. Yet, it was the single women that made up the majority of women in indenture. Despite their triple vulnerable status and victimization that was meted by the hands of the colonial officers, the middlemen and their own Indian brethren, indenture offered the women an opportunity to renegotiate their peripheral position and move to the center. Almost all accounts written on indenture describe the women's subaltern status, with their ratio of 40 to 100 men making them constant victims of rape and violence.[17] Yet, paradoxically, it is their low numbers that ensured them a level of privilege, and granted them agency. Their scarcity gave them some control over the terms of their indenture, and offered them social mobility. The Indian Emigration Act of 1864 had, after revision, made it compulsory to ensure forty women for every hundred men sailing on the ships to the colonies. Gaiutra Bahadur informs that despite great care being taken to house the single men and women separately, "Power was being renegotiated between men and women in the 'tween decks. What had seemed unthinkable in India was becoming conceivable as the seas were crossed. In some cases, women discovered a whole new ability to set terms and conditions" (72). Whether it was a calculated move by the colonists to buy their favor, or simply because they were women, they received lesser quantity of food than the males on board the ships, making them resort to desperate measures to assuage their hunger. At times, sleeping with the colonists, as well as the Indian seamen on the ships was the only option they were offered in return for more food. There was no rule that restricted sex with female immigrants, and in the absence of any checks or penalties, sexual

16 For more information on the vulnerability of indentured women, see: Poynting 1986; Reddock 1985.

17 See the episodes about Narayani and Kunti narrated by Sanadhya 1991.

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abuse of women continued unabated onboard the vessels. In *Coolie Woman*, one of the female voices informs, "One night the surgeon came down between the decks, took me by the arm, and dragged me into his cabin, and had connexion with me…I was not a prostitute in India" (58). The toilets on the ships "[S]erved as a bizarre portal to the women aboard, where 'puddings' were occasionally left as sad enticements for sexual favours" (Bahadur 51). When the women took up the courage to complain to the Protector of Immigrants, they found themselves doubly victimized and called "sluts." It is unfortunate that male writers have long been unwittingly complicit in reinforcing the stereotype of indentured women as immoral. They have not questioned the colonial archive that has cast the coolie woman as the seductress who enticed men in return for "pudding"!

Statistical data of the immigrants compiled by historians reveals that a majority of the indentured women were not accompanied by male relatives. This has led to their being stereotyped on the binary of either innocent victims of indenture who were kidnapped and abducted, or as widows, abandoned, fallen women and prostitutes, escaping the oppressive conditions leading to their marginalization in India. Whether they were sexually molested and raped, or whether they gave in "willingly" to meet the scarcity of food, their choices in creating an alternative life for themselves were certainly limited. In the narratives written by men, whether colonists or Indians, their one-sided readings on the indentured women in colonial 'his'tory have not allowed the women to either represent, or speak for themselves, relegating them to a double displacement in the literary space.[18] Bahadur reiterates, "Women … were not known persons at that time (19). It is the women writers of the later generation, who through their research-driven narratives, have retrieved the 'her'stories of their female forbears and "sailed" with them through their journeys towards their subsequent reinvention.[19]

Women writers have given voice to the suffering that indentured women underwent on the voyage, highlighting the fact that they faced greater troubles than men owing to their gender. Bahadur extrapolates that among other hardships, the women on the ships were "[G]iving birth, losing children, going mad, being driven to suicide, engaged in infanticide, rejecting or being rejected by shipboard husbands …" (63).

18 For more information on the (mis)representation of women in indenture by male writers, see: Klein 2019.

19 There is no first-person record written by women who underwent indenture. While some women have spoken about their journey and experience on the plantations, it has been left to their descendants to write about the experiences of their foremothers. For more information, see: Pande 2020.

Despite these setbacks, the women, more than the men, kept looking forward towards the end of the journey. While the men were looking back towards the homeland with a sense of nostalgia, the women were looking ahead with longing towards the new land they were sailing to. This is because, despite their lamentable condition, indenture was seen as an opportunity—an escape hatch—through which they would be able to break away from the shackles of patriarchy and create a new beginning, as well as a new life for themselves. In *Jahajin,* one of the female voices says, "We stopped talking about all that happened before. It was as if we had left the people we used to be behind us" (83). Marking a clear departure from the rudiments of the Indian patriarchal society that favored boys, pregnant women on board the ships hoped their wombs would yield girls. "We already have too many boys... What we need now is some girls" (*Jahajin* 65). "We stopped looking back. I think we had finally crossed the *kala pani* in our minds, changed from being the people we were before. The sad notes of the *beeraha* we had sung as we crossed that ocean had brightened into a new song, a song with no dark corners and no storms" (82).

The voyage led to a revaluation of the ascribed gender roles for women. Brinda Mehta notes how "[S]patial dissolutions motivated the blurring of caste, class and regional distinctions that provided Indian women with the scope for a certain sexual mobility" (193). She further adds that "[B]y openly flouting the very idea of Brahmanic monogamy, with its thesis of allegiance to one man and one family, these women were able to challenge traditional cultural norms and Hindu familial structures that had been deeply embedded in the Indian psyche for centuries" (193). Thus, crossing the *Kala pani*, paradoxically, gave the indentured women a rebirth and saved them from being shunned into oblivion in the homeland. In India, their fate would have accorded them an oppressive life lived in the margins. Indenture allowed the women to negate their earlier identity, and renegotiate a new one for themselves.[20] In *Coolie Woman*, one of the polyphonic voices speaks, "On that mad ocean, we came to life … We crossed seven seas: seven shades of water, shades of darkness and light, light that died and darkness that was born, darkness somehow extinguished and light rekindled[…] to spin the thread of a novel identity" (62).

A close reading of the narratives on indenture reveals that the transoceanic crossing, which is a key component in the indenture paradigm, has for long remained riddled with myths and stereotypes. The nar-

20 For more information on how women renegotiated their identity during indenture, see: Mukherjee 2015.

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ratives play a starring role in uncovering the many paradoxes linked to the sea voyage from India to the Caribbean. After stepping aboard the ship, the *girmitiyas* faced the reality of their dashed dreams about the Promised Land, one which had induced them to indenture. However, instead of mourning the loss of caste on crossing the *Kala pani*, a majority of the indentured Indians, who belonged to the lower castes in India, and were living deplorable lives as subalterns, celebrated the rupture with the homeland and hailed the ship as their new point of origin. Paradoxically, the loss of their individual identity led to the forging of a new collective cultural identity, that of *Jahaji bhais* and *Jahaji behens*, which endured long after their indenture was completed. The narratives on indenture written by women writers have called to question the one-sided view promulgated by male writers about the woeful and lamentable lives of the indentured women. Women writers lend voice to the hitherto voiceless and silenced *jahajins* who have slipped through the gaps in 'his'story. Their narratives divulge what can now be seen as one the greatest of paradoxes about indenture. It was during the voyage that the women discovered how their scarcity, while being the cause of their hardship and victimization, was simultaneously the ground for affecting their agency. Their indenture made them a stakeholder, and granted them more autonomy than they could have ever imagined receiving in India. On the ship, their gendered differentiation pushed them from the footnotes of the migration saga and brought them to the center. The voyage thus, serves as a metaphor for the poetics of indenture, with the narratives playing a starring role in reconstructing the transoceanic crossing, and allowing for a true reflection of the experience of the journey.

Abstract: The almost century-long system of Indian indenture (1830–1920) initiated by the British after the abolishment of slavery in 1833 displaced 1.3 million Indians who were taken as cheap contract labor to work on the plantation colonies of the Empire. This paper will draw focus on the voyage undertaken by the indentured Indians across the Indian and Atlantic Oceans to the British plantation colonies in the Caribbean. It will deconstruct certain stereotypes and myths about the journey on the ships across the *Kala pani* (black waters of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans) that have for long been reproduced in the earlier literature written on indenture. The journey of the indentured Indians to the Promised Land, towards the American continent, was paradoxically not for adventure, or for a religious cause, or even to pursue a dream, but was, quite simply, a means to an end. The ship, and by extension, the voyage, would become the site of their coming together, and it is from the ships that would emerge the narratives of their origin. Through a growing body of work across diverse genres of poetry, fiction and prose, the succeeding generations of the indentured people have been engaged in interrogating and reclaiming the indenture experience of their forbears in order to mine the legacies

of indenture. This paper will take a closer look at select narratives documenting the invisible and unvoiced 'her'stories to reveal the several paradoxes surrounding the experience of the transoceanic voyage in indenture.

Keywords: Indenture, Caribbean, Voyage, *Kala pani*, *Jahajis*

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WHERE STORIES ARE ALIVE
Traveling into Wolverine's Territory in Eowyn Ivey's *To the Bright Edge of the World*

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Eowyn Ivey's novel *To the Bright Edge of the World*, published in 2016 and set in 1885, traces the beginnings of the US American impact on the native cultures of Alaska by following a group of government-appointed explorers to the Alaskan interior. Loosely based on Lieutenant Henry Tureman Allen's historic exploration of the Tanana and Copper rivers, Ivey's novel departs from historical accuracy to bring the colonizing agenda of the exploration party into conversation with the individual perspectives and sensibilities of its members, exposed as they are to a world where old stories are alive and where nonhumans or not-quite humans are intentional, agential beings. How will the explorers meet the dual challenge—as well as the moral dilemma—of navigating an older world that resists comprehension (a world they learn to respect) and mapping the terrain for potential military invasion? In my analysis I will attempt to foreground the paradoxes and challenges of travels and travel narratives. Employing Brazilian anthropologist Viveiros de Castro's theorization of Amerindian perspectivism, I want to argue that *To the Bright Edge of the World* decolonizes the literary genre, as well as the experience of traveling between worlds.

It is believed that the first Europeans to discover Alaska were Russians (Grinëv and Bland 52). In 1741, during Vitus Bering's Second Kamchatka Expedition, Russians made a landing on the northwestern coast of North America and brought home a wealth of high-quality pelts. The discovery of fine fur-bearing animals gave an impetus for the development of the lucrative Alaska fur trade and the successive commercial colonization of the area. When Alaska was transferred to the US, however, the most enduring legacy of Russian America

was Orthodox Christianity, the "new medicine," felt by many Alaska Natives to be more potent than shamanism (Znamenski 12), powerless as the latter had been against the advances of European newcomers. Since 1867 the US carried on its own extensive colonization program, eradicating the old shamanistic ceremonies and supplanting them with militant versions of Protestantism. It is in the early stages of the American colonization of Alaska that Ivey sets her novel, fictionalizing the groundbreaking, five-month-long expedition of Lieutenant Henry Tureman Allen, often depicted as the Alaskan equivalent of Lewis and Clark's. A freelance journalist Mike Coppock pinpoints Allen's epochal achievements in the following words: "[he] had cut a 1,500-mile trail through the heart of a mysterious land, mapped three major river systems, made first mention of what would be called Mount McKinley, discovered a valuable pass from coastal Alaska to the interior and located vast mineral wealth." The party's official goal was to gather ethnic and geographic data in the area of the Copper and the Tanana River drainages. The second task was military. The contiguous US was still fighting the so-called "Indian Wars" and the federal government was bracing itself for similar developments in the newly acquired territory.

In Ivey's novel the main male character is named Colonel Allen Forrester, and the Copper River is thinly disguised as the Wolverine River. Other major departures from Alaskan geography also focus on that mysterious fur-bearing animal; thus, between the Wolverine and the Tanana rivers Ivey places the haunted Wolverine Mountains, with Wolverine River Indians (Midnooskies in Russian) inhabiting the upper reaches of the eponymous river. Traveling up the Wolverine from the coast, the exploration party moves away from a world already modified by the colonial encounter toward an unmapped territory, never previously seen by European travelers. This is the old, mythical world of constant realignments and transformations where old stories are alive and the old medicine still works. Local inhabitants insist that the Wolverine Mountains are the mountains of the dead: the area is "a kind of spirit world" (161) where "nothing follows white man's rules" (187).

THE WOLVERINE

The wolverine has a mythical status among the hunters of the far north. In *Make Prayers to the Raven*, anthropologist Richard K. Nelson, who had spent a year living with and studying the close connection between the Koyukon of western Alaska and the natural world, describes his first encounter with the wolverine in terms suggestive of an epiphany:

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"I looked directly into its eyes and knew that I understood nothing." Ivey has chosen these words as an epigraph for her novel. Admired for strength and tenacity, the wolverine is a somewhat ambiguous culture hero: mean, spiteful and greedy, he is feared and revered, a trickster who harms more often than helps. Just before Colonel Forrester's party enter the land of the dead, they spot a wolverine and want to hunt him down for food, but the animal outsmarts them and steals their food supplies, leaving the explorers vulnerable in their confrontation with the Alaskan wilderness. Seargent Tillman reads the signs and warns the colonel not to trespass on "that other world the Indians talk about." The rational Forrester, however, answers in character: "I have no use for the occult" (Ivey 368). In the night, as heavy fog descends on the mountains, Forrester scribbles a dramatic farewell note to his newly-wed wife, Sophie: "I do not know if we will survive this night. They are all around us. They scream & cry so that it is hard to think to put these words on the page" (369). The following morning he puzzles: "What is it that we witnessed? The terror, absurd as it seems, has not entirely left us" (371). Struggling with words and trying to make sense of the inexplicable, he reports in his diary how the previous night the scattered bones of humans and prehistoric animals seemed to have taken on flesh, and a throng of shadowy beings, as Forrester puts it, "walked out of the fog […]. Arms, hands, howling mouths. Bitter cold, their touch. Some of human form, while others were great lumbering beasts" (371). Trying to locate Lieutenant Pruitt, the colonel finds himself at the edge of a precipice, cold fingers strangling his neck, he himself longing for death, only to be saved at the last moment by the cry of a newborn infant—was this a ghost from the past or a call from the future? He cannot decide. "The cold fingers at my throat withdrew. I turned to face my enemy, but there were only clouds coursing by" (372). The following morning the landscape is silent and empty save for a raven passing overhead in the direction of the Tanana Valley, the expedition's next destination.

DECOLONIZING TRAVEL NARRATIVES

Throughout the novel, Ivey juxtaposes official and fictional discourses, oral stories and written documents, Russian and American historical records, reports of Russian Orthodox missionaries and Indigenous stories, myth and history, human, nonhuman, and transformational beings' perspectives, male and female voices, the past and present, the frequent use of first-person narrative in the novel's numerous epistolary exchanges and diary entries additionally exposing the sub-

jective nature of perception. The novel's polyvocal narrative questions culturally- and gender-encoded assumptions, as well as asks readers to shift their outlook and their sympathies from the authoritative colonial discourse toward the Indigenous voices usually suppressed by it, the greatest epistemic challenge being probably the native belief that the world is populated by extra-human agencies and intentionalities.

To the Bright Edge of the World opens with a hand-drawn map of Lieutenant Colonel Allen Forrester's Alaskan journey. In the map's center there is a black raven. The bird's outspread wings mark the geographical east and west, while its straight back, made longer by an arrow running through it, marks the remaining two cardinal points of the compass. The presence of the raven, sacred to many North American Indigenous cultures, troubles the authority of colonial cartography, gesturing toward the novel's decolonial ambition, also alluded to in the novel's epigraph. The book's two introductory pages, which precede chapter one, feature a letter written by Walter Forrester, the colonel's great nephew, to Josh Sloan, curator of Alpine Historical Museum and a 21st-century descendant of Wolverine Indians. Walter Forrester wishes to donate his great uncle's private diaries to the museum. In the figure of Josh Sloan, Ivey presents a contemporary Alaskan, whose Indigenous and immigrant roots—he is a member of the Wolverine River tribe on his mother's side and Russian, Swedish, Irish, and Scottish on his father's—have been entwined in the complicated history of Native Alaskans' survivance. Highlighting Josh's Indian origin, Ivey embraces the Indigenous conception of identity by affiliation and of continuity through change over the colonial narratives of the blood quantum and the "vanishing Indian." In consequence, before the novel properly starts, readers are invited to view it through the lens of decoloniality and—along with the novel's characters—to inhabit the border between diverse cosmologies.

Having troubled the idea of Western universality, Ivey shifts the perspective in the direction of the pluriversality of knowledges, or, to put it differently, toward a world where many worlds coexist. Walter Mignolo, an Argentine semiotician and leading decolonial thinker, defines pluriversality as "the entanglement of several cosmologies connected today in a power differential. That power differential […] is the logic of coloniality covered up by the rhetorical narrative of modernity" (x). The civilizational rhetoric of Western modernity, as Mignolo elucidates, revolves around the idea of religious (Christian) and economic (capitalist) salvation and represses other ways of thinking and being in the world as primitive, barbarian, savage, etc. In other words, the universe of meaning that came into being around

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1500 (the colonization of the Americas) demonized and silenced the multiplicity of co-existing worlds. Decoloniality attempts an epistemic reconstitution of the repressed ways of being and thinking that the rhetoric of modernity occludes.

In his first letter to Josh, Walter Forrester expresses his concern that "[s]everal of [the Colonel's] private journal entries are downright fantastical and don't align with his official reports" (Ivey 1). But he is far from denying their credibility at face value. The letter continues:

> Some who have read these pages write off the odder occurrences as hallucinations, brought on by starvation and exposure to the elements. Others have accused the Colonel of embellishing his journals in order to gain notoriety. But I tell you, he was neither a hysteric nor a charlatan. He was a West Point graduate who fought the Indian Wars and negotiated himself out of capture by the Apaches, yet by all accounts he never sought the limelight. I've chosen to consider another possibility—that he described what he saw with his own two eyes. It takes a kind of arrogance to think everything in the world can be measured and weighed with our scientific instruments. The Colonel started out with those sorts of assumptions, and as you will see, it did not serve him well. (1–2)

Having claimed discipline, rationality, and modesty as his great-uncle's signature characteristics, Walter decides to take the Colonel's diary seriously, even if doing so means questioning the modern binaries. Pointing to the deception of assumptions—those beliefs one accepts as true due to one's cultural embeddedness—Walter chooses to think from the border of cultures and epistemologies. He believes the assumptions of the modern/colonial world do not apply to a world as diametrically different as that encountered by his distant ancestor in the Alaskan bush. Among the challenges most trying for the Colonel, not to mention the readers of his diary, was the Indigenous belief in bodily metamorphosis and the agency of the nonhuman world.

AMERINDIAN PERSPECTIVISM

Diverse characters in the novel ask themselves the same question that haunted Colonel Forrester: What is it that we witnessed? I find it useful to approach this question *via* the theory of perspectivism introduced by Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. As he observed in his field studies, in the highly transformational world of hunting-gathering societies, bodies are conceptualized as disposable; they are skin or clothing that can be shed to reveal the inner human essence that all beings share. Thus, humanity—understood as the human condition and not as a species—is the common condition of all. Capable of assuming the position of a subject, nonhuman

beings are intentional, sentient, agential beings. The body, on the other hand, as an assemblage of affects, capacities, and dispositions, is the site of differentiation and the origin of perspectives. In his article "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism" Viveiros de Castro argues that "body and soul […] do not correspond to substantives, self-subsistent entities or ontological provinces, but rather to pronouns or phenomenological perspectives" (481). As he further clarifies:

> Animals see in the *same* way as we do *different* things because their bodies are different from ours. I am not referring to physiological differences—as far as that is concerned, Amerindians recognize a basic uniformity of bodies—but rather to affects, dispositions or capacities which render the body of every species unique: what it eats, how it communicates, where it lives, whether it is gregarious or solitary, and so forth […] Thus, what I call the body is not a synonym for distinctive substance or fixed shape; it is an assemblage of affects or ways of being that constitute a *habitus*. (478)

While the Amerindian belief in bodily metamorphosis is based in the socially-constructed, performative character of the body, the crucial "dimension of perspectival inversion," argues Viveiros de Castro, "refers to the relative and relational statuses of predator and prey" (471). This is of special relevance to hunting societies, such as those portrayed by Eowyn Ivey in *To the Bright Edge of the World*. As the Brazilian anthropologist explains, while humans see themselves as humans (the eaters) and animals as prey (the eaten), big predators also see themselves as humans—therefore inedible—and humans and other animals as prey (edible). On this scale of edibility/transformability, spirits are "eaters *par excellence*" (ft. 21, 489); having no visible bodies to be consumed, they are "anthropophagous beings" (ibid.) and frequently assume the bodies of predator animals when they make themselves manifest. It is little wonder that Colonel Forrester reported enormous beastly forms emerging out of the dense fog and felt himself being hunted like a game animal: the spirits of Wolverine Mountains assumed the bodily shapes of predatory beings. Viveiros de Castro sums up the principles of Amerindian multinaturalism in the following words: "there is no doubt that bodies are discardable and exchangeable and that 'behind' them lie subjectivities which are formally identical to humans. But the idea […] merely manifests the objective permutability of bodies which is based in the subjective equivalence of souls" (482). To sum up, Amerindian multinaturalism—the principle that there are many different corporeal states but one common human/cultural condition—entails relationalism, or the idea that everything is constituted through and exists in rela-

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tions to everything else. Multinaturalism also explains how bodily metamorphosis results in a shift in perspective, since perspectives are located in the body.

Indigenous myths of origin depict how at the beginning of time all beings were human and nonhuman simultaneously, since bodies were still in the state of constant transformation. Subsequent myths show how animals finally separated themselves from humans by adopting other, non-human bodies. In consequence, today "humans are those who continue as they have always been," clarifies Viveiros de Castro, while "animals are ex-humans" (472).

As is well known, the forager cosmologies of the far north assign special significance to shamans as mediators between the world of spirits and the natural world. Shamans are healers, they reveal the location of animals to tribal hunters, and they are believed to be capable of assuming nonhuman bodily forms when need be.[1] Among the first indigenous Alaskans to encounter the Russian explorers in 1741 were the Eyak, inhabiting the Copper River Delta (the Wolverine River Delta in Ivey's the novel), whose shamans communicated with spirits, returned animal spirits to their animal masters, treated diseases. At the time the action of *To the Bright Edge of the World* is set, the Eyak are dispersed, decimated by wars and epidemic diseases, and largely converted to Orthodox Christianity. But pockets of shamanism survive, the old medicine occasionally still practiced in secret.

INDIGENOUS METAMORPHOSES: RAVEN AND MAN WHO FLIES ON BLACK WINGS

In many Alaskan Athabascan origin stories, Raven appears as an important character. In his ethnography *Make Prayers to the Raven*, Nelson uses the following words to comment on the ambiguous status of this bird: "Raven, the contradiction—omnipotent clown, benevolent mischief-maker, buffoon, and deity" (17). The hunting peoples of the far north often portray ravens as tricksters and opportunists, but even mocking them, they stand in awe of their spirit powers. In shamanistic religious practices, the raven is one of the most powerful animals and a privileged bodily form the shaman takes when flying to the spirit world. It is little wonder that the raven plays an important

1 The Copper Eskimo, called in Ivey's novel Wolverine River Indians, believed that "in former times animals in human form were very common. Then they lived just like men as long as they were in human form […] In olden times, too, everybody could easily turn into animals, and until quite recently shamans have had the same powers" (Rasmussen 35).

role in Ivey's novel, appearing and reappearing in its key moments, either in the form of a black bird or that of a crippled Eyak shaman called Man Who Flies On Black Wings.

In his first dairy entry dated March 21, 1885, Colonel Forrester refers to an Eyak Indian—"an old man with a lame leg"—crouching high in the branches of a spruce tree late at night, possibly sleeping there. This sight leaves the Colonel "slightly shaken" (Ivey 5), although his cultural assumptions are to hold strong throughout most of the even more incredible occurrences to follow. When on the following day the old man with the shriveled leg offers his services as guide, Forrester reluctantly employs him, for lack of a better option, only to repeatedly regret his decision: the Eyak proves untrustworthy; he causes troubles, steals food, misleads the men, is vengeful, even though occasionally he can be protective and helpful. Despite his age and bodily deformity, the man is always ahead of the explorers, traverses most difficult territory without much effort, knows where to find food or where the party is heading; he is even unharmed by the lake monster that nearly kills the explorers. Rumored to have had his leg shot when flying from tree to tree (Ivey 198), Man Who Flies is an unpredictable, amoral trickster, an incarnation of the old Indigenous world that is rapidly disappearing, and possibly the last practitioner of the old medicine in the area.

In the quiet of the morning that follows the dreadful night in Wolverine Mountains, the American explorers of Ivey's novel see a raven flying overhead. When on the next occasion the Colonel sees a raven squawk and circle above his head, he fires his carbine. The assumptions he had "started out with" (2) prove false and Forrester finally confesses in his diary: "I know who the raven is" (384).[2] The West Point graduate and veteran of Indian Wars is forced to admit that "truth" may be much more problematic than he thought before entering that other world where "nothing follows white men's rules" (187). Before leaving Alaska, he writes to his wife: "I can find no means to account for all that we have witnessed, except to say that I am no longer certain of the boundaries between man & beast, of the living & the dead. All that I have taken for granted, what I have known as real & true, has been called into question" (423).

This discovery resonates with testimonies of anthropologists taking lessons from tribal elders. Here I need to return to Richard Nelson,

2 A clipping from a local newspaper, dated May 14, 1907, reports that while aboard a whaling ship, an old "Indian witch doctor" with a "pronounced limp" (Ivey 447) killed himself when accidentally triggering the mechanism of a harpoon bomb. The locals, however, insist that instead of dying, the witch doctor has become a black bird and lives in a spruce tree.

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one of the ghosts haunting Ivey's novel. Before writing *Make Prayers to the Raven* (published in 1983), he spent a year doing ethnographic work among the Koyukon of Alaska, learning to see the world through their eyes. During that year he acquired a renewed respect for the living, sensate, animate world. Intended as "a native natural history […] outside the realm of Western science, though it has been organized and filtered through a Western mind" (Nelson xiv), his ethnographic account merges fact and feeling, empiricism and emotion "to better represent the whole reality" (Nelson xvi). Living in Alaska, Nelson acquired, as he puts it, "a different perception not only of the raven, but of every living and nonliving thing in the northern forest" (14).

TOWARD A PLURIVERSE—A WORLD WHERE MANY WORLDS MEET

In the course of their journey up the Wolverine and Tanana rivers, the Colonel and his men are forced to admit that there may be not one reality but a multiplicity of complementary versions of the real. What Westerners believe in, they realize, can be as irrational—or perhaps as real—as Indigenous Alaskans' beliefs. For one thing, if Forrester finally recognizes the old man for a shapeshifting shaman, to the Midnooskies the Colonel seems no less powerful a shaman himself, with all his scientific equipment, his light-catching camera, and his life-saving medicine. No culture is free from projection, and Ivey skillfully shifts perspectives to foreground the double-edged nature of cultural prejudices. She suggests that whatever we learn to accept as real will always be inadequate in confrontation with the teeming profusion of reality. In consequence, there is no one definitive answer to what the novel's characters really saw, because seeing is a never-ending process of educating the eye, of unmasking layer after layer of illusions.

As the novel unfolds, a pluriverse of meanings emerges. On their part, the white explorers no longer deny the possibility of "the occult" (Ivey 368), as Forrester used to call it. Transformations abound: geese become women and marry tribal men; a child is born from a tree root; an otter from Wolverine Mountains becomes human and marries a native woman—who slays him when he resumes his animal skin; one of the trappers who make part of the party takes a fog wife. Still, from non-Western perspectives, the stories of origin Christians accept may seem to be just as improbable and "occult." Samuelson, the other trapper-turned-prospector, lucidly counters Pruitt's initial dismay at hearing the geese story: "a woman from a rib you'll have, but not from a goose?" (173).

Transformational beings, like the otter husband, do not respect the modern/premodern boundary, either. Sophie Forrester is finally ready to admit that her deceased artist father—obsessed with sculpting a marble bear—was sculpting a self-portrait and that what looked like madness (living in the woods, sleeping in the barn, growing his hair and a beard, roaring like a bear) may have been a return to his original bear nature instead. After all, the Western world's pre-Christian cultures abounded in stories of metamorphoses, and so there is no reason why a Bear falling in love with a Quaker woman should not assume a human form to marry her, as Sophie realizes. "That night when I looked upon the marble bear, alive with the setting sun, what did I witness?' she muses; "Was it only sunlight on stone, or Father's spirit, or a reflection of my own?" (Ivey 444). Unable to decide, she nonetheless makes a valid point about the nature of perceptions. Her artistic medium of choice, photography, relies on catching a special effect of light, on arresting a moment of singular intensity. Sophie's art foregrounds the tricks of perspective, the magic of light, and a hunger to approach a mystery.[3] About her award-winning photograph she says:

> It is only an effect of a beam of sun glancing off a branch behind the subject and can be explained rationally & scientifically. Yet this cannot account for the remarkable sensation it evokes in me, a trembling, thrilling exhilaration, as if I have set something right, and long to do it again and again. My excitement comes, in part, from the knowledge of how easily it might have slipped past me. (444)

Taking the photograph, she was fully attuned to the moment; she saw in an instant what untrained eyes would not have noticed. This complete attunement to the environment, was it not the explanation why the Alaska explorers saw seemingly unaccountable things? When Forrester urges the Athabascan tyone Ceeth Hwya to tell him what he witnessed when he thought he saw the goose women, the latter loses patience. His answer, as translated by Pruitt, is both explicit and elusive: "You saw them, not him. How can he tell you again what your eyes already told you?" (Ivey 252).

CONCLUSIONS

The official story of the expedition is factual, rational, filled with geographical and ethnographic details, complete with sugges-

3 In his *Camera Lucida* Roland Barthes admits that one way of approaching the photograph is "to confront in it the wakening of intractable reality" (119).

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tions on the chances of conducting a potential military campaign against the Alaska Natives. As soldier and government official, Forrester has to obey orders; he has to accomplish the tasks entrusted to him. But he chooses to preserve the other—untold and untellable—side of his travels in the form of diary entries and letters to his wife. As a private man, he admits to having been awakened to the existence of a world which puzzles Western epistemology. Stepping into the Wolverine River Indian world, he enters the fluid, transformational reality of Indigenous myth, in which bodies can be shed, assumed, or transformed, and where everything is alive. Sophie's acceptance of her father's identification with the bear, as well as her recognition of the lame Eyak shaman in the raven who announced the death of her unborn child, in turn suggest that even in the "rational" West that older world—long associated with magic, witchcraft, or superstitions and as such destroyed by the guardians of Christian orthodoxy—may still linger at the edges of modern consciousness. And even though modernity itself arrived in Alaska in the wake of the Allen/Forrester expedition, perhaps there too the old world in which geese turn into women and a deadly monster inhabits a lake is not entirely gone, only changed, preserved in a different form. "Maybe," as Josh speculates, "we don't have the eyes for it anymore" (403). The colonization of imagination shifts the dominant worldview, burying the old beneath the new. But the unfamiliar we face as we travel away from "home" as the site of the safe and tested, the dis-placement—geographical as well as mental/spiritual/epistemic—re-positions us within a world of meanings, testing the supposedly universal truths we have been brought up with and opening us up to the challenge of the pluriverse.

Abstract: In 1885 Lieutenant Colonel Forrester explores the newly acquired territory of Alaska for the US government. His passion to see an unknown world clashes with the mission Forrester has received from his military superiors. How will he meet the dual challenge—as well as the moral dilemma—of navigating an older world that resists comprehension—a world he learns to respect—and mapping the terrain for potential military invasion? My analysis will thus attempt to foreground the manifold paradoxes of travel/narratives. Loosely based on Lieutenant Henry Tureman Allen's historic exploration of the Tanana and Copper rivers, Ivey's novel departs significantly from historical accuracy in order to bring the colonizing agenda of the government-sponsored exploration party into conversation with the individual perspectives and sensibilities of its members, exposed as they are to a world where old stories are alive and where nonhumans or not-quite humans are all agential beings. Employing anthropologist Viveiros de Castro's theorization of Amerindian perspectivism, I want to argue that *To the Bright Edge of the World* decolonizes the genre of travel narratives as well as the experience of travelling between worlds.

Keywords: Eovyn Ivey, Alaska, colonialism, decolonial narrative, multinaturalism, shamanism

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WALKING WITH AND ON TURTLE ISLAND
Indigenous Activist and Artistic Expressions in North America as Counter-Mapping Practices

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While mapping or cartographic imagination could be associated with imperial and colonial enterprise of discovery, claiming of lands, exploitation of natural resources, imposition of geographical borders, and restriction of movements, G. Malcolm Lewis concludes his study of Indigenous mapmaking practices in North America by stating that "native North Americans differed from Europeans in not having used maps to divide their terrestrial worlds into finite areas comparable to the Europeans' states, territories, townships, and properties" (182). Instead of divisions and fractures, Indigenous maps point to connections and relations. This becomes particularly visible in the Indigenous representation of their cartographic imagination. Woodward and Lewis identify that

> The cosmographical dimension is present everywhere in native representations of the world, where the landscape and universe are regarded not as a passive backdrop against which human events unfold, but as active participants in human life. The land owns the people, not people, the land. […] Cartography becomes less of a gridded stage on which life takes place and more a model of how the spiritual world and physical world interact. (538)

Indigenous Peoples have expressed, remembered, and performed their spatial orientation, imaginations, and relations as part of their various movements across Turtle Island (the North American continent, according to some Indigenous nation's creation stories), including migrating, hunting, gathering, trading, ceremonies, storytelling, dancing and also while being forcibly removed and displaced from their ancestral lands to reserves. Acknowledging Indigenous practices of spatial imagination, orientation, and relations, this paper expounds

on three Indigenous activist and artistic expressions in North America as counter-mapping practices. I look at the protest walk initiated by David Kawapit, known as the *Journey of Nishiyuu* or *The Journey of the People*, a 1,600-kilometer journey of a group of young Cree walkers from Whapmagoostui, Quebec, to Parliament Hill in Ottawa to support the Idle no More movement as a contemporary activist expression of embodied mapping through journeying. I refer to the traveling art installation project *Walking With Our Sisters*, honoring the lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada and the USA to demonstrate how Indigenous artists bridge the walking and traveling experience to enact a counter-mapping practice for resurgence and healing of the community. Finally, I discuss *Frost Exploding Trees Moon*, a solo performance choreographed by Michelle Olson and Floyd Favel and performed by Olson to present how Indigenous performers draw from travel stories and nomadic experiences of their ancestors to establish contemporary artistic expressions of embodied mapping as forms of resistance to colonial narratives. These three different Indigenous activist and artistic performances of journeying are explored as counter-mapping practices that offer decolonial mapping of Turtle Island, leading to embodied healing.

WALKING AS A COUNTER-MAPPING PRACTICE EMBEDDED IN INDIGENOUS WAYS OF BEING

The term "Indigenous" carries the core of Indigenous people's relation to land. The Latin term *indigena* means "born of the land." Shawn Wilson (Cree) explicates through his conversation with Lewis Cardinal (Cree) how "Indigenous peoples and their traditions and customs, they are shaped by the environment, the land, their relationship; their spiritual, emotion and physical relationship to that land. It [this relationship] speaks to them; it gives them their responsibility for stewardship" (88). Sandra Styres (Kanien'kehá:ka) elaborates on how this relationship determines Indigenous understanding:

> Land is both space (abstract) and place/land (concrete) it is also conceptual, experiential, relational, and embodied. […] Land is spiritual, emotional, relational, Land is experiential, (re)membered, and storied; Land is consciousness—Land is sentient. (27)

This explication defines land as more than a geographical or physical space. So, alongside connections, interactions, and relations (Woodward and Lewis), Indigenous mapping practices highlight lived, performed, and processual experiences, and they "may be gestural,

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chanted, or inscribed in stone, wood, wall, tattoo, leaf, or paper. […] Indigenous maps may be used to assess taxes, guide a pilgrim, connect the realms of the sacred and profane, or navigate beyond the horizon. Clearly, Indigenous cartographies are process oriented as opposed to product dependent" (Pearce and Louis 110). This processual cartography is reflected in the extension of the map into the landscape, inscriptions, stories, dances, or ceremonies, as well as the embodied experience of space and place (Pearce and Louis 110–111). Indigenous people have continued performing their spatial expressions and relations despite Western cartographic practices imposed upon these communities.

Not an Indigenous concept, the term counter-mapping was coined by Nancy Peluso (1995), who explored a grassroots mapmaking of a forest by an Indigenous community in Indonesia, which brought into light the realities and knowledge of the marginalized group in the society, who were being denied their traditional rights by the government. A counter-cartographic practice is fundamentally based on the premise that it is a "type of transgression [that] goes against official geopolitical maps while exposing relations of domination over and exploitation of a territory as well as revealing concealed networks of power. […]" and may be employed "for analyzing networks and spaces in order to generate social change from below" (Mesquita 26). Counter-mapping in analog and digital forms of cartographic practices has been undertaken by different marginalized groups worldwide to bring social/political changes (*This is Not an Atlas).* In the context of the present study, I understand counter-mapping as a form of activism against dominant power structures to restore the voices and perspectives of Indigenous Nations that challenge Western notions of place and spatial imagination and question the arbitrarily imposed by colonization borders between different areas on earth, between people, nations and between nature and man. Indigenous people use various media and technology to protect, reclaim, and express their spatial imagination and relations and resist colonial or state narratives. Within cartographic practices, examples of Indigenous counter-mapping may include such projects as *Decolonial Atlas* or *Native Land Digital*, as well as those that involve digital mapping of locations of missing and murdered Indigenous women or residential school children's unmarked graves. These projects incorporate new media and digital technologies alongside stories and embodied experiences. Given the diverse range of forms and practices that Indigenous mapping can encompass and recognizing the Cree heritage shared by many of the activists and artists in the projects discussed in this

paper, I turn to the act of walking, which holds significance in both mapping practices and Cree cultural experience.

While there is a long and complex history of walking amongst non-Indigenous philosophers, artists, writers and activities, due to this paper's focus on Indigenous practices, I deliberately avoid delving into those narratives and bring instead the reader's attention to Indigenous walking histories and practices. For the traditionally nomadic people, the act of walking is at the heart of Cree life and identity and is manifested in "The Walking Out Ceremony," where the practice of walking is a rite of passage marking a child's first encounter with nature, first steps on Mother Earth. Walking is central to vision quests, also practiced as rites of passage, understood as "a spiritual journey when participants, often adolescents, are said to receive sacred knowledge and strength from the spirit world" (Filice). Gwilym Lucas Eades and Yingqin Zheng explored the *Kaachewaapechuu*, a long commemorative walk in the northern Quebec Cree village of Wemindji, as a counter-mapping practice, as it "cuts across territorial trapline blocks historically defined by both state and market (hierarchical) interests operating in Wemindji Cree territories over the course of three centuries" (81), and they presented it as a form resistance to the state.

While walking has been long practiced across the globe in a variety of forms and for different purposes, according to Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman, co-directors of WalkingLab (www.walkinglab.org), a queer-feminist walking research-creation collective,

> The sense of urgency and expediency surrounding walking is entangled with the desire to generate research and knowledge in situ, that is community-based, and that is attuned to more-than-human entanglements and encounters. […] walking has become more than a utilitarian or pedestrian mode of getting from place to place; walking is an ethical and political call to collective action. (2)

I refer to Springgay and Truman because they accentuate Indigenous perspectives of relationality, connections, reciprocity, responsibility, and action that reflect Indigenous relations with the land, which remain central to all the walking projects discussed in this paper. I draw from these definitions of walking practices and counter-mapping to extend their application to Indigenous activists' and artistic expressions.

WALKING FOR LEARNING, RESTORATION AND HEALING

The Journey of Nishiyuu or the Journey of the People, a 1600-kilometer journey by a group of young James Bay Cree walkers from

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Whapmagoostui First Nation in Quebec, Canada, was undertaken in 2013 in support of the Idle No More movement to express their opposition to the Canadian Government's Bill C-45, which included changes to land management on reservations. The journey's aim was also to "establish and unite our historical allies and restore our traditional trade routes with the Algonquin, Mohawk and other First Nations" (Hall). The seven walkers who set out on this journey, including Stanley George, Jr., 17; Travis George, 17; David Kawapit, 17; Johnny Abraham, 19; Raymond Kawapit, 20; Geordie Rupert, 21; and their guide, Isaac Kawapit, 47, performed an embodied mapping practice by hiking and snowshoeing for 68 days until they reached Parliament Hill in Ottawa to address the Canadian politicians.

These young men undertook this walk adhering to the Cree epistemologies emphasizing "the importance of respect, reciprocity, relation, protocol, holistic knowing, relevancy, story, interpretative meaning, and the experiential nested in place and kinship systems" (Kovach 67). They moved across different Indigenous territories, following Indigenous protocols of permission, hospitality, and collaboration, and their group kept growing and reached 270 walkers. The documentary *The Journey of Nishiiyuu* (2017), directed by Benjamin Masty, highlights how their walk connects back to the Cree story of Cheh-Cheojans, which tells about the best warriors sent to the South to bring back the bundle with the spirit of the spring and summer to their land of perpetual winter and restore the four seasons and their connection to nature (Halls, *The Journey of Nishiiyuu*). So, as these young men carried on the journey, moving along their people's paths, they reconnected with their ancestors' stories. Jordan Masty from Wemindji, who later joined the original walkers, remembers stories of his Elders, who stressed how powerful walking was for the mind and the body (*The Journey of Nishiiyuu* 00:26:15–00:33:50). For Masty, as he carried the Staff gifted by the Algonquin nation throughout his journey, this walk became an embodied experience of uniting nations. In the documentary, he reflects on his physical and mental struggles. While carrying the heavy staff and experiencing knee pain, he recalls feeling the responsibility bestowed upon him through the gift, which had the image of the medicine wheel, symbolizing the unity of all nations. The documentary emphasizes that unity is one of the key outcomes of this journey: "To walk together as one with all different nations and races. Both native and non-natives. I saw it happening," says Kawapit (*The Journey of Nishiiyuu* 00:39:07–00:40:04). For Kawapit, the walk was also to instill hope and motivation: "I wanted to help inspire somebody to make a change in their life or to be able to give

them that little extra boost of confidence to try something they were scared of trying" (Bell and Kitty). For these Cree walkers, the legend was like a prophecy of their ancestors or a story carrying a form of teaching that the young warriors would journey at the time of disbalance. It was to awaken the ancestral spirit to resist and oppose the Canadian Bill C-45 and also to restore the strength to fight and survive some of the challenges faced by Indigenous people, such as poverty, lack of clean drinking water, and inadequate housing.

The walk and the journey also provided the young Cree men a learning and healing experience. They were drawn closer to nature as well as to the traditional ways of their ancestors. Styres, in explaining the literacies of land, states, "Traditional knowledges were and continue to be transmitted through storying; shared values and belief; as well as land-centered activities, reflections, and observations—they are woven out of individual and collective experiences" (28). Matthew Mukash, a Whapmagoostui Cree elder, former chief of the community, former Grand Chief of the Cree Nation, and co-producer of the documentary *The Journey of Nishiiyuu,* looking back after a decade of this walk noted that "a lot of stuff has changed since then. There are more land-based activities for youth … and young adults" such as yearly winter journeys that offer healing and cultural connection and honor the purpose "for people not to forget their connection to the earth, because our culture is land-based" (Bell and Kitty).

The walkers faced physical, mental, and emotional struggles during their journey. Masty's documentary visually captures the walkers' struggle as they face the extreme weather, blizzards, the heat of the sun, and minus-fifty-two-degree temperature. But these embodied experiences turn into the lessons of kindness, both supporting each other and also receiving gifts from others in the form of food from women, a Sweatlodge ceremony or sacred items such as a staff or a sacred pipe, and other forms of hospitality and support from the communities by which they were hosted along their journey, as well as donations from individuals across the country, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Besides the physical adversities of walking long distances, the walkers shared their personal stories and reasons behind the journey. Issac Kawapit, called the White Wizard, the guide, embarked on this healing journey to address his own addictions and hardships while showing the youth his ancestral pathways to healing. Geordie Rupert joined this walk after he lost his son. Rupert saw his child sitting on his toboggan during the walk, and the child's spirit gave him the strength to continue walking despite difficulties. He said, "Let's go, son," as he began the journey and the spirit accompanied him (*The Journey*

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of Nishiiyuu 00:12:15–00:14:08). Kawapit noted: "There was something in the Journey that no one knows about. I didn't know about it first but there was a spirit that followed. At night, I would see it. Sometimes, in my dreams, I saw an Elder; he was with us during our walk." (*The Journey of Nishiiyuu* 00:39:05–00:39:). Rupert and Kawapit refer to spirits as their relatives to whom they talk, who give them strength and look after them on their journey. The healing and spiritual essence of this walking experience is further exemplified in the title *Walking is Medicine* by Alanis Obomsawin, a brief documentary chronicling this Cree men's walk. It was featured in the CBC Arts Series as a response to Buffy Sainte-Marie's call to "Keep Calm and Decolonize." Brock Lewis from Ojibway First Nation adequately explains in Obomsawin's documentary that walking heals because "you get to feel the land, that's how our ancestors are speaking to us, through the land" (*Walking is Medicine* 00:03:05–00:03:13). In the finale scenes, the camera follows people, animals, and all other beings as they keep walking, advocating that this protest walk is a decolonial act reconnecting with the land-based and reciprocal traditions and beliefs of their ancestors.

This embodied walking and journeying with humans and more-than-humans becomes part of decolonial ventures understood as "(trans)local struggles, movements, and actions to resist and refuse the legacies and ongoing relations and patterns of power established by external and internal colonialism" (Mignolo and Walsh 16). The journey of learning, restoration and healing as "an ethical and political call to collective action" (Springgay and Truman) could thus be seen as a decolonial counter-mapping practice that directly resists the state's policies of governing Indigenous lands and lives.

WALKING WITH THE SPIRITS TOWARD RESURGENCE

A commemorative art installation for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada and the United States, *Walking With Our Sisters* (WWOS), was initiated by Métis artist and grassroots leader Christi Belcourt and joined by those who became members of this collective. The collaborative art piece was created from the 1,763+ pairs of moccasin vamps (tops) plus 108 pairs of children's vamps donated by different individuals worldwide. As this installation traversed across Canada and the USA, a counter-mapping unfolded and witnessing the installation itself entailed a walking experience.

Presented as a floor installation, it included the donated beaded vamps arranged in the formation of a path made of fabric, and view-

ers were asked to walk barefoot on a path of cloth placed alongside the vamps. The *Walking With Our Sisters* collectives' website explains:

> Each pair of vamps (or "uppers" as they are also called) represents one missing or murdered Indigenous woman. The unfinished moccasins represent the unfinished lives of the women whose lives were cut short. The children's vamps are dedicated to children who never returned home from residential schools. Together, the installation represents all these women; paying respect to their lives and existence on this earth. They are not forgotten. They are sisters, mothers, aunties, daughters, cousins, grandmothers, wives and partners. They have been cared for, they have been loved, they are missing and they are not forgotten. (*Walking With Our Sisters*)

While walking through the art installation, the participants acknowledged and tried to establish a connection with the spirits of those who are no longer physically present in this world. It reflects the Indigenous worldviews and the importance of relationships between people and the spiritual world. Drawing from Indigenous studies, the co-directors of the *WalkingLab* highlight that the practice of "walking with" refers to "'more than' orientation. Withness is not simply about group walking practices, but rather emphasizes complicated relations and entanglements with humans, non-humans, Land, and an ethics of situatedness, solidarity and resistance" (Springgay and Truman 3). This form of "walking with" also represents what scholars identified in the Indigenous mapmaking practice as the overlapping of different worlds to such an extent that "it is impossible to separate secular from sacred" (Woodward and Lewis 538). The members of the collective deliberately chose to design and undertake this project following Indigenous protocols and beliefs. Shalene Jobin and Tara Kappo state that the installation is not seen as an exhibit but a memorial, which transformed into a ceremony (135). With the guidance of Elder Maria Cambell (Métis), the installation was grounded in ceremonial protocols from its opening in Edmonton in 2013 to the closing in Batoche in 2019. The ceremonial character could also be noticed in the use of the terms "bundle" in reference to the collection of the vamps and other ceremonial objects and "lodge" as the space for the installation, which itself is referred to as "the memorial ceremony" (Jobin and Kappo 135). The sacredness of "walking with" in the installation has been essential in binding the community, as one of the volunteers at the Thunder Bay installation, Kristie Williams, said: "It's been a really wonderful experience seeing how the community has shown a sincere interest and not just visiting Walking With Our Sisters but learning

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what the significance... is for all of us and how in the end, we're all related" (Porter).

Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee) states, "If colonization is a disconnecting force, then resurgence is about reconnecting with homelands, cultures, and communities" (97). *Walking With Our Sisters* led toward this reconnection and resurgence, which, as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Mississauga Nishnaabeg) notes, requires "our Elders, our languages, and our lands, along with vision, intent, commitment, community, and ultimately action" (67). Jobin and Kappo explain that "the bundle is restor(y)ing the landscape of Turtle Island, re-engaging our relationships by hosting communities in places to which the lodge is invited […] The bundle is a material demonstration of community—of physical and non-physical beings, being together—traveling the highways of Turtle Island, and in *pêbonânak* (gathering places) where the lodge is held" (142). They refer to the history of their ancestors from different nations traversing across Turtle Island and meeting in sacred places called in the Cree language *pêbonânak* to conduct "ceremonies, for activism, for mourning, for diplomacy, for trade, for celebration, and to share stories" (139). Between 2013 and 2019, this commemorative art installation traveled to twenty-seven sites, connecting communities across Turtle Island. When the installation came to its closure in Batoche, Kara Louttit, an Ottawa member of WWOS, shared how this has been a healing journey: "My life has changed so much since becoming a part of this and it feels like it's coming full circle for me to end it here in Batoche" (Laskowski). Through this walking and traveling act, the collective established a decolonial counter-mapping practice that offered communities resurgence, reconnection and healing. Mapping against the state's indifference to a human rights crisis concerning Indigenous women, the perpetuation of stereotypes, and the normalizing of power and privilege while putting forward Indigenous processes and engagements, *Walking With Our Sisters* united communities across Turtle Island to bring acknowledgment, understanding, and healing.

PERFORMING A WALK TO RECONNECT WITH LAND THROUGH KINESTHETIC MEMORY

Frost Exploding Trees Moon is a solo dance choreographed by Michelle Olson (a member of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation) and Floyd Favel (Nêhiyaw/Cree) and performed by Olson, where a woman re-imagines, embodies, and performs walking-traveling along her trap

line.[1] The title refers to the harsh and cold month of December, when the trees freeze and crack, making a loud exploding sound. Moving on a trapline implies a form of embodied and kinetic map or map-making by walking. The trappers were experts who had an embodied sense of the terrain. By moving along an imagined ancestral trapline, the dancer performs a map, reconnecting herself with the land and her ancestors.

In the beginning, the audience sees a woman sitting with three wooden sticks, with which she engages throughout the piece, walking with them as a support, carrying them, and hunting with them; other times, they seem to become part of her body as she embodies the game she hunts for; later the sticks seem to signify the game she managed to hunt. Finally, once she finds a suitable place, she sets up her tipi, tying those same sticks with a rope and putting a white scarf upon it. She situates herself within it. Her explorations of positions inside a tipi ultimately lead her to become one with the tipi. The dancer fixes the tipi upon her shoulders, carefully balancing the sticks and rotating almost like a whirling dervish dancer in a deeply contemplative mood or meditation. This final moment leads to an embodiment of an imaginary map, reconnecting the woman with the land.

In this performance, Favel "was looking for the 'bridge' between the past and the present" (Favel), accentuated by the accompanying Native American Church songs sung by Kelly Daniels (Cree). Olson also identifies the search for traces of connection with the past, as the experiment employs "the body positions and movement of our aunties/grandmothers/elders when they are in the woods" (Olson). The idea behind it is that the traditional movements in relation to the way of life and practices were deeply intertwined with nature. Thus, the doing and embodiment of these movements may invoke memory, feeling, and energy, and let the performer embody it. Olson explains:

> The piece is an homage to a way of being that is particular to people who live on the land. And it is an opportunity to take these shapes, emotions, and sensations and live in them. As I live mostly in urban areas, I love finding this calm/centered/responsive space in my body. I wonder, by inhabiting these movements, that some ancestral memory will arise. (Olson)

This is an approach discussed by other Indigenous performers. For instance, Santee Smith Tekaronhiáhkhwa, a Kahnyen'kehàka/Mohawk dancer, explained:

1 For images see: https://ravenspiritdance.com/project/frost-exploding-trees-moon/.

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> So when we do our performances, and especially when we're talking about intention, about why we're moving in a certain way, what does that mean to us, as the individual performer, that's when we try to call upon that ancestral stuff or try to awaken that. […] [W]ithin me is a piece of all my ancestors, and I have that memory within me somewhere. The challenge is to get in tune to that, to hear and feel it, respond to that kind of memory. (Murphy 223, 224)

Olson mentioned that both choreographers shared memories of seeing Elders in movement and positions, which became their research material or exercises. She says: "There is one image of my grandfather that I always resource in one of the positions in the tent, of him staring off into space and holding so much memory and experience as he quietly sits by the window" (Olson). These choreographic choices speak of Indigenous concepts of intergenerational connection (Murphy 224) or relationality (Wilson 80) and the importance of situating one's self (Kovach 109).

The performance aims not only to connect the performer with the ancestors and nature but also to bring the audience closer to nature. Favel explains, "Through her performance and us watching her, we should connect with the land. Like Nakajima (a Butoh dancer and teacher Favell trained with) said, 'when the dancer dances, I dance as the viewer'" (Favel). So, by observing the dancer's movements, actions, and feelings through kinesthetic empathy (Foster 2010; Sklar 2006), the audience member can "see what she does and see the thought in it" (Fraleigh 169). However, the sticks and the idea of the shelter provide a perspective for Olson, who says, "The sticks create shapes and structures through which I see the world. It frames my perspective. So, there are many layers in the piece that engage so many different audiences. Children love the building aspect, and building a home or fort, an adult may see a journey of a woman, someone may sit with their own loss, and an elder may remember what it was like living off the land as a child" (Olson).

By starting from the elemental level of the dance and the body movements, it was to reconnect with the past ways that, at the same time, bring one's body and self closer to nature. For Favel, "This would be an intensive healing process as one has to go past modern colonization back to an original connection to Creation". For Olson, this piece also provides an embodied healing experience:

> It is about the push and pull between earth and sky, between living and death, and the struggle to stay in the moment when there is a strong desire to move on to the spirit world. I think about the word home, where is home? Also, where are my loved ones? It is a lonely piece, and the woman struggles sometimes

with the deep silence around her. My goal is to sit so deep inside the work that the audience will have to sit deeply inside of themselves. (Olson)

This performance of walking along the imagined traplines re-enacting the ancestral ways of living offers an experience of embodied mapping that leads to healing by reconnecting to one's ancestors and land through kinesthetic memory.

CONCLUSION: ACTIVIST AND ARTISTIC WALKING AS DECOLONIAL COUNTER-MAPPING AND EMBODIED HEALING

Styres explains that "land literacies" employ decolonizing praxis as "stories are etched into the essence of every rock, tree, animal, pathway, and waterway (whether in urban or rural/natural or built environment) in relation to the Indigenous people, who have existed on the land since time immemorial" (29). At the core of each of the discussed projects involving walking practices is the fundamental relationship with the land and the spiritual connections with the land and the spirit world. By walking with and on Turtle Island, these activists and artists employ lived and processual experiences of learning and healing that go against the colonial and state narratives, honor and bring Indigenous stories, perspectives, beliefs, methods, and practices to the forefront, and push forward towards bringing social change concerning the Indigenous as well as the Canadian society. So, whether by literally walking 1600 km on the land, walking with the spirits across different communities on Turtle Island, or by reimagining and reembodying their ancestors' footsteps and trails, these Indigenous performers and activists draw from travel stories and nomadic experiences of their ancestors to establish contemporary artistic and activist expressions as forms of resistance to colonial and state narratives, making interventions and presenting "a form of storying and counter-storying that disrupts dominant narratives and representations of place" (Springgay and Truman 3) as well as their relations. These counter-mapping practices of walking and journeying undertaken by these Indigenous activists and artists establish a decolonial mapping of Turtle Island—North America that offers its participants an embodied healing experience.

Abstract: Indigenous Peoples have expressed, remembered, and performed spatial orientation, imaginations, and relations as part of their various movements across Turtle Island (the North American continent according to some Indigenous Nation's creation stories), including migration, trading, hunting, gathering, and also the forced displacement of Indigenous Peoples from their ancestral lands to reserves. Gwilym Lucas Eades' (2016) research demonstrates how Indigenous communities understand spatial imagination and use maps

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and digital media to express their cultural identity, reclaim land and assert their sovereignty, tell stories, transmit cultural knowledge, and counter colonial narratives through counter-mapping showing the essence of one's spatial awareness. In the context of this study, I understand counter-mapping as a form of activism against dominant power structures to restore the voices and perspectives of Indigenous nations that oppose Western notions of place and spatial imagination and question the arbitrarily imposed by colonization borders between different areas on earth, between people and between nature and man. This paper explores three different forms of walking experiences as Indigenous counter-mapping practices. The protest walk initiated by David Kawapit, known as the *Journey of Nishiyuu* or the *Journey of the People*, a 1,600-kilometer journey of a group of young Cree walkers from Whapmagoostui, Quebec to Parliament Hill in Ottawa to support the Idle no More movement marks a contemporary activist expression of embodied mapping through journeying. The traveling art installation project *Walking With Our Sisters*, honoring the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada, demonstrates how Indigenous artists bridge the walking and traveling experience to enact a counter-mapping practice for resurgence and healing of the community. Finally, *Frost Exploding Trees Moon*, a solo performance choreographed by Michelle Olson and Floyd Favel, presents how Indigenous performers draw from travel stories and nomadic experiences of their ancestors to establish contemporary artistic expressions of embodied mapping as forms of resistance to colonial narratives. Drawing from decolonial cartographic approaches and Indigenous perspectives on land and mapmaking, these Indigenous activist and artistic performances of journeying are theorized as counter-mapping practices offering decolonial mapping of Turtle Island and embodied healing.

Keywords: walking, counter-mapping, journeying, Indigenous performance, activism, stories, healing, resurgence, decolonial

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EL PAÍS DE LAS AMAZONAS
Una delimitación imaginada en la cartografía francesa colonial del siglo XVIII

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1. INTRODUCCIÓN

Desde principios del último siglo de dominación colonial las representaciones cartográficas de la Amazonia tuvieron un auge inusitado que involucró principalmente a los cartógrafos franceses por cuenta de su pretensión de mostrar la extensa región al interior de la *Amerique Meridionale*. Así, en mapamundis, mapas continentales y regionales se hizo frecuente un imaginario cartográfico como forma, manifestación y producto de la organización espacial concebida y deseada del sur continental acorde con la ambición territorial francesa. Se trató de una delimitación que empezó a circular dentro del conjunto de ideas, imágenes y símbolos que definieron los supuestos discursivos en torno a la Amazonia y las representaciones de su espacio geográfico y de sus habitantes desde finales del siglo XVII. Esta forma regional permite considerar en la historia de la cartografía amazónica un momento representacional político-imaginado de alcance subcontinental fundamentado en la delimitación imaginaria denominada "País de las Amazonas".

Como abstracción del espacio geográfico, los mapas son funcionales para la administración, control y gestión de los territorios adscritos a una entidad legítima capaz de ejercer soberanía. Además, son artefactos tecnológicos de dominación en tanto permiten hacerse una idea de toda la superficie terrestre, una parte o un punto específico, dependiendo de la escala que se requiera. Por tanto, la Amazonia como región fue representada según la conveniencia e intereses variados de los cartógrafos y las casas reales a las que prestaban sus servicios, por lo que sus mapas fueron expresión de la organización espacial deseada o instrumentos que permitieron desplegar los dispositivos

de poder para el ejercicio de la soberanía colonial. En este sentido, resulta importante indagar por las formas en las que se concibió y pensó la distribución y delimitación del espacio geográfico amazónico en la cartografía francesa durante el periodo colonial, puesto que el alcance de las conquistas del imperio galo en la región no solo fue limitado, sino que adicionalmente no era común trazar delimitaciones dadas las constantes disputas territoriales y la consecuente indefinición jurisdiccional.

Para los siglos XVII y XVIII, la cartografía francesa tuvo gran notoriedad y relevancia por cuenta del trabajo continuo de geógrafos al servicio del rey, como la dinastía de Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville, con sus dos hijos menores Adrien y Guillaume, su yerno Pierre Duval, su nieto Gilles Robert de Vaugondy y su bisnieto Didier Robert de Vaugondy (Blanco; Miceli). De hecho, el análisis de recurrencia en atlas y compendios cartográficos de mapas, en los que aparece representada la Amazonia durante el periodo de dominación colonial, permitió identificar la delimitación imaginada objeto de estudio en la obra del patriarca Sanson y del bisnieto, así como en representaciones de otros destacados cartógrafos reales como Nicolas de Fer y Guillaume De L'Isle.

A continuación, se presenta el análisis de la obra de estos cuatro cartógrafos franceses para dar cuenta del proceso de construcción y reproducción de una imaginación geográfica particular: el País de las Amazonas. Este imaginario cartográfico se mantuvo en la cartografía francesa durante todo el siglo XVIII para representar el territorio desconocido "sin sujeción efectiva por parte de portugueses o españoles" (Díaz et al. 24) y permitió mantener viva la mitología inicial del descubrimiento del río, sin necesidad de recurrir a ninguna imagen figurativa como en mapas precedentes. En las seis representaciones francesas analizadas también se evidencia cierta continuidad y semejanza en cuanto a información geográfica, técnica cartográfica y estilo representacional.

2. PRIMEROS TRAZOS E INTENTOS DE DELIMITACIÓN

La cartografía francesa desde mediados del siglo XVII se interesó por contar con datos geográficos consolidados y precisos, más que dar cuenta del alcance de las administraciones coloniales en el territorio suramericano, en especial de aquellas áreas distantes y lejanas que, como la Amazonia, seguían marcándose en los mapas como ignotas o poco conocidas. Sin embargo, esto no implicó que no se esbozaran delimitaciones con notorios trazos de colores para señalar jurisdiccio-

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nes virreinales y provinciales. Por el contrario, esta práctica empezó y se generalizó con Nicolas Sanson, padre fundador no solo de la famosa dinastía de geógrafos, sino de la misma Escuela Francesa de Cartografía.

El trabajo cartográfico de Sanson está notoriamente influenciado por su origen flamenco, dado que en Holanda aprendió la técnica y los métodos para la elaboración de cartas que le valieron el reconocimiento y la protección de la nobleza francesa, como preceptor de Luis XIII y Luis XVI, quien lo nombró geógrafo y consejero real (Acevedo; Blanco; Miceli). Los mapas de Sanson deben considerarse en el marco de la transición cartográfica que empezó a dejar de lado los decorados y las representaciones figurativas para privilegiar el detalle y la precisión geográfica en grabados de calidad. Ejemplo de esto es la colección presentada en 1656 como el primer atlas francés con todas las partes del mundo.

El interés por mantener actualizada la cartografía, para el caso de la región amazónica, hizo que Sanson validara la fuente de información geográfica, a saber, la crónica publicada en 1641 del misionero jesuita español Cristóbal de Acuña, quien en 1639 acompañó el viaje de regreso de Quito a Belém do Pará en la expedición portuguesa liderada por Pedro de Teixeira. A pesar de esto, en el mapa de la *Amerique Meridionale* de 1650 aparecen trazos incorrectos de los cursos y afluentes del Amazonas y del Orinoco: el primero emerge en la confluencia de los ríos *Iuan di Origliana* y *Xauxa*, que nace en las montañas peruanas próximas a Lima, Oropesa y Cusco; mientras que en el segundo desemboca el río Negro y al parecer se conecta directamente con Guayaquil en el Pacífico, pasando por Riobamba y cerca a Quito (Figura 1).

Figura 1. Mapa de América Meridional de Nicolas Sanson, 1650, Banco de la República de Colombia, https://babel.banrepcultural.org/digital/collection/p17054coll13/id/645

Si bien en este mapa se muestran etnónimos como *Arwacas* y *Epuremei* para dar cuenta del poblamiento amazónico, es evidente el vacío cartográfico con el amplio espacio en blanco delimitado en aguadas de color verde, justo en la zona intertropical bordeado por otros trazos de colores. En amarillo, hacia la costa oriental, se definen aparentemente las capitanías hereditarias del Brasil colonial; al sur, las provincias de Chaco y Paraguay, y al norte, las gobernaciones de Popayán y el Nuevo Reino de Granada. En naranja, al norte, se localizan las tierras de Paria y Guiana. En rojo, al sur, Guayra, y al occidente, la provincia peruana de Los Quijos y Pacamoros. Estos trazos en aguadas de colores deben entenderse como los primeros intentos de delimitación de las jurisdicciones coloniales en América del Sur, los cuales no eran comunes en la cartografía de la época y no se replicaron ni siquiera en los mapas franceses posteriores.

Como parte del Atlas de América, que Sanson publicó en 1657, uno de los mapas detalló *le cours de la Rivre Amazone*. Este no solo presenta un contenido que supera el vacío cartográfico, sino que corrige el mapa de 1650, gracias a una mejor definición del curso del río y sus principales tributarios, así como el trazado de las islas y la inclusión de una mayor cantidad de etnónimos. Además, se destaca el nacimiento del Amazonas en la zona montañosa de Quito al juntarse con el río Coca y la conexión con el Orinoco a través del *Cariquacure ou Rio Negro* (Figura 2). Estos detalles geográficos y la precisión en el trazo, fue producto de la verificación por parte del geógrafo real del método cartográfico implementado para elaborar el mapa publicado en 1655 por el ingeniero militar francés Blaise François Pagan, quien logró trazar el curso del río mediante el cálculo de las longitudes a partir de las latitudes registradas en la crónica de Acuña (Cintra). De este modo, la cartografía científica amazónica se consolidó de forma preilustrada desde mediados del siglo XVII por cuenta del trabajo de geógrafos y cartógrafos como Pagan y Sanson (Unigarro).

El mapa de Sanson de 1657 también puede considerarse una representación cartográfica regional pionera, puesto que se presenta en detalle el curso completo del río Amazonas con varios de sus afluentes más importantes, lo cual permite visualizar la gran extensión de la cuenca amazónica habitada por poblaciones indígenas referidas con sus respectivos etnónimos y organizadas territorialmente en provincias como Aparia, Machiparo, Mataya, Tapaysa y Paranayba, entre otras. Sin que se tratase de un reconocimiento oficial de sus territorialidades, resulta evidente el interés de la cartografía francesa por comprender y mostrar una gran región delimitada por un trazo en aguadas muy sutil, pero bordeado por trazos muy bien definidos

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y gruesos en amarillo y verde, que señalan el dominio colonial alrededor con jurisdicciones como Brasil, Paraguay, Perú y Guyana. Así, los mapas de 1650 y 1657 del geógrafo real francés Nicolas Sanson empezaron a configurar una delimitación para la Amazonia sin enunciar denominación alguna.

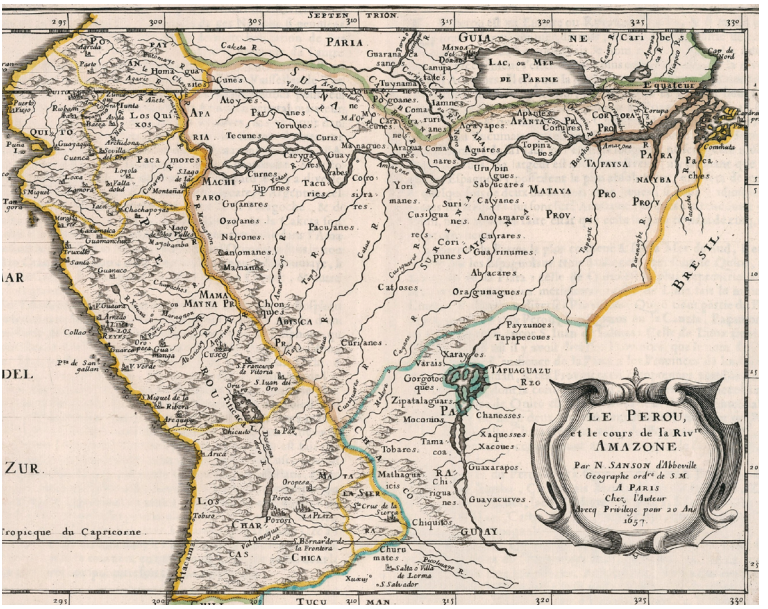

Figura 2. Mapa del Perú y el curso del río Amazonas de Nicolas Sanson, 1657, David Rumsey Map Collection, https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~295215~90066302

3. LA EMERGENCIA DE UNA DELIMITACIÓN IMAGINADA

Para finales del siglo XVII, es posible encontrar algunos mapas de origen diverso con delimitaciones, también en aguadas de color, correspondientes a las divisiones territoriales del norte de Suramérica, entre las que aparece el "país de las amazonas". Un ejemplo data de 1685, atribuido al comerciante de mapas e hidrógrafo real inglés John Seller, en él se ubicó el mítico lago Parima en la provincia de Caribana y se hace referencia explícita a la delimitación *Part of the Amazones Country*, al sur de la línea equinoccial (Blanco 34–35). Sin embargo, es en los mapas producidos por la cartografía francesa durante todo el siglo XVIII que estuvo presente un topónimo que, en sí mismo, se constituye en un imaginario cartográfico de la región: el *Pays des Amazones*.

Así como la imaginación geográfica permitió la emergencia del lago Parima y su localización en la Guyana (Figuras 1 y 2), producto

del mito de El Dorado, este país imaginado respondió a la reinvención del mito de las guerreras amazonas. De esta manera, fue posible situar en las proximidades del curso del río, y gran parte de su cuenca, un área controlada y dominada por diferentes grupos de habitantes originarios, considerados salvajes por la firme y viva intención de defender sus territorios heredada de sus ascendentes míticas. Si bien, el hecho de mostrar un área delimitada mediante trazos de colores lleva a pensar en una jurisdicción político-administrativa del orden colonial, esta nunca existió, a pesar de incluso ser referida en los títulos de los mapas y, adicionalmente, tener múltiples variaciones.

Una de las primeras representaciones en las que aparece esta delimitación y denominación es *La Terre Ferme et le Perou avec le Pays des Amazones et le Bresil dans l'Amerique Meridionale* de 1702 (Figura 3). Este mapa fue realizado por el dibujante, grabador y reconocido cartógrafo y editor francés Nicolas de Fer, quien heredó de su padre Antoine de Fer el taller de mapas *Quai de L'Horloge*, regentado por su madre desde 1673 hasta 1687. Por la notoriedad de su obra, fue nombrado tres años más tarde geógrafo oficial del delfín francés, en 1702 del rey Felipe V de España y, después, de Luis XIV de Francia, así como oficial geográfico del papa Clemente XI en 1720, año en que murió.

Figura 3. Mapa de la Tierra Firme y el Perú con el País de las Amazonas y el Brasil de Nicolas de Fer, 1702, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8468651k

La prolífica producción cartográfica de De Fer es innegable, se consolidó también en atlas, aunque se destacan más los detalles artísticos que su calidad y precisión geográficas, cuestionadas en parte por la carencia de fuentes ciertas y suficientes sobre el interior conti-

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nental. No obstante, deben señalarse la inclusión de las convenciones propias de la cartografía oficial francesa que empezaba a relevar su cientificidad: la orografía indicada por perfil; la línea ecuatorial graduada; la escala en leguas y grados; la orientación con una rosa con lis en el extremo inferior derecho, y además, justo debajo de su cargo y autorización real dentro de la cartela con forma de cortinaje, las coordenadas geográficas de Panamá, Cartagena, Lima, Pernambuco y Rio de Janeiro como importantes ciudades de referencia.

Las posiciones de estas localidades fueron establecidas según el sistema de medición ptolemaico en longitudes, contando desde el primer meridiano en las Islas Canarias hacia el oriente hasta los 360° (Blanco 42). Pero el empleo de este antiguo sistema evidencia el desconocimiento por parte de De Fer del progreso cartográfico francés alcanzado en la década de 1680. Esta reforma tuvo como fundamento el método de determinación de las longitudes terrestres mediante la medida precisa de las diferencias horarias de los eclipses en diferentes meridianos, aporte del astrónomo y geógrafo de origen genovés naturalizado francés, Jean-Dominique Cassini, miembro de la Academia de Ciencias y director vitalicio del Observatorio de París, nombrado por Luis XIV.

En relación con la Amazonia representada por De Fer en su mapa de 1702, son múltiples los detalles geográficos, tanto reales como imaginarios, cuya presencia llama la atención, por cuanto son retomados de la cartografía precedente. La insularidad mítica de regiones como Guyana y Brasil, al norte y al sur del río Amazonas, por ejemplo, está presente a partir del siglo XVI como producto de la "zona de contacto" (Pratt), apropiada y reproducida desde las expectativas medievales de los conquistadores y la compleja realidad de los pueblos originarios (Ibañez). En el mapa la idea-mito de la Isla Brasil toma forma cuando se proyecta con un delineado doble la continuidad del río *Tapayes* o Tapajos hasta la laguna interior de *Xarayes*, donde nace el río Paraguay, y se explica en la nota que "se cree que este lago se comunica con el río Amazonas" (1 en la figura 4), argumento geográfico y cartográfico que incluso fue usado con fines diplomáticos (Kantor).

Por su parte, la idea-mito de la Isla Guyana se manifiesta gracias a la conexión directa entre el Amazonas y el río *Baraquan* o Negro que también desemboca en el Mar del Norte (2 en la figura 4). A pesar de la confusión, nada más y nada menos que con el río Orinoco (Blanco 42), en el medio de la ilusión insular aparece un área montañosa con una nota en la que se explica que el fondo o la parte baja de esta sierra apareció en algún viaje como un lago (3 en la figura 4), sin duda una referencia directa a Parima en el relato de sir Walter Raleigh,

el cual avivó el mito de El Dorado en la Guyana, por lo que se incluyen referentes geográficos imaginarios como el lago Cassipa y la ciudad de oro denominada Manoa (4 y 5 en la figura 4).

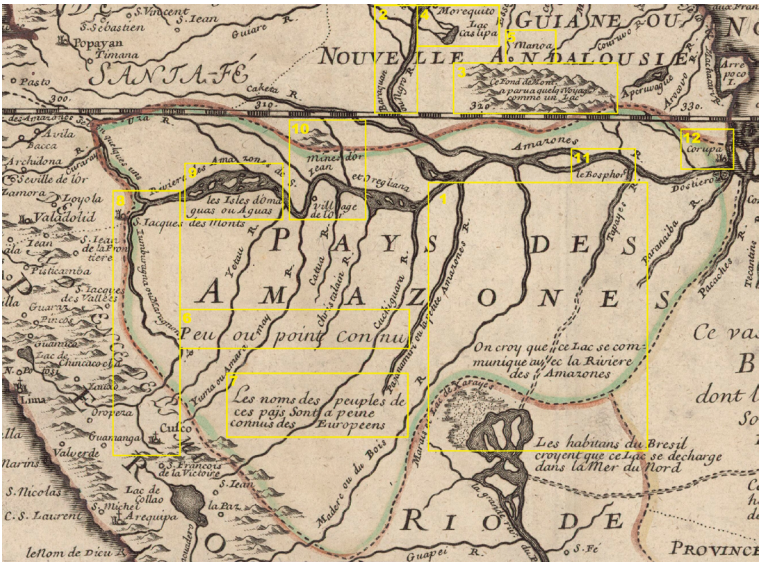

Figura 4. Detalle del País de las Amazonas en el mapa de Nicolas de Fer, 1702, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8468651k

Respecto de la emergencia del imaginado *Pays des Amazones* como unidad territorial al sur del continente, esta se enmarca con un delineado de trazo discontinuo, en cuyo borde interior con aguada de color verde se muestran el curso principal del río, parte de la cuenca norte y, sobre todo, la cuenca sur con los tributarios más importantes. Cabe destacar la nota "poco o nada conocido" (6 en la figura 4), así como la explicación de que "los europeos apenas conocen los nombres de los pueblos de este país" (7 en la figura 4). El exterior de la delineación se marca con dos bordes en aguadas de color, uno en rojo y otro en amarillo: el primero, define el área correspondiente al virreinato del Perú con las provincias de Tierra Firme al norte y Río de la Plata al sur; y el otro, "el gran país llamado Brasil". En cuanto al trazado del curso del río, parece retomarse el mapa de Sanson de 1657 (Figura 2), dado que el Marañón se encuentra con el Amazonas (8 en la figura 4), se dibujan "las islas de los Omaguas" (9 en la figura 4), las "minas de oro" y la *Village de l'Or* (10 en la figura 4), *le Bosphore* (11 en la figura 4) y la ciudad de Corupa (12 en la figura 4).

La mayor obra de Nicolas de Fer, que incluye cartografías de Europa y América con sus islas, tiene un extenso título descriptivo: "El Curioso

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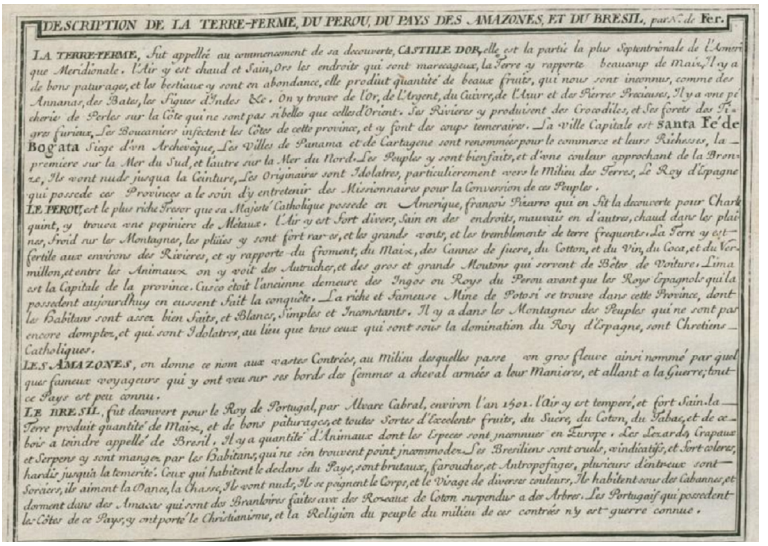
Atlas o El Mundo Representado en mapas generales y particulares del cielo y de la tierra, divididos tanto en sus cuatro partes principales como por estados y provincias, y adornados con planos y descripciones de las capitales y principales ciudades, y de los más soberbios edificios que las embellecen: como iglesias, palacios, casas de placer, jardines, fuentes, etc.". De este trabajo, hace parte el mapa del norte de América meridional de 1702, que se acompaña de rótulos informativos y, además, está indexado con una descripción geográfica textual sobre los descubrimientos, las poblaciones y, especialmente, las riquezas de la Tierra Firme, Perú, las Amazonas y Brasil (Figura 5).



DESCRIPTION DE LA TERRE-FERME, DU PEROU, DU PAYS DES AMAZONES, ET DU BRESIL, par N. de Fer.

LA TERRE-FERME, fut appellé au commencement de sa decouverte, CASTILLE DOR, elle est la partie la plus Septentrionale de l'Amerique Meridionale. L'Air y est chaud et Sain, Ores les endroits qui sont marecageux, la Terre y rapporte beaucoup de Maïs, Il y a de bons paturages, et les bestiaux y sont en abondance, elle produit quantité de beaux fruits, qui nous sont inconnus, comme des Annanas, des Dates, les Figues d'Indes &c. On y trouve de l'Or, de l'Argent, du Cuivre, de l'Azur et des Pierres Precieuses, Il y a une pescherie de Perles sur la Côte qui ne sont pas si belles que celles d'Orient. Ses Rivieres y produisent des Crocodiles, et ses forets des Rhinogres furieux, les Boucaniers infectent les Côtes de cette province, et y font des coups temeraires. La ville Capitale est santa Fé de Bogata Siege d'un Archevêque, Les Villes de Panama et de Cartagene sont renommées pour le commerce et leurs Richesses, la premiere sur la Mer du Sud, et l'autre sur la Mer du Nord. Les Peuples y sont bien faits, et d'une couleur approchant de la Brune, Ils vont nuds jusqua la Ceinture, Les Originaires sont Idolatres, particulierement vers le Milieu des Terres, le Roy d'Espagne qui possede ces Provinces a le soin d'y entretenir des Missionnaires pour la Conversion de ces Peuples.

LE PEROU, est le plus riche Tresor que sa Majesté Catholique possede en Amerique, francois Pizarro qui en fit la decouverte pour Charles Quint, y trouva une pepiniere de Metaux. L'Air y est fort divers, Sain en des endroits, mauvais en d'autres, chaud dans les plaines, froid sur les Montagnes, les pluïes y sont fort rares, et les grands vents, et les tremblements de terre frequents. La Terre y est fertile aux environs des Rivieres, et y rapporte du froment, du Maïz, des Cannes de sucre, du Cotton, et du Vin, du Coca, et du Vermillon, et entre les Animaux on y voit des Autruches, et des gros et grands Moutons qui servent de Bêtes de voiture. Lima est la Capitale de la province. Cusco etoit l'ancienne demeure des Ingas ou Roys du Perou avant que les Roys Espagnols qui la possedent aujourdhuy en eussent fait la conquête. La riche et fameuse Mine de Potosi se trouve dans cette Province, dont les Habitans sont assez bien faits, et Blancs, Simples et Inconstants. Il y a dans les Montagnes des Peuples qui ne sont pas encore domptez, et qui sont Idolatres, au lieu que tous ceux qui sont sous la domination du Roy d'Espagne, sont Chretiens Catholiques.

LES AMAZONES, on donne ce nom aux vastes Contrées, au Milieu desquelles passe un gros fleuve ainsi nommé par quelques fameux voyageurs qui y ont veu sur ses bords des femmes a cheval armées a leur Maniere, et allant a la Guerre; tout ce Pays est peu connu.

LE BRESIL, fut decouvert pour le Roy de Portugal, par Alvare Cabral, environ l'an 1501. l'Air y est temperé, et fort Sain. La Terre produit quantité de Maïz, et de bons paturages, et toutes Sortes d'excellents fruits, du Sucre, du Coton, du Tabac, et de ce bois a teindre appellé de Bresil. Il y a quantité d'Animaux dont les Especes sont inconnues en Europe. Des Lezards, Crapaus et Serpens y sont mangez par les Habitans, qui ne s'en trouvent point incommodez. Les Bresiliens sont crudes, vindicatifs, et fort colorez; ils aiment la Danse, la Chasse, Ils vont nuds, Ils se peignent le Corps, et le Visage de diverses couleurs, Ils habitent sous des Cabannes, et dorment dans des Amacas qui sont des Brankieres faites avec des Roseaux de Coton suspendus a des Arbres. Les Portugais qui possedent les Côtes de ce Pays, y ont porté le Christianisme, et la Religion du peuple du milieu de ces contrées n'y est guerre connue.

Figura 5. Descripción textual del mapa de Nicolas de Fer, 1702, Google Libros, https://books.google.com.co/books?id=hQkd2v9az9kC&pg

Sobre el espacio geográfico que se muestra como Amazonas, explica que así se llama a los vastos pueblos en medio de los cuales pasa un gran río, denominado de igual modo por algunos viajeros famosos que vieron en sus orillas a mujeres armadas para la guerra, siendo todo ese *Pays* una extensa área poco conocida. En el mapa no aparece ninguna figura exótica, pero en la información respecto del Brasil no solo se describen los gustos de los habitantes por bailar, cazar, andar desnudos, pintarse el cuerpo y la cara de varios colores, vivir en chozas y dormir en hamacas, sino que se alude al imaginario salvaje de la región cuando se emplean calificativos como crueles, vengativos, atrevidos, temerarios, brutos, feroces, antropófagos y hechiceros.

Si bien esta descripción en extenso es pionera para los atlas en general, desde finales del siglo XVI las notas etnográficas y geográficas

contribuyeron tanto a explicar detalles que se consideraban relevantes, como a llenar el vacío cartográfico del interior subcontinental, en especial de zonas desconocidas como la Amazonia. Con Nicolas de Fer, la cartografía francesa del primer tercio del siglo XVIII retomó esta práctica, que sería considerada y empleada en lo sucesivo.

4. UNA GEOGRAFÍA MÁS PRECISA EN LA *TERRA AMAZONUM*

El destacado cartógrafo francés de nombre Guillaume de L'Isle, o Delisle, no solamente incluyó en sus mapas de América del Sur anotaciones sobre aspectos geográficos e hidrográficos de varios afluentes amazónicos, sino que estas fueron el reconocimiento explícito de los resultados del método de contrastación, que empleaba en su búsqueda por la precisión cartográfica. Hijo de un reputado abogado que también enseñaba historia y geografía a la nobleza, primero dibujó mapas para las obras de su padre y perfeccionó su técnica cartográfica de la mano del reconocido astrónomo director del Observatorio de París y reformador de la cartografía francesa mencionado antes: Jean-Dominique Cassini.

La relevancia de la obra de De L'Isle desde inicios del siglo XVIII, le permitió ser maestro del delfín que se convertiría en Luis XV y recibir de este el título de *Premier Géographe du Roi* en 1718. Además, fue estudiante, profesor y miembro pleno de la *Académie Royale des Sciences*, posición desde la que adoptó nuevos principios cartográficos, los cuales significaron un reto para los editores de mapas por la introducción del uso de datos astronómicos e importantes correcciones de estos; innovadores métodos de medida a escala y georreferenciación; el empleo de una escala fija de medición para regiones vinculadas; una completa topografía, y el cuidado detallado y meticuloso de la toponimia. Todo esto, no solo contribuyó a la construcción de una imagen más realista del mundo, sino que dio paso a un nuevo sistema geográfico que, pese a sus deficiencias, marcó la transición entre la cartografía antigua y la moderna geografía francesa (Acevedo 83; Miceli 139).

Contrario a su predecesor De Fer, para De L'Isle la precisión era fundamental, por lo que confirmaba la exactitud de las fuentes y contrastaba sus datos de cada continente y país con las descripciones e información de bitácoras, crónicas de viaje y otros mapas. De este modo, registraba las discrepancias indicándolas claramente en anotaciones sobre los mapas o notas anexas publicadas en los informes de la Academia. A pesar de que nunca viajó, fue un gran geógrafo y cartógrafo de escritorio con gran calidad en su producción, basada en variedad de datos obtenidos de primera mano, gracias a una sólida red de infor-

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mantes viajeros que le mantenía actualizado de los descubrimientos recientes en el Nuevo Mundo. Por tanto, la alta calidad científica, los conocimientos actualizados y la precisión cartográfica le dieron gran ventaja sobre sus competidores, en comparación, por ejemplo, con el trabajo de la familia Sanson que continuó publicando datos errados y obsoletos (Dawson 41).

Las posesiones coloniales francesas en América fueron objeto preferente de la obra cartográfica de De L'Isle, siendo conocidos entre 1703 y 1725 varios mapas del norte subcontinental con gran detalle topográfico por la representación en perfil de bosques y montañas. Dado que las variaciones entre sus mapas eran prácticamente inexistentes en cuanto a la información geográfica contenida, aunque variaban la lengua y el uso de aguadas de color, se presentan el denominado *Carte de la terre ferme du Perou, du Brésil et du Pays des Amazones*, de 1703 (Figura 6), y la *Tabula Americae Specialis Geographica Regni Peru, Brasilis, Terra Firma e Reg. Amazonum*, de 1725 (Figura 7).

Figura 6. Mapa de la Tierra Firme, de Perú, de Brasil y del País de las Amazonas de Guillaume de L'Isle, 1703, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b531194387#

El mapa de 1725, a pesar de estar en latín, replica en su título un detalle particular de aquellos en francés que lo preceden elaborados por De Fer y De L'Isle: la referencia explícita a *Reg. Amazonum*, territorio de gran extensión que simula la forma de un escudo bor-

deado y relleno en aguada de color azul en medio del subcontinente americano (Figura 7). Esta área marcada como *Terra Amazonum*, con mayúsculas sostenidas y en negrita, abarca la cuenca amazónica tanto al norte, destacándose el contraste con el borde rojo como límite con la *Terra Firma* en la parte media de la conexión con el *Caketa* a través del *Curana l. Curiguacura h. e. aqua nigra*, al parecer el río Negro, que en su curso forma grandes islas al estar enlazado con el Amazonas por los ríos *Basururu*, *Agaranatuba*, *Yupara* y *Yurupau* (1 en la figura 8); como al sur, con los extensos ríos tributarios que nacen en los Andes peruanos. La representación cartográfica del trazado del curso del río, por su parte, mezcla algunos elementos presentes en la cartografía de Sanson y De Fer: las islas y asentamientos del pueblo Omagua (2 en la figura 8), la mina y la *Vilage de l'Or* (3 en la figura 8), *Insula Topinambes* (4 en la figura 8), *Bosphorus Amazon* (5 en la figura 8) y Corupa (6 en la figura 8).

Figura 7. Mapa Geográfico de América con el Reino de Perú, Brasil, Tierra Firme y el Reino del Amazonas de Guillaume de L'Isle, 1725, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/ btv1b85963955

Sin embargo, en contraste con el mapa de De Fer, la *Tabula* de De L'Isle resulta sobrecargada de información y detalles no solo geográficos, sino también etnográficos. En cuanto a la descripción geográfica, es innegable el reconocimiento de las costas de todo el subcontinente y la zona andina, que muestra una dinámica de ocupación casi completa, con información bastante precisa manifiesta en innu-

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merables topónimos para puertos, diferentes tipos de asentamientos y nombres de montañas; mientras que en el interior aparecen desplazamientos y fallas notorias, evidencia de "una discusión especulativa […], particularmente de la cuenca del Amazonas" (Guerrero 50).

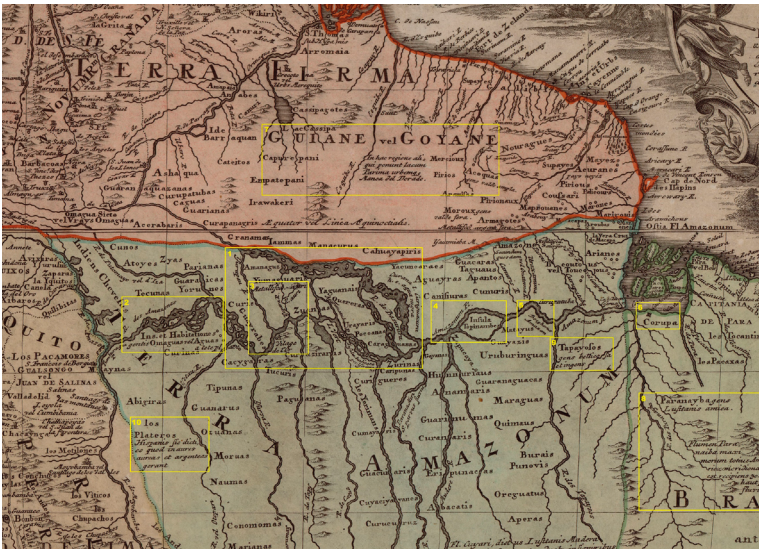

Figura 8. Detalle del curso del río en el Mapa Geográfico de América con el Reino de Perú, Brasil, Tierra Firme y el Reino del Amazonas de Guillaume de L'Isle, 1725, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/ 12148/btv1b85963955

En relación con la información etnográfica, según la declaración del mismo cartógrafo, en el ornamentado cartucho rodeado de un bello paisaje laboriosamente trabajado a plumilla, esta representación tiene como base las crónicas y los mapeos del historiador español Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, del geógrafo neerlandés Johannes [Jean] de Laet, del misionero español Cristóbal de Acuña y del padre neogranadino de origen caleño Manuel Rodríguez de Villaseñor, siendo los dos últimos reconocidos por su pertenencia a la Compañía de Jesús y dedicar sus obras al descubrimiento e historia del Gran Río. Esto explica el interés por localizar en el mapa los pueblos indígenas de la región con sus respectivos etnónimos.

A pesar de la delimitación imaginada, la *Tabula*, dibujada según una proyección de paralelos rectos y meridianos curvos, conservadora de las formas al estilo del maestro Cassini, es de gran relevancia geopolítica en la medida en que evidencia el orden territorial colonial del sur continental, al contener las audiencias de Panamá, Santafé, Quito y Charcas (Blanco 50). Es así como al norte del imaginado país se muestra en aguada de color rojo la Tierra Firme, primera entidad

continental nominal para ser conquistada, conformada por algunas audiencias, gobernaciones y provincias con jurisdicciones inestables y variables durante los siglos XVI y XVII, adscritas al virreinato del Perú y la real audiencia de Lima hasta 1739, cuando como provincia se incorporó al virreinato de Nueva Granada y la real audiencia de Santa Fe de Bogotá, de la que dependió en lo político-administrativo desde 1591 hasta 1729 la provincia de *Guiane uel Goyane*, topónimo debajo del cual aparece la anotación que reza: "En esta región algunos ubican el lago Parima y la ciudad de Manoa del Dorado" (7 en la figura 8).

Al occidente, se establece el límite en aguada de color amarillo con el reino del Perú y sus tres audiencias de norte a sur: Quito, que también pasaría a la Nueva Granada en 1739; Lima, vigente hasta 1821, y Los Charcas, que pasó a ser parte del virreinato del Río de la Plata cuando se creó en 1776. En el sur, se muestra la gobernación del Paraguay con sus provincias Chaco y Guayra. Brasil aparece en aguada de color verde, al oriente de la *Terra Amazonum*, incluyendo su denominación anterior como *Terra de Santa Croce* y algunas notas geográficas y etnográficas, como aquellas relacionadas con Paranaiba como el río "más grande de toda Suramérica que recibe otros 30 pequeños ríos" y también como "una nación amiga de los portugueses" (8 en la figura 8). Por el contrario, del lado amazónico se encuentran pueblos salvajes como los Tapayosos: "una nación guerrera e ingeniosa" (9 en la figura 8), y otros como los Plateros, "llamados así por los españoles, porque llevan oro y plata en las orejas" (10 en la figura 8), lo cual justificaría su conquista.

Con este tipo de representaciones, la cartografía francesa marcó un estilo particular para los mapas del norte de Suramérica y, sobre todo, para la región denominada "País de las Amazonas", el cual es replicado y reproducido por diferentes casas cartográficas europeas durante todo el siglo XVIII.

5. CIERRE Y CONCLUSIÓN: LA PERVIVENCIA DEL INTERÉS COLONIAL Y DEL IMAGINARIO MÍTICO

Cabe suponer que la cartografía generada por los geógrafos reales debía estar acorde con la producción de ciencia y la expansión económica coloniales como procesos coincidentes y simultáneos históricamente, los cuales tuvieron en común la mirada de la naturaleza como objeto de dominio (Restrepo 178). De esta manera, el conocimiento territorial de una región como la Amazonia resultaba potencialmente atractivo para los imperios coloniales en el contexto de la expansión transatlántica del capitalismo europeo. Así las cosas, la cartografía francesa

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consolidó entre los siglos XVII y XVIII una forma de representación, al mismo tiempo tanto política como imaginada, que le permitió posicionar su conocimiento sobre la región mediante una delimitación inventada que denominó "País de las Amazonas". No obstante, este nunca fue reconocido como territorio adscrito o soberano de ninguna de las otras potencias coloniales europeas, a pesar de la evidente presencia de intereses y representantes españoles y portugueses.

Esta estrategia representacional de carácter geopolítico, permitió mantener la ambición y el interés francés por adentrarse en la parte media de la cuenca y conquistar una mayor extensión de la Amazonia. Si bien el uso de topónimos como el de Brasil en la cartografía regional estuvo presente desde las primeras décadas del siglo XVI, y hubo intentos de delimitación de América del Sur en provincias al final de este, es posible afirmar que fue la cartografía francesa oficial de la década de 1650 la que, de la mano de Nicolas Sanson, se interesó por marcar límites jurisdiccionales con trazos en aguadas de colores y establecer un área en torno de la cuenca amazónica (Figuras 1 y 2). Y eso sin proponer ninguna denominación, como sí lo hicieron sus sucesores De Fer (Figuras 3 y 4) y De L'Isle (Figuras de 6 a 8), al incorporar el "País de las Amazonas" y preocuparse por trazar un límite respecto de las jurisdicciones coloniales vecinas, señalando además sus topónimos.

El hecho de que, hasta bien entrado el siglo XIX, perviviera en algunos mapas el imaginario cartográfico de una extensa región con límites aparentes, pero imaginados como el País de las Amazonas, es una muestra de cómo los imaginarios que permearon las representaciones amazónicas desde el siglo XVI, se lograron reinsertar en las producciones oficiales elaboradas por los geógrafos al servicio de las casas reales. Es así como un mapa de Didier Robert de Vaugondy, bisnieto de Sanson y último miembro destacado de aquella dinastía francesa de geógrafos y cartógrafos reales, reproduce la idea de una región amazónica delimitada en aguadas de color amarillo, pero sin cerrar el trazo en la parte norte (Figura 9).

En este mapa, el río Amazonas funciona como límite entre *Goyane* al norte y el *Pays de l'Amazone* al sur. Se mantiene la insularidad de Guyana, dada por la continuidad en los trazos de los ríos Amazonas, Negro y Orinoco o Paria, solo que el fabuloso y ecuatorial lago Parime se ha desplazado hacia noroeste y ahora aparece como Cassipa, y al oriente cerca a una zona montañosa otro lago mucho más pequeño: el Amapá. Sobre el curso al norte y desde la cuenca media del río hacia el oriente, Vaugondy sitúa las misiones portuguesas, para dejar a las españolas ocupando solo la parte alta cercana a los Andes. De esta situación

geográfica se infiere la aceptación por parte de los franceses del control y dominio ejercidos por los portugueses en la zona por la que hasta mediados del siglo XVIII competían y mostraban interés.

Figura 9. Mapa de Tierra Firme, Perú, Brasil, País de Amazonas de Robert de Vaugondy, 1778, https://antique-maps.lt/product/1778-vaugondy-ferme-perou-bresil/

Finalmente, es imposible no pensar que el "País de las Amazonas", como lo mencionó De Fer en el texto explicativo del mapa incorporado en su atlas de 1702 (Figura 5), evoca el mito fundacional respecto de las guerreras que resistieron la invasión europea, asociado por demás con la condición salvaje de sus habitantes. Por su supuesto los conquistadores proyectaron en el Nuevo Mundo sus imaginarios después de experimentar un enfrentamiento armado con guerreras indias, o mejor indios de cabello largo y, desde luego, sin senos, en los que creyeron ver a las míticas amazonas (Durán). Sin embargo, la *Terra Amazonum*, adaptación del topónimo en latín del *Pays des Amazones* en francés, también lleva a pensar en lo desconocido, exótico y extraño del *paysage* (paisaje) amazónico, así como en los *paysans* (campesinos, paisanos o léase pueblos originarios) que aún habitan como comunidades organizadas este enorme espacio geográfico aún por descubrir.

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The Country of the Amazons: an imagined delimitation in French colonial cartography of 18th century

Abstract: Since the mid-16th century, cartographic representations of the New World included a large river that crossed the southern continent from east to west. Despite names such as Santa María de la Mar Dulce or Río de Orellana, in reference to the Spanish captain who led the expedition that made its hazardous discovery in 1542, a mythical European reference ended up prevailing: the Amazons River. This hydronym also became the toponym that since then refers to the extensive basin defined by the wide main channel with its innumerable tributaries. Nevertheless, during the colonial domination period, none of the European empires used the term "Amazon" to officially name any of their jurisdictions in America. Then the aim is to demonstrate how French cartography produced during the 18th century constantly presented and reproduced an imagined territorial delimitation marked as "the Country of the Amazons", probably in accordance with the French colonial interest in establishing a presence in the region disputed mainly by the Spanish and Portuguese. Although, in the end, such delimitation was just another product of the colonial geographic imagination and, specially, of the mythical imaginaries associated with the region since its discovery.

Keywords: ancient cartography, history of cartography, geographic imagination, Amazons Country, colonial representations

Resumen: Desde mediados del siglo XVI las representaciones cartográficas del Nuevo Mundo incluyeron un gran río que atravesaba el sur continental de oriente a occidente. A pesar de nombres como Santa María de la Mar Dulce o Río de Orellana, en honor al capitán español que lideró la expedición de su azaroso descubrimiento en 1542, terminó imponiéndose un referente mítico europeo: el río de las Amazonas. Este hidrónimo se transformó además en el topónimo que desde entonces refiere la extensa cuenca definida por el ancho cauce principal con sus innumerables afluentes y tributarios. Sin embargo, durante el periodo de dominación colonial ninguno de los imperios europeos empleó el término "Amazonas" para denominar oficialmente alguna de sus jurisdicciones en América. No obstante, se pretende mostrar cómo en la cartografía francesa producida durante el siglo XVIII se presentó y reprodujo de forma constante una delimitación territorial imaginada marcada como "País de las Amazonas", probablemente en correspondencia con el interés colonial francés de hacer presencia en la región disputada principalmente por españoles y portugueses. Aunque, finalmente, tal delimitación fue tan solo un producto más de la imaginación geográfica colonial y, en especial, de los imaginarios míticos asociados a la región desde su descubrimiento.

Palabras clave: cartografía antigua, historia de la cartografía, imaginación geográfica, País de las Amazonas, representaciones coloniales

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NEW AMERICAN GRAND TOURS AND TRAVEL NARRATIVES OF VIDEO BLOGGERS
Leisure, Cultural Myths and Crisis Management in Visual Storytelling

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INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH FIELD AND RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Neither were Americas the destination of the historic Grand Tours nor were Americans their protagonists. This was a very European idea: the tours were undertaken by Europeans (to become worthy of the name of a comprehensively educated person), and it was Europe that was both the destination and the object of interest (Mączak, *Odkrywanie Europy*; Adler, "Origins of Sightseeing"). This process gained strength in the Renaissance and Baroque periods and has been continued to some extent in various forms to this day, although the term itself is used to denote 16th- and 17th-century educational journeys of young noblemen for whom the Grand Tour (i.e. distant and long-lasting) was to be a liminal experience, a rite of passage into adulthood, also in the sense of acquiring a variety of cultural experiences, acquaintances and good manners, as well as comprehensive knowledge useful in a further professional career (Mączak, *Peregrynacje*).

Today's educational trips rarely have this versatile and in-depth nature, tourism has become an area of mass consumption (Urry), and the ease and speed of transport does not necessarily deepen the reflections of young travelers. However, if today one seeks for a culturally common form of a long journey and the accompanying reflection similar to the Grand Tour phenomenon, one should focus on the blogosphere, and particularly the vlogosphere. Vlogs are a kind of culturally sanctioned form of contemporary description of the world, which take into account dominant media formats and narrative formulas answering to the needs of contemporary participants of the communication process. In the 16th and 17th centuries a similar function was performed by journals and travel memoirs filled with descriptions of both real

and imagined experiences in distant countries, to the delight of various circles of recipients, for whom they constituted a kind of literature with educational and at the same time entertainment values, and often also with a community-forming dimension (Maj, *Media w podróży*). Today, all these functions are fulfilled by the vlogosphere: providing knowledge, entertainment, but also a sense of belonging to specific virtual communities.

Although the vlogosphere as an area of cultural practice is a relatively new space, related to the technical capabilities of the post-2005 Internet (the emergence of YouTube) and the rapid transmission of images and the development of mobile media in the last two decades, it is nevertheless an area of continuous redefinition of communication behavior by means of new technologies. We witness the appearance of new platforms (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, etc.) and links with other services and social networks, new technical possibilities, such as the use of drones, video streaming, incorporation of artificial intelligence in video transmission or the emergence of AI-based virtual influencers competing with people for the attention of recipients, and all of them are accompanied by new cultural patterns (Ameen et al.). In this context, not only are the mass social phenomenon and the influencer marketing industry developing, but also the research on them (in marketing, psychology, media studies, sociology, etc.). Researchers try to describe the complexity of the phenomenon of network gatekeeping, which includes the creation of network video narratives (vlogs)—they create influencer typologies and conduct research on the relationship between creators and recipients of this type of content, as well as attempts to model effective communication behavior in this area (Chung & Cho 481–495). It is noted that various vlogs perform different functions, and the popularity of the message or their authors does not necessarily translate into the success of the brand and the product they advertise (Magno & Cassia 288–290).

In this study I focus on Polish vloggers' activities and manners of telling stories which belong to European narratives of contemporary travelers using new media and typical for this genre narrative forms. A certain visibility of cultural myths and stereotypes can be correctly identified primarily in one's own cultural space, which is the main reason for this choice of the research subject. Another issue is the participation of the studied group in a wider community of global media users and, to some extent, universal pop culture dominated by American content. Perhaps (and this is my hypothesis) this is why America, or rather the Americas, often become a Grand Tour destination—although long journeys can also concern Asia or Australia, they are of a different

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nature than the ones around the Americas, which verify the identity of Europeans and demythicize cultural messages of the Western world. In this study I argue that for Polish vloggers, America still functions as a symbol of a Grand Tour to the land of freedom, where human resourcefulness and entrepreneurship are not limited and everything is possible. Even if they do not perceive any of these distant continents as a paradise (which was common for the 19th-century Polish immigrants from Galicia to the US) or as hell (this is how Polish immigrants perceived Brazil at that time) (Szejnert), today, despite numerous crises and better knowledge of the world, North America (or rather Canada and the US) remains a symbol of success and freedom, whereas South America and Central America—a symbol of exotic adventure and encounter with nature.

The Americas constitute a world that is close and distant at the same time, both in terms of geography and culture. Europeans' travels around both of the continents bear the hallmarks of a double clash of civilizations and of confrontation with one's own ideas created on the basis of contacts with the media and culture of the Americas. Contact with the media is of paramount importance for modern travelers: primarily with the Internet (especially forums and films) and with film productions reproducing the American dream, mythicizing and demythicizing it at the same time. Today, the journey to the western hemisphere is primarily a clash with the myth of America and simultaneously a story about the role of a blogger as a narrator consolidating their audience and network community in the role of subjects looking behind the horizon and behind the scenes of the "real America."

In the web stories North America functions primarily as a place of encounters with wildlife and vast areas of the far North in Canada or the central states of the US, but also of a clash with the images of the metropolis, headed by New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Washington, which constitute specific texts of modern mass culture, such as images produced in Hollywood. It is also a confrontation with the cultural differences of the multicultural but primarly Anglo-Saxon world, exposing the aspect of proximity and paradoxical cultural distance.

Travels to Mexico and Mesoamerica are of a different nature: the experience of contact with ancient monuments is mixed with a series of multi-sensory experiences of the richness of nature and contemporary culture, although often perceived through the prism of folk culture and cultural traditions. These elements are also characteristic of experiencing South America, along with its diversity and exoticism

(or different exoticisms ("The Tourist Image," Segalen, Yu)), which can undoubtedly be attractive to the recipients of videoblogs also in the visual or cognitive aspect.

ON METHODOLOGY

The research is based on the triangulation of methods used in the cultural studies area: compositional and content analysis of audiovisual messages (Rose, Monaco, Bergstroem, Lutz & Collins), narratology (Propp, Ball, Tkaczyk) and netnography or digital ethnography (Pink, Kozinets, Jemielniak). Combining several methods allows for simultaneous examination of the digital message from different perspectives (content analysis and narratology) and determining which elements have a community- and worldview-forming value (through studying a network community). This combination makes it possible to examine the complexity of the communication situation in which a travel vlog assumes a role of the message.

Compositional and content analysis enables understanding the process in which an audiovisual message is created on the technical level (film and photography, music and sound, or montage). Narratology adds the value of deepening the analysis by giving the ideas about the presented story, its cultural and emotional content, on the screenplay level (the temporal composition and the dynamics of the narrative resulting from the story told, which are accompanied by cinematic means of time—management such as editing, motion or tempo). Narratology gives—broader than the film production—a cultural heritage perspective, the connection between digital narratives and other historically and culturally based narratives (myths, traditional media stories and their types, heroes and toposes). Netnography gives the third perspective, an anthropological understanding of the social context of the communication process. It allows one to understand the interactive and technology-based process of creating the narrations and virtual communities around it. It drives attention to the fact that the communication leader has to formulate the main characteristic of the community values and rules of communication within the group. Being a communication leader (vlogger–traveler or other type of influencer) means something more than simply gatekeeping or trying to become a social media celebrity. The role of the communication leader is similar to the community creator, enabling globally dispersed people to gather around a common "digital fire" for storytelling, gossiping and value creation.

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Compositional and content analysis tools that were used include 1) the analysis of the language of the medium: frames, editing, light, contrast, colors, movement, movements of the camera, sound, audio-visual effects, and other film and photography language means; 2) the analysis of the creative process, analysis of the context of creation and dissemination and the compositional analysis of selected frames from selected video materials; 3) the content analysis of video materials (what is shown, how often, in what order and perspective and how), the analysis of the gazes and their cultural meaning in the AV material; 4) comparative analysis of film means used on different platforms.

These methods have been widely used in film and media studies and art history for years. Nevertheless, they are developing together with new media digital language and new functionalities on different platforms. The paper presents conclusions from the analyses mentioned above. Regular observations of the given vlog had been carried out for three years in several intense few-month sessions in which various aspects were researched (2021–2023). For this study, the most important were content analysis and comparative analysis. The analyses of certain AV materials on the level of technical means, especially the use of film language, and the analysis of the creative process and its contexts were treated as additional analytical tools which helped to understand the specificity of the presented YouTube channel.

Narratological tools used here are the analysis of the storytale elements and characteristics of the story, its protagonists, types of dynamics, storytelling techniques and marketing effects, and comparative analysis of the storytelling on different platforms. These methods have been widely used in anthropology and folklore studies and literary studies, and—recently—in marketing studies and marketing new practices, especially in the context of digital narratives in social media. The analysis of storytelling in the vlogosphere had been conducted for three years in several sessions and concentrated on various videoblog channels and AV materials. For this study, the analysis was necessary on the level of identification of presented and promoted ideas and the ways of telling the story of American and global problems (intercultural dialogue, perception of the Americas and their subregions or specific American countries by the Western societies, tourism and the media, culture & nature, ecology and overlanding travels).

Netnography or digital ethnography tools used here include virtual communities analysis, analysis of acts of communication, types of interaction, specific behaviors and reactions of the leader/gatekeeper, roles in the community, problem-solving in the community, community values and rules, typical and atypical behaviors,

comparative analysis of interactions on different platforms. Ethical problems connected with the analysis include the informal character of communication of specific individuals, the necessity of anonymization, the dependence of content and the community communication on the platform provider. The steps for netnographic analysis included the formulation of the research problem, identification of the virtual community for observation, observation and preparation of the notes, systematic analysis for a particular time (here, three one-month sessions of systematic observation plus the analysis of the public record of communication acts from the channel history), the formulation of the theses, the verification of observations and conclusions. The method is used in digital media studies and anthropology or marketing studies and is the newest method used for complex analysis of virtual communities. Here it was applied to understand what is essential in the communication process to formulate the virtual community around a vlogging traveler, the specific role of the chosen influencers (expert, opinion leader and community creator), and the communication tools they use to obtain their goals. This level of analysis allows for understanding of the relationship between the vlogger as gatekeeper and their virtual community as an audience and, thus, the dissemination of the ideas of cultural dialogue, sustainability, freedom, patriotism and so on.

Using several analytical methods does not allow for very detailed presentation of all stages of the analytical process in one essay, therefore I have focused on presenting the results of the analyses instead. However, it permits a better understanding of the complexity of connections between the medium and its language, the technology itself, the messages, the story and its creator, the values and ideas, and the people who gather around a particular vlogger to create a community for specific reasons.

TYPES OF TRAVELS AND TRAVEL STORYTELLING

The analyzed material allows to distinguish various narrative ways used by vloggers to build audience engagement through creating the narrative tension and controlling it. The topics referred here include the paradoxes stemming from the clash or confusion between the time for leisure and the time for work, as well as the necessity of multitasking, constantly observing and telling about the observations. All activities of a vlogger, even free discovery and crisis management, turn out to be not only a participant observation (a paradox of field work well-known in anthropology) but also self-reflexive partici-

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pant meta-observation. The categories of "spontaneity" and "crisis" in the context of vlog narrative thus become problematic, because the boundary between improvisation and staging is fluid.

Visual storytelling as a narrative method has both limitations and technical conditioning, which must be accompanied by awareness of the medium language. The analyses indicate that this awareness among travel vloggers is built gradually, with different dynamics, we can also often observe some progress from amateur to semi-professional or even professional work. However, this requires time and commitment or technical support from a skilled film crew, whose existence is usually meticulously concealed in the context of travel narrations. The vlogger's materials cannot remind the audience of a film or television production, as this could expose the vlogger as a media actor (Feng et al., Chung & Cho 481–495).[1] Meanwhile, the unwritten condition for the community to follow a given vlogger is to trust them as a bottom-up authority, a human being "like us," who could be a companion of (our) journeys. Credibility and simplicity are the basis of the authority of the sender understood in this way (Maj 1–13).[2]

The implementation of the vlogger's message depends on the author's approach, but also on the style of traveling, observed by Adler ("Travel," 1382–1383) and the level of professionalism of the vlogger-traveler activity. Several attitudes can be distinguished here that allow for the creation of travel typologies similar to traditional typologies (as described by Podemski 208–316), which in the context of online activities can be combined with various types of influencing, as Morteo suggests. In the Polish vlogosphere, one can also indicate various types of approaches to the subject of traveling, including the American journey. The review of popular Polish travel vlogs dealing with "trips to America" or "travels around Americas" allows to indicate several dominant trends of traveling and of online audiovisual narrative

1 Although there are many models for vloggers narrations, the concept of trust and authenticity is the most important here, especially in the context of giving advice or documentary relation from a certain destination. It does not mean that the question of film production or film equipment is not important or often addressed (the films are the proofs that the gear is of a certain quality), or that there are not different types of narrations on YT—but they are less successful in the context of traveling and creating community around travels as a subject. This is typical for general relations between influencers in social media and their public.

2 In the case of the most successful Polish travel vlogs which create the strong and supportive virtual community it seems that professionalism at a certain level is required, but it cannot exceed the specific "uncanny valley" of the network media message, which cannot be too similar to its model genre reference, i.e. television message.

about traveling (mainly on YouTube, but also on Instagram, Patronite or Twitter).

The exploratory type of traveling and travel storytelling can be indicated—it is important to cover a long-distance route in this case. It is a kind of Grand Tour in terms of distance, duration, effort and cost, but also of the promise of the reward (in the form of in-depth knowledge of the world and extraordinary experiences) (Kerckhove 66).[3] It is most often overlanding in America or Americas—traversing one and/or two (three) continents (e.g. *Busem przez świat* [Around the world by van]: "Through 3 Americas in a van," *PoDrodze* [OntheWay]: "Arkady Fiedler: both Americas in a small Fiat"), and not a real exploration of unknown lands (of which there are few left in the world today). Overlanding allows for a certain freedom and contingency of travel, which is *de facto* not included in extreme trips, the purpose of which is to implement a specific plan or sports goal (and everything is subordinated to them).

The second type of traveling and travel storytelling can be called a cultural journey or a cultural analysis. A clash of civilizations, sometimes a conflict, or all cultural differences and situations of surprise are exposed here. They can result from both similarities and differences between cultures, such as similarities and differences in terms of space, technical solutions or cultural patterns that are revealed during encounters with people. They are emphasized and subjected to a more or less in-depth analysis by the narrator (who acts as an authority) and then often by the narrator's audience. A cultural dialogue is also an important element of travel ideology, and the essence of traveling is curiosity—thus, trying to interpret a foreign culture is one of the most important challenges facing the vlog narrator and the recipients. The type of this narrative applies both to travels to Canada and the US, as well as to countries in South and Central America.

The third type of traveling and travel storytelling is an original video diary (it applies to beginners as well as advanced vloggers followed by a large community that demands materials, it is created every day). It is focused on the author and their interpretation of the world, as well as on constant contact with the audience. Life in exile combined with traveling constitutes another type, i.e. a grand trip (related to work or education) and tourism as part of it. This is the way a lot of vloggers start their activity, which then evolves in a specific direction. Another type is traveling in search of traces of Polishness (familiarity)

3 The so-called *cliffhanger effect* which helps to attract the audience's attention and follow long multi-element stories is also important.

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in foreign countries. This is a grand topic of discovering the traces of various generations of immigrants and meeting them, sometimes it is combined with assistance to local communities. Distinct types of vlogs include: a journey focused on tourist values (a guidebook style) and a journey with aesthetic dominance.

This list can probably be continued endlessly, but my primary goal is to indicate the most common threads and types of narratives. They are sometimes mixed in different proportions by different authors within one vlog (video) or channel (series). The question of typology can also be approached differently, leaving aside the goals or features of the narrative and the journey itself. However, it seems that while, for instance, sociological factors can be important for the audience in the process of projection-identification, the types of narrative present higher analytical value than the sociometric indicators.

In the context of cultural and media analysis the most interesting seem to be those journeys and narratives which include certain elements of cultural analysis or at least an original attempt to interpret the world. They demonstrate different qualitative levels in the sense of deepening (or lack of deepening) the author's knowledge on a given topic, they represent different styles of both the journey itself and the communication with the recipients. Some authors have educational background and knowledge that allow them to deepen their reflection, others consider it unessential, choosing an affective approach to cultural differences and the journey itself (it is important for them to feel the world and others, to share their travel impressions). The latter approach is much more common, although in the case of long journeys, which one needs to prepare for, the former approach is also found. The cultural capital of a vlogger and their age (maturing into a story and a tendency to reflect) are not insignificant, either.

Busem przez świat and *Planeta Abstrakcja* seem to be an interesting material for the analysis of travel vlogs. I find the sociological similarity of the authors (two couples of similar age, educated, from a medium or large city) interesting—this correspondence, however, does not generate the same stories, as I will try to demonstrate in the following analysis. Both vlogs can be classified as culture-oriented, with an element of the author's interpretation of the world, but the former goes in an aesthetic direction, while the latter can be seen even as anthropological.

BUSEM PRZEZ ŚWIAT: "INDIANS ARE SUCH A SAD STORY TODAY" (LEWANDOWSKI #23)

The biggest challenge is undoubtedly storytelling about foreign cultures, and vloggers deal with this task in various ways, e.g. by talking to immigrants—and in the case of Polish vloggers, America abounds in Polish diasporic resources. Such meetings are both helpful and add an element of a story depicting a happy protagonist who immigrated to the land of freedom or exoticism. At the same time, in the case of *Busem przez świat*, it can be said that such meetings dominate, and therefore contacts with foreign culture are largely mediated.

Busem przez świat, created by Karol and Ola Lewandowski, is a travel vlog created in various corners of the world, including a significant "van journey through 3 Americas," which is divided into 3 stages. The vloggers have already traveled by van around the US and have even published a guidebook "US for 8 dollars a day," therefore they consider themselves experts. This is an example of a low budget trip, a kind of camping or overlanding, with frequent overnight stays at places belonging to Polish diaspora representatives. On each trip the vloggers take a few of their fans/recipients who went through auditioning. The vlog is assisted by a film editor who accompanies the van team. Editing is one of the greatest assets of this vlog: it provides the audience with a video-clip atmosphere, because the vlog is actually an aesthetic musical and visual compilation with short sequences of Karol's comments.

The Polish diaspora in America constitutes one of the main topics, starting from the first 15 episodes addressing preparation of the van and the life of the Polish diaspora in Chicago. The analyses are cursory, lacking real depth, the perspective is rather typical of tourists. In addition, visual stereotypes prevail: shots from highways and urban roads in the US, shots of beautiful nature in Canada. Similarly in terms of the subject matter: the US in vloggers' materials is shown as a country of freedom and successful businesses, full of nice, helpful people, Canada is wild but beautiful and Canadians certainly hunt for bears and fish on the ice. Polish diaspora is presented as resourceful and energetic. Of course, there are also First Nations (Lewandowski #23).[4]

4 "We are at the Center for Indian Culture in Canada. When you think about Indians, you probably associate Indians more with the US than with Canada, but the truth is that Indians are not only in the States, but also in Canada. What is more, American Indians came from Canadian Indians because this migration arrived from the north. When Europeans think about Indians, they most often imagine Pocahontas and the history of happy people, but actually the history of

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Busem przez świat is not created by cultural scientists, although undoubtedly the vloggers have some aspirations. They often try to show the world through the prism of interpreting a foreign culture, although the dominant experience of traveling in their case consists in meetings with the Polish community, who helps vloggers at many stages of their journey. The authors skillfully talk about their adventures, using an aesthetic and exploratory approach, complemented by a tourist experience: visiting parks and museums, attractive cities and monuments. They build engagement through the video clip editing of beautiful handheld and drone shots, showing the vloggers on the move, a car from above (in a style reminiscent of car commercials—a vehicle in an empty landscape of majestic mountains or lakes, etc.), but also through a monologue in front of the camera. The narrator is invariably Karol, who is the face and the voice of the vlog, Ola completes the narrative with her presence, sometimes with a commentary, but stays mainly in the background.

In the episode from Wanuskewin Heritage Park, when talking about First Nations, Karol does not address his argument to experts, clearly he is not an expert either.[5] Therefore, he does not use the term "First Nations," but "Indians," being completely unaware of the rejection of this term by both the subjects of the speech, Canadian society and the official state, as well as by academic discourse. However, this does not prevent him from conducting a pop-cultural version of the lecture for the interested community. At the same time, he reveals his ignorance mentioning *Pocahontas* as the main source of his knowledge. Interestingly, although he does not tell anything revelatory, he engages the viewers on a visual level as if he were unveiling a secret. He speaks straight to the camera in a slightly lowered tone, at a close-up. The text

Indians from the last few centuries is not a happy story. Firstly, when white people invaded their lands, most of them were killed, and secondly, the white took away their rights, took away their lands, which have not all been returned to them to this day. Now the Indians have many more rights, they also have benefits, they also get apartments and in general their life should be much better, but there is such a problem with them that the Indians lost the meaning of life. Indians used to live to survive, they lived to hunt animals, to have something to eat, to have a roof over their heads, to maintain a family and today, when they get a roof over their heads, when they get benefits, when they can buy food with it, they don't really know what to do. If you add alcohol problems, drug problems, it turns out that Indians are a very unhappy nation today, and a very high percentage of people in prisons are people of Indian origin, and there is a very high percentage of suicides among Indians, so, Indians today is a rather sad story."

5 In this sense his narration is typical for the era of "Internet experts" or "YouTube experts," in which the authority is at least questionable and the sense of the word has been devaluated.

is not prepared or memorized, at least in part it is the result of his reflections on the spot, although probably the topic of the argument, as well as the purpose of the visit to the museum were planned in advance. Even if this text has significant faults for a cultural scientist, it builds the community involvement. The comments include reflections on the White–Native American relationship or violence recorded in the history of conquering the territories of today's United States and Canada by the colonizers. This thread, started in episode 23 from Canada, returns in episode 68 from the US, in the context of the Crazy Horse Memorial built by a Polish sculptor. It is worth noticing that this episode simultaneously presents the theme of "Indian patriotism" or struggle for cultural identity preservation (in the context of the Crazy Horse Memorial story), as well as American patriotism (in the context of Mount Rushmore and the sculptures of four US presidents), and the community in the comments combined them with Polish patriotism, although the vloggers themselves only suggested this in the title of the story (the little-known story of the Polish sculptor Korczak Ziółkowski was quoted very efficiently) (Lewandowski #68). The thread of intertwined Polish and First Nations fates also returns in the story of the Pole Staszek, who became the "white chief of an Indian tribe" (Lewandowski, "How a POLE").

Discussions and the community involvement are very important: it is thanks to them that the vlog makes sense in terms of communication and gets funding.[6] It is also a testimony to the skills of the senders: they are manifested both in the way they invite community members to travel and in promoting their activity through small gifts, e.g. postcards from Alaska, on the basis of mutual exchange ("comment, share, like") (Lewandowski #24). Netnographic observations confirm that the *Busem przez świat* community, just like the vloggers, mixes mythization with demythization and remythization of White–Native American relations ("Busem przez świat," online discussion).[7]

6 As in the case of the most popular Polish travel vlogs the funding is the mixture of Patronite crowdfunding and sponsoring, ad revenue and other incomes (selling books or gadgets, tickets for meetings and screenings).

7 Several examples of such mythization, demythization and remythization: "@PawelA92: Indians vs Europeans and Aborigines vs Europeans are actually almost identical stories @hrabiakusiu: talking about the problems that Indians have, that is, that they end up in prisons, that they have problems with alcohol, that they have lost the purpose of life, etc. all of this resemble the stories about the aborigines in Australia peterkmita3383: As for the Indians...they have benefits and free medical care, but it's only true for those who live in reservations.....The Indians who live among Canadians are normal tax payers, etc…. @mattkowalski2213: Indians living in Canada have two citizenships: Canadian and American, they

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PLANETA ABSTRAKCJA: "»THEY TOOK US FROM OUR HOMES BY FORCE«" (MICUCH, "ARCTIC")

Borys and Ola Micuch, who host the *Planeta Abstrakcja* channel, are undoubtedly able to approach the topic of multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue differently. Moreover, they sometimes address difficult topics, such as the history of various ethnic conflicts, wars, prisons and forced labor camps (e.g. in Siberia) or—as in the case of the episode from the Nunavut region in Canada—difficult history of the Canadian–Inuit relationship. The vlog is more than a guidebook or a holiday footage. The travelers, as their audience notices, present their stories with anthropological passion and the skills of professional documentary filmmakers. The vlog structure frequently helps to introduce the topic: from partner conversations between the authors (both of them have a voice and interpret reality here), to Borys' voice-over commentary accompanying shots of a given place, to interviews. Even if the interviews are partially accidental (because the authors are undoubtedly open to improvisation), they are always carefully selected and reveal new aspects of local reality, which—combined with other fragments of the video—give a mosaic image of a given place. A particular problem is often presented in a multifaceted way owing to several interlocutors. What helps here is the travelers' undoubted talent for accosting the locals and drawing them into the conversation, as well as their openness to the unexpected (Micuch, "Arctic").[8]

do not pay taxes and have access to schools absolutely for free. If they want to learn to fly a plane, the government gives them a possibility; they live in the north. They have flight vouchers. Flights by plane. To a medical centre, etc. @PostapokaliptyczniePRZEZSWIAT: the Indians were simply part of the ecosystem and the white man ripped them out of it like weeds ;/ we destroyed a beautiful culture" [selected by AM].

8 "We heard that when it comes to statistics here in Nunavut, the crime rate is more than 5 times higher than in other parts of Canada. Most of this crime takes place in homes. And do you feel safe here? –As a rule yes, although there are such places, which are basically meeting centers for people, I would say, with the problem of homelessness or some addictions... – They are often from such families where trauma is transmitted from generation to generation, resulting from the so-called residential schools. [off] Residential schools were boarding schools compulsory for indigenous people. The schools were run by the church and the Canadian government until the end of the 1990s. They were created to enlighten and convert the Inuit and First Nations. Children at a very young age were forcibly taken from their parents and kept at schools for many years to be indoctrinated. Sexual abuse, violence, and other forms of abuse were commonplace in residential schools, moreover, the children were starved, sometimes to death. Bodies of about 6,000 Inuit children have been discovered in mass graves. Today, a person who finished a residential school is not called a graduate,

Not only do the vloggers demonstrate their knowledge of the subject matter, clearly supported by previous readings and research, but they also show sensitivity to minor linguistic differences or the ability to listen to the interviewees. The conversation of vloggers introduces the audience to the topic which is then addressed in a comment, and later elaborated on in a conversation with the protagonist of a given story, who understands the problem in depth, and their life functions as a kind of testimony. The vloggers' conversation takes place in a backroom or in the parking lot in front of the store, but the next sequence consists of shots presenting from a distance the capital of Nunavut shrouded in white snow, then in the scene accompanied by the commentary concerning the history of residential schools a symbolic graffiti (large-format colorful faces of Inuits) is shown in a pictorial layer, finally there is an interview with an Inuit woman and her story. Owing to this, the presented statistics depicting dramatic social situation in Nunavut are given a human face (the image and the narrative combine in the figure of a real human being, a representative of the history and the problem).

This type of visual narrative allows the viewers to focus on the more intelectually demanding parts of the footage (earlier and later there are less serious sequences—shopping and a ride in a sleigh on a frozen bay, where we see traditional views, endless snow-covered landscapes, sledges with Inuits drawn by huskies—they intertwine with various difficult stories throughout the episode, which is typical of this vlog). The recipients may relax at times, but in general they remain focused because their attention is not distracted by unnecessary visual or narrative elements, all sequences in some way combine to describe the difficult environment (extreme cold) and the people together with their

but a survivor. Both the Canadian government and recently Pope Francis apologized for the harm done to the First Nations. We talk about the school traumas to a member of the Nunavut Parliament, the mayor of the small town of Cambridge Bay, who also describes herself as a residential school survivor. —[interview] "A plane arrived to take the children to residential schools. And I remember when my sister and I got off the bus and she looked at me and said in our language: 'No matter what, don't speak our language, just say yes to them. I was lucky to have siblings with me who helped me. One of the things we lacked in the residential school was contact with our parents. We didn't have our parents with us. When I was first taken away, I was 4 years old. We were there from August to June. When we got home, my sister said, 'Go to Mom and Dad.' And I said, 'They're not my parents.' I was only 5 years old. Imagine what my parents felt when I said I didn't know them. When I had my own children, I had to learn to be a parent from scratch. I couldn't watch my parents being parents. So it's seeping… The trauma of residential school survivors impacts their children and their grandchildren."

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problems. The whiteness of the landscape is not only a counterpoint to the words of the commentary and conversations or interviews with several interlocutors, it becomes a separate protagonist.

The comments of the community testify to the fact that such an approach is very appreciated by the audience, who call the bloggers real documentary filmmakers or even "the new Tony Halik and Elżbieta Dzikowska" (i.e. compare them to the most famous Polish travelers of the Polish People's Republic and their television reports from all over the world). This proves that the American experience does not have to revolve around typical topics such as tourists' visits to New York and Los Angeles or Yellowstone and Grand Canyon, and a vlog can provide specific knowledge about certain community or social problem, also at the level of an academic lecture or a documentary film, quoting sources and relevant research.

PLANETA ABSTRAKCJA: "»IT'S LIKE PARADISE HERE«" (MICUCH, "PARADISE")

Similar documentary values are provided by the vloggers' materials from Brazil. Showing the meetings with the Polish diaspora, the vloggers present here stories about the difficult history and poor living conditions of the 19th century Polish immigrants in Brazil. The vlog gives a multifaceted insight into the important cultural problem of the Polish diaspora "forgotten by country" for many years and recently "rediscovered" to Polish national consciousness.

An obvious advantage is deepening the vloggers' and their recipients' knowledge about the problems of the local community and its history,[9] but it should be added that the interviews with the grandchildren of immigrants (aged 80–100) conducted for the purposes of the video have, in fact, a documentary value for the Polish culture of this region and Polish culture in general.[10] Thus this American travel becomes a Grand Tour both in spatial and in temporal sense: it is performed in order to learn and to teach, to get and pass further the knowledge to the virtual community.

9 This vlog from Brazil takes on a community-forming aspect, from deepening acquaintanceship through bilateral visits (it is the second visit of the vloggers to the city of Àurea), invitation to Poland (they invite the Àurea representative to Poland to spend time with their family), to supporting the community in the efforts to build the Polish cultural center in Àurea (by crowdfunding on Patronite and participating in writing an application to Polish Ministry of Culture for financial help).

10 Vloggers also often become witnesses of history: whether it is the war in Ukraine, or the pandemic, and in the American context, Pele's funeral or riots in Venezuela. However, not all vloggers have enough skills to use it.

In the Polish travel vlogosphere, it is the vloggers from the *Planeta Abstrakcja* and *Bez Planu* channels who most often play the role of documentary filmmakers, talking about matters important for the identity of the visited nations, sometimes risking their own health or life.[11] Difficult topics are of course interesting to the audience, but as a consequence they may not only bring a chance for good material, but also an unnecessary risk. *Planeta Abstrakcja* raises this issue in the last part of the footage from Brazil (presenting a story about the theft of a phone during New Year's Eve and an earlier assault with a gun, and talking about their ambivalent feelings towards different countries). The topic is triggered by the community itself by asking questions about the authors' approach to risk, about their fatigue or burnout, about the attacks and reactions to them, about the things they do not like (Micuch, "Robbed in Brazil").[12]

The footage contains colloquial, spoken language, often containing errors that the authors do not remove in editing. We get a kind of "RAW version" of the video material, which resembles anthropological "notes from the field." There are frequent conversations between the vloggers about a given topic, interviews with people on the street, both with friends and strangers. However, the topic is always well-thought-out and well-documented, initial observations and textbook information provided in the form of commentary are deepened owing to conversations with the inhabitants of the visited areas, their opinions are equivalent to the opinions of the vloggers, it is a kind of polyphony

11 This generalization is based on the observation for many years of multiple vlog channels of Polish travelers who from time to time, sometimes provoked by their public, talk about their health problems or problems with security in various destinations. The most prominent examples here include *Bez Planu, Globstory, Planeta Abstrakcja*.

12 "We wanted to base this material on one question you asked us: have you ever had enough of a place, a country, or was a specific trip unsuccessful? –We were thinking a little about the answer, and we actually discovered that basically every trip we made was both successful and unsuccessful, we have never visited a country that we totally hated, everywhere we go we find some of our pros and cons. And when you watched our previous material from Brazil, you probably realized that we talked about things that we just like in this country, but there are also a lot of things that we really hate in Brazil, and I think we didn't mention them too much, so we'll talk about them a little bit today, and this station is the perfect place for that, because traveling around Brazil is one of those things that we don't like very much. (…) Q: Don't you ever experience burnout or some kind of pressure to make movies? A: I think we don't, because we kind of... each movie is a little different and we come up with different topics: whether it's sexuality in Brazil or the topic of education in Madagascar, as if... it's interesting to us and we don't feel burnout because of this."

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and not a tourist impression. Charitable campaigns are also frequent, the vloggers engage in various activities (Maj, "Communicate").[13]

The comments of the virtual community (or the vloggers' audience) testify to the appreciation of not only the videos, but also the vloggers' idea of Grand Tour and lifestyle, to a certain community of values and approach to the world characterizing this community. Emotions related to their approach to risk, difficult social topics and intercultural relations, wars and conflicts are also revealed here—addressing these topics evokes respect among the community, which eagerly engages in aid campaigns. The vloggers simply have a loyal group of fans. At the same time, despite the professional approach and predilection for difficult topics, the vlog contains an interesting set of documentaries from the world and good entertainment. The community interacts much more often than in the case of other analyzed vlogs—not only with the broadcasters, but also with other members. Discussions are often multithreaded, most posts are commented on, the community tends to engage in long—and often cognitively valuable—polemics. Discussions, moreover, are engaging, revealing the audience's broad knowledge of other travel vloggers and their critical assessment (in terms of self-presentation, value of materials, travel style) ("Planeta Abstrakcja," online discussion).[14]

The recipients appreciate the professionalism, both in the approach to the subject in terms of filming and editing, but also in financial transparency towards the patrons[15]. Owing to the serious approach to their patrons and thoughtful selection of sponsors, the travelers

13 They are the initiators of, among others, over 200 virtual adoptions of children in Madagascar in order to support their education; they raised over PLN 1.5 million from their followers to help Ukraine; etc. These examples show the constant and strong support of the virtual community for the vloggers, who are recognized as ethic influencers and virtual authorities.

14 "@pucusiek87: I love you, I watch everything you share, you have interesting footage and you talk very matter-of-factly about the countries, places, cities you visit, it's really great to watch. Do not worry about negative comments, they are posted by people who envy you, but do not realize how much work it requires from you. Thanks to you, many people can "see" a bit of the world, learn something interesting about other countries, in addition, you are very committed to helping others. No one has the right to accuse you of incompetence or greed, this is a slur. I hope that the accommodation issue will be resolved quickly and we can soon watch your new videos. Keep on creating, many people are cheering for you, all the best and see you @bartuszo: Exactly! Faza, cash, podróże wojownika.... I stopped watching as they have been only whining, only Planeta Abstrakcja can still be watched."

15 This means that in final episodes of particular travels the vlogers present the total costs of their excursion to the patrons who support them on Patronite.

do not need to be afraid that the community will turn away from them (Feng et al., Magno & Cassia 288–290). The professionalism concerns yet another sphere: the ability to use local languages. Almost everywhere Boris learns the local language enough to conduct conversations, and Ola supports him in this during their American travel. This is a unique phenomenon in the Polish travel vlogosphere, where travelers speak mainly English and thus significantly narrow their cognitive horizon.

BEZ PLANU: "HELL & PARADISE"

Bez Planu is Bartek Czukiewski's travel vlog that portrays his trips to South America and Mesoamerica. The most interesting materials concern Venezuela, where the vlogger spent several years of his life. What is important, the author is fluent in Spanish and English. On the one hand, he presents himself as a narrator-macho, who talks about exotic beaches, exotic trips and his exotic girlfriends, but it is certainly not a vlog with typically tourist content, because visually and thematically it combines this sensorially attractive exoticism with socially important topics, not avoiding economic issues or observations of a journalistic or even reportorial nature. One of the assets of this vlog is the vlogger's almost "radio" deep voice commenting on the images from the field.

The episode "Hell & Paradise" addresses the paradoxes of Venezuela, where scenes from Caracas are accompanied by a story about protests against President Maduro, about widespread poverty in a country where the average salary is $4, and about hunger (the viewers can see people standing in endless queues for bread). This narrative is juxtaposed by way of contrast with another scene, which is a story about the tourist paradise of the Los Roques islands intended for the rich, located only 40 km away from Caracas, where you can only arrive by plane for the price of $250 and where prices are European. The narrative uses contrasts in the visual layer (shots from a drone in Los Roques show a sandy white beach and azure sea and the vlogger's Venezuelan friend in a swimsuit, depicted in a style of travel agency ads, scenes from Caracas show the dramas of everyday life, poverty, social unrest, protests, queues, robberies, the scenes are partly shot from a moving car, partly out of hiding, indicating the vlogger's participation in protests together with a group of journalists). The commentary is also based on contrasts, but here the vlogger uses other means: he presents a large amount of data reflecting the realities of life of various layers of society, he juxtaposes prices and earnings of protesting Venezuelans

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and prices for tourists, he describes in detail the difficulties of everyday life by showing protesters and their arguments when allowing them to speak to the camera (Czukiewski, "Hell & Paradise").

An earlier episode, "Venezuela. Chaos, Protests" was filmed entirely in Caracas during street fights, which were shown in close-ups and confirmed the vlogger's participation as a media observer in the protests against Maduro (Czukiewski, "Venezuela. Chaos"). It is an eight-and-a-half-minute documentary of street fights, social unrest and dangers, the army shooting at crowds, protesters and their fights with the soldiers. The footage includes numerous observations of peaceful moments accompanied by a commentary allowing to understand the presented scenes and the reasons why people took to the streets, a description of spatial relations between the fighting sides, the audience can see starvation portions of food and primitive weapons of the demonstrators as well as armed military convoys. However, this is not all: there are also dynamic scenes of escape from an army attack, chaotic images of fleeing in fear, testimonies of shots, calls for help directed to the world. Such materials about Venezuela were not provided at that time by global mass media, they could only be shown by independent war correspondents and vloggers (who in fact become independent journalists and war correspondents). Christopher Booker suggested once that "those who tell stories, rule the world" (Burgess & Green 186), and some vloggers prove this sentence to be true.

This documentary feature characterizes the *Bez Planu* channel, and the lack of attachment to the aesthetic values of the shots (mainly handheld shots, frequent traveling, hidden shots) corresponds to the assumed non-fiction nature of the narrative. A strong advantage of the channel is the economic and social analysis, as well as the choice of less popular destinations that are undervalued by the mainstream media. The planned chaos fits into the poetics of the *Bez Planu* channel, which is appreciated for this "harshness" and realism of the material, as evidenced by the reactions of the community ("Bez Planu," online discussion).

CONCLUSIONS

The American Grand Tour of contemporary vloggers is a multi-threaded and multi-layered topic. Each video is always a choice, and the aesthetics as well as approaches of the vloggers are definitely very diverse. My observations prove the constant contact of the vloggers with virtual communities that follow them as well as the use of many attention-engaging techniques and conscious application of the film

language. In conclusion it can be stated that leisure, cultural myths and crisis management constitute three permanent aspects of travel narratives, which are implemented by the vloggers in an individual way.

Leisure. Vloggers address the issue of travels in reference to leisure and work differently. For Czukiewski, relaxation means resting on an exotic beach, for the travelers from *Planeta Abstrakcja* it is a journey to places which are dirty, dangerous or considered the "worst in the world," such as Norilsk in Siberia or Nunavut in Canada. Owing to this, the offer of vlogs is diversified, and the audience know what to expect. Therefore, one can look at it as a kind of genre-related identification of vlogs or a creative strategy. On the other hand, this corresponds to the natural different ways or styles of traveling represented by the vloggers.

Cultural myths. This is the most difficult topic for the vloggers, which is at the same time very tempting, and although everyone promises a meeting of cultures, a clash with strangeness and demythization, they often mythicize the places they visit themselves as their narratives tend to be a kind of mythographic creation. It is not demythization but creation of myths, or rather re-mythization, that is their characteristic feature. America(s) seem(s) to be (a) perfect object(s) for this. The American Grand Tour of a vlogger thus becomes a story about the hardships of traveling and brave protagonists, whereas historical knowledge at the high school level or geographical and cultural knowledge at the level of a tourist guidebook are presented here as a revelation of mystery.

Crisis management. The vloggers often deal with external crises, typical of a long expedition, of traveling by a specific means of transport (e.g. constant repairs of the car). Sometimes these difficulties result from cultural differences and problems with communication or mobility, sometimes from a long distance to urban centers, sometimes they are associated with climate disasters. However, there are also difficulties of a different kind: interacting with other cultures is not always easy, and people met on the way are not always friendly, the vloggers' equipment can be an easy prey for thieves, etc. Hence the stories of how the vloggers were attacked or robbed (e.g. *Planeta Abstrakcja*), and sometimes about the fact that someone was aiming weapons at them (e.g. *Bez Planu*, *Planeta Abstrakcja*). On the other hand, psychological crises related to constant traveling, changing places and choosing such a lifestyle instead of a settled family life are also discussed in the vlog entries. The vloggers deal with them differently, sometimes relaxing between trips or going on vacation without a camera (*Busem przez świat*), sometimes taking longer breaks to reappear with a new crew

(*Bez Planu*, *Busem przez świat*) or talking about burnout (*Globstory*, *Bez Planu*). The latter may also be caused by an external situation (wars, conflicts, protests and riots, disasters, pandemic).

The important problems that accompany travel narratives thus include topics of biggest significance to the audience: both the boredom of everyday life (even an exotic one) and all possible crises that a person can experience, regardless of the place of residence or the represented culture. These are problems of any engaging media message, not only of the vlogosphere. And the vloggers help their communities interpret the world to the best of their abilities.

Translated by Justyna Kucharska

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Abstract: The article concerns travel narratives of Polish video bloggers (or vloggers) who treat a journey through the Americas as a contemporary Grand Tour. Video blogs and their visual storytelling are becoming tools for describing the world in the digital era. In this context, the Americas take on the meaning of a world that is simultaneously close and distant. Traveling on both continents of the other hemisphere is characterized by a double clash of civilizations and a confrontation with one's imagination created on the basis of encounters with the media and culture of the Americas. It is also a clash with the myth of America and, at the same time, a story about the role of a vlogger as a narrator consolidating their audience and the network community in the act of looking beyond the horizon and behind the scenes of "real America." The research will use the analysis of the content of audiovisual material from selected YouTube travel channels and elements of netnographic analysis of virtual communities gathered around the best Polish travel vlogs.

Keywords: Grand Tour, travel vlogs, online narratives, storytelling, cultural myths, American journeys, Polish vlogosphere

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VISUALIZING THE OTHER
Media Representations of Nina Khrushcheva during the Khrushchevs' State Visit to the United States in 1959

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The mainstream understanding of gender codes is implicitly and explicitly intertwined with the notions of power and subordination. This perception inevitably transforms the concepts of femininity and masculinity into a system of social doctrines that are incorporated into state ideology and become a factor of political propaganda. The gender discourse proved to be an effective weapon of the Cold War and had an important role in the ideological confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. The American rhetoric inscribed the faults and failures of the communist system directly on women's bodies, portraying them as unkempt, graceless and asexual. In popular imagination, the image of a Soviet woman became an epitome of the other which both personified the threat of communism and, at the same time, eased domestic anxieties about rigid gender roles in the post-war US.

However, the Cold War was not a homogeneous process. The period from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, which is often referred to as the Khrushchev Thaw, was characterized by the governments' attempts to defuse the tension on the international political stage. Premier Khrushchev's American tour in September 1959 was the first official visit of a high-rank communist leader to the United States, and until 1973 was the only visit of Soviet Premiers to American soil. Such periodicals as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Daily Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times* provided exhaustive analysis of the event, paying particular attention to Nina P. Khrushcheva, the wife of the first secretary of the Communist Party, who followed her husband during the official program. The American press accepted this opportunity to humanize the image of an average communist female, introduc-

ing the idea of different, but not intimidating, femininity. Numerous references to Khrushcheva's modest personality, understated dressing style, focus on her family life behind the iron curtain meant that her public persona came to represent not socialist values but essential human virtues.

This paper will provide contextual analysis of the media representations of Nina Khrushcheva based on newspaper articles that appeared in major American periodicals. How was her style and manners commented on in the press? Which techniques were used to highlight her personality? Did her appearance and behavior challenge what American public considered acceptable for a First Lady? To answer these questions, the author turns to *The New York Times* archive that possesses full reports of the Khrushchevs' visit, including articles by Edith Evans Asbury, who was appointed to write exclusively about Mrs. Khrushcheva's experiences during her two weeks in the United States. The present study suggests that Khrushcheva's image was used by the media to create positive attitude towards the Soviet delegation among the American audience in the time when the society was cautious towards the idea of collaboration between the two superpowers. Soon after September 1959, fragile hopes for amity between the Western and Eastern Blocs were shattered due to the U-2 spy plane scandal in 1960 and the Berlin Crisis of 1961. Nevertheless, the popular narrative about the Soviet femininity had been transformed. The review of Khrushcheva's representation in American periodicals will illustrate how gender codes are influenced by the mass media, and will prove that international policies can gain human face in the press.

GENDER DISCOURSE AS A WEAPON OF THE COLD WAR

Achievements in gender studies conducted over the past half-century have made it unquestionable that gender is central in shaping social life. Scientists in most various fields of research underline that "gender is one of the central organizing principles around which social life revolves" (Kimmel xii). As a system of self-identification, gender is intertwined with other types of representation, such as, for example, national, religious, and political identity, and is being influenced by them to the same extent as it is influencing them. The society as we experience it in our daily lives is organized in accordance to a binary gender schema that divides people into two categories, female and male. Any other constituents of social identity are aligned with these major modifiers. As explained by Carol Cohn in "Wars, Wimps, and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War," gender is

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> a symbolic system, a central organizing discourse of culture, one that not only shapes how we experience and understand ourselves as men and women, but that also interweaves with other discourses and shapes them—and therefore shapes other aspects of our world—such as how nuclear weapons are thought about and deployed. (Cohn 228)

This perception of gender as a concept with wide range of meanings is caused first of all by the fact that gender marks a border between the notions of *us* and *them*. As an important mechanism of the processes associated with inclusion and exclusion, gender codes are used to establish the concept of *the other*, the ultimate rival or enemy who personifies distinctly different characteristics from those of oneself. Divergence from the appropriate gender behavior is believed to lead to social disorder and subsequent vulnerability of the community.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the dichotomy of "natural" gender performativity and "unnatural" sexuality was one of the main topics in American anticommunist narrative throughout the Cold War. Accusations against communism stressed its alleged attempt to distort human nature – the idea that was associated with hierarchic relations between the sexes. During the time when the battle with the USSR acquired almost "religious meaning" (Harle 2000), communism was understood as a type of gender deviation that challenged religious and ethical norms to the same extent as it contradicted Western political ideology. In her study of gender normativity during the Cold War, Cynthia Enloe emphasized that as well as being a competition between the two super-powers, the war represented a race to set the norms of masculinity and femininity (Enloe 18–19). John D'Emilio in *Intimate Matters*: *A History of Sexuality in America* explains: "A nation at the height of its power searched for answers about why the world was exploding with danger. Just as hidden traitors were undermining the nation's physical security, so too did sexual deviates deplete its moral resources" (D'Emilio 294). In this sense, Barbie doll, which illustrated American family virtues of the period, is no less an instrument of the warfare as, for example, intercontinental missiles. The image of a white middle-class family, consisting of a breadwinner husband, a housewife and two to four children, was understood as a representation of social success, conformity, sexual fulfilment and consumerism: the primary values of the post-World War II American society. Elaine Tyler May in *Homeward Bound* argues that in the dangerous atomic world, "[Americans] looked toward home as a way to bolster themselves against potential threats" (May 88).

In contrast, the images of Soviet femininity and masculinity were used to prove the accusation that the Soviet system caused men

to become infantile, because it deprived them of the basic foundation of masculinity—the right to own private property. The widespread use of sexual images and metaphors in the discourse of the Cold War highlights the process of feminization of the enemy, which is a common technique of military propaganda. If war is associated with power, so is masculinity. Since gender is traditionally used to denote domination, anticommunist rhetoric preyed on the images of emasculation. The Soviet Union became an abstract symbol of the imminent demise that would follow when Americans turn "*soft*." Thus, American men were urged to strengthen their "moral fiber in order to preserve their freedom and their security":

> Many high-level government officials, along with individuals in positions of power and influence in fields ranging from industry to medicine and from science to psychology, believed wholeheartedly that there was a direct connection between communism and sexual depravity. […] National strength depended upon the ability of strong, manly men to stand up against communist threats. (May 91)

Paradoxically, however, sexuality in the Soviet Union was simultaneously presented as insufficient in some cases and excessive in others. The backbone of the propaganda's claim about the "unnatural" gender performativity was the idea that communism encouraged sexual indulgence and polygamous intimacy. Critics of the socialist political system often referred to the second chapter of "The Manifesto of the Communist Party," which includes a part about abolition of the family as a means to establish social equality (Marx and Engels 86). In the eyes of the public this meant that members of the communist party were more interested in sexual freedoms rather than in the political program itself (Sharp 102–103). Sex appeared as an uncontrollable force behind the spread of communist ideology, the vigor that caused social chaos when it was let loose. American mass media assured its audience that gender equality was merely a slogan of the Soviet propaganda: "Soviet women were freed from the slavery of their own husbands only to be trapped by the slavery of the state" (Brennan, qtd. in Riabov 22). Equality of the sexes was perceived as evidence of economic and cultural backwardness, and the US Information Agency asserted that only women in economically disadvantaged communities value career above motherhood (May 159).

Women's liberation in the Soviet Union was presented as a shortcut to hard physical labor, which was declared the main reason of communist women's deformed femininity. Richard M. Ketchum in his book *What is Communism?* (1955) writes: "According to the Soviet

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understanding of 'equality,' women are obliged to do the hard work that is usually done by men in other countries. They work on railways, in mines, in logging, and in road construction" (171). Similar comment was made by the members of the 1955 American delegation to the Soviet Union, who during their tour of the Northern Caucasus were "both amused and disturbed by the large number of women engaged in heavy labor on farms and in factories" (*Christian Science Monitor*, qtd. in Brown 49). In their report, American farmers claimed that at least 60 percent of the farm laborers they had seen were women, "owing both to labor policies and the loss of working-age men during World War II" (Brown 50).

The theme of deformed femininity became central to representations of Soviet women in the American popular culture. In 1954, *Look* magazine published an article by Julie Whitney titled "Women – Russia's Second-Class Citizens." The author confirms that many Russian women receive a good education and become doctors, teachers, engineers, scientists, and party workers. However, Whitney continues, "a woman in Russia has a chance to be almost anything except a woman. Even today, in a relatively cosmopolitan Moscow, a good-looking, well-dressed girl wearing make-up is one of three things: a foreigner, an actress or a prostitute" (Whitney 116). This theme was a recurrent subject of ridicule in the American cinema of the period. Such films as *The Iron Petticoat* (1956), *Silk Stockings* (1957), *Jet Pilot* (1957), among others, portray Soviet women as desexualized adepts of communism. Through romantic connection with American men, they discover their femininity and take the first chance to flee to the West together with their lovers. Another example, a 1954 drawing by Bill Danch for *Independent Woman Magazine* depicts two communist women dressed in coats resembling military uniform, one complaining to the other: "Even if we are superwomen, I still wish we had fun like Americans" (illustrated in Belmonte 89).

The so-called "kitchen debate" between Vice President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev at the opening of the American National Exhibition in Moscow on July 25, 1959, brought gender discourse to the highest level of official rhetoric. Remarkably, the discussion between the two leaders did not address missiles, bombs, or modes of government, but, instead, focused on the relative merits of color television and washing machines. Nixon insisted that the essence of American freedom was confirmed by abundant life in modern suburban family homes. Khrushchev replied to Nixon's assertion with a famous phrase "In this country we do not have the capitalist attitude towards women" (qtd. in "kitchen debate tran-

script"). This episode became known in the history of the United States as an official proclamation of the ideology of domestic containment which took over the nation's consciousness for over two decades. Within such political and ideological context, the 1959 Khrushchev's visit to the United States was a particularly significant step to improve relations between the two countries and required meticulous means to prepare the public.

NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES: "THE PREMIER TO TAKE HIS FAMILY ALONG"

Khrushchev's American tour had to become the first official visit of a Soviet leader to the United States, the center of the capitalist world. The meeting was equally necessary for both parties: the Soviet Union was striving for the earliest possible agreement on the status of West Berlin, while Eisenhower sought through negotiations with the Soviet side to raise the prestige of the Republican administration in the light of the upcoming 1960 presidential elections (Kuskova 182). At the beginning of 1959, the XXI "Extraordinary" Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union stated:

> Improving relations between the United States and the Soviet Union is of particular importance in the process of defusing international tensions. Expansion of trade, cultural ties, as well as personal contacts of statesmen and public figures can play an important role in improving mutual understanding and establishing friendly relations between the states. (*Verbatim record* 59)

Prior to this unprecedented event, the mass media was tasked to set favorable ideological context for the visit and educate the general public about the importance of collaboration between the two states. Donald R. Matthews, a political scientist and contemporary of the events, acknowledged that the US media in the 1950s and 1960s were "overcooperative" and "complaisant" (qtd. in Fink and Schudson 4), and there is little doubt that certain instructions had been forwarded to the journalists. Similar argument is expressed by Kathryn McGarr, who suggests that there was a reinforced sense of common purpose between the political administration and news reporters, the so-called "consensus" in "conducting the nation's affairs during the 'troubled times,' as they saw them" (McGarr 79).

However, the tone of American and Soviet publications varied significantly. The main argument proclaimed by communist periodicals was that the future peace of the world depended on Khrushchev's trip. For several months, media space of the *Pravda*, the central state-

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controlled newspaper of the USSR, was overtaken by such headlines as "Put an End to the Cold War" (August 10), "The World Can Be Released From the Danger of a New War" (August 13), "Allow People to Take a Deep Breath" (August 30), "Melt the Ice of the Cold War" (September 3), "In the Interests of the People of the Whole World" (September 3) etc. On the other side of the Atlantic, US society seemed to be wary of the upcoming visit. In his memoir *My Life and The Times*, Turner Catledge remembers that as editor-in-chief of the *New York Times*, his editorial office was literally bombarded with both angry and positive responses to the upcoming event (Catledge 252). The American society was split into two camps: despite the obvious interest in the Soviet leader, some Americans did not want to see Khrushchev as their guest. For example, on September 6, 1959 *The New York Times* published an article "Anti-Soviet Posters Being Sought Here" reporting a protest against Khrushchev's visit: "Keep your city clean—keep it from Khrushchev." In the section "Letters to the Editor" on August 9, 1959, the newspaper published a collection "Comments on Khrushchev's Visit," where the following letter from Gerard T. Baxter appeared: "I am shocked by Eisenhower's invitation to Khrushchev to visit this country. Khrushchev represents all that evil that is hateful and contrary to the basic concepts that gave birth to the United States as a nation" (8).

In the context of such criticism, Khrushchev took a decision to include his wife, Nina P. Khrushcheva, and their children into the official delegation. The need to establish contacts between the USSR and the West required emergence of the new characters in the information field, figures who could penetrate the iron curtain. Khrushcheva who was not only a member of the Soviet delegation, but had her own personal program as part of the official visit, was one of such figures called to establish positive image of the Soviets in the United States (Tsvetkova 30). This strategic idea was based on the understanding that American ideology of the era was built around domestic values, therefore the public's attention towards the Premier's family would direct the media narrative towards essential human qualities that transcend social and ideological systems.

This strategy was unusual for the Soviet foreign policy, as spouses of the heads of state in the USSR carried no official duties and received no public recognition until the late 1980s, when Raisa Gorbacheva, wife of the last General Secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev, adopted traditions of Western countries and started implementing cultural, educational and charitable duties. Until that time, the Soviet public discourse did not acknowledge

the formal title of "the First Lady of Russian Land" (Petrova 138) and often deliberately excluded wives of communist leaders from the media narrative. For example, after their return from the United States in 1959, Nikita and Nina Khrushchev paid an official visit to Rostov region, however the photographs of Nina were absent from news reports and official archives of the event (Petrova 137).

The idea to take the entire Khrushchev family on the American trip was suggested by First Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan (see Kuskova 183; Petrova 140; Gorlov 125 et al.). Already after the preliminary program of the visit was confirmed by both states, Mikoyan drew Khrushchev's attention to the fact that American ideology was built around the idea of family and main familial values (Kuskova 183). International diplomatic etiquette required heads of states to be accompanied by spouses, therefore adherence to this protocol would create positive image of the Soviet Union in the eyes of American public. Nikita Khrushchev explains his decision in the memoir *Time. People. Power. Memories*:

> Before that, I traveled to India, was in England, Finland, and at negotiations of four leaders in Geneva. The latter was actually a business trip, not a guest trip. We didn't take our wives with us then. First of all, this was the legacy of Stalin's times: Stalin did not travel anywhere and was very jealous of anyone who took a wife along. I think only once did Stalin order Mikoyan to take his wife with him when traveling to the USA. Secondly, in our country this was considered either a luxury or something smugly tasteless, but not a businesslike. Now the same question arose before my trip. I also thought about going alone, without accompanying spouse. But Mikoyan said: "Abroad, common people treat others better if guests come with their wives. And if a man is also followed by other family members, this favors him even more. Therefore, I would suggest that Khrushchev takes Nina Petrovna with him and also includes other members of his family in the delegation. This will be well regarded by the American people, and it is better for us." I doubted whether I should do this. But members of the Presidium of the Central Committee supported Anastas Ivanovich and convinced me that this would really be good. I agreed. (Khrushchev 634)

The plan was able to achieve the expected results: news about Nina Khrushcheva's arrival excited the public and took up significant part of informational buildup in the media. Notably, the appeal of the Premier's wife resided not in her nationality or political beliefs, but in the universal down-to-earth femininity and essential domestic virtues she seemed to epitomize. As a result, references to her professional background were almost entirely omitted from the reports. Instead, the press highlighted her role as a faithful wife, loving mother and grandmother.

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It was only decades later that academic and publicistic studies of the period started taking an interest in the personality of Nina Khrushcheva. Until recently, her name almost exclusively appeared in scholarly analyses dedicated to her husband's biography. Nevertheless, Khrushcheva's personal archives and official documents available at the State Archive of the Russian Federation, Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, and Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (Petrova 138) make it possible to look at her role in the history of the Soviet Union independently from that of Nikita Khrushchev.

Nina Khrushcheva (*née* Kukharchuk) was born on April 14, 1900 in the village of Wasylów, which was then part of the Russian Empire, and now lies within the borders of contemporary Poland. Although coming from a poor peasant family, Nina received good education: upon recommendation from her school teacher, she enrolled in Lublin City Gymnasium and later with the support of archbishop of Chełm – in Mariinsky Women's College. Notably, there is no information regarding schooling of Nina's younger brother Ivan, thus it is possible that she was the only one in the family with formal education (Petrova 138). In early 1920s, Khrushcheva joined the Bolshevik party and soon was working as an agitator on the Polish front and as the head of women's division of the Central Committee of Communist Party in Western Ukraine. In 1921 after completing eight-month courses at the Sverdlov Communist University in Moscow, she was assigned to teach political economy and history of revolution in Donbass, where Nina met Nikita Khrushchev. Even though their marriage was not officially registered until 1965, in her memoirs Nina Khrushchev writes that since 1924 they were "wed"[1] (qtd. in Petrova 139). Understandably, the information that Nikita and Nina Khrushchev were not legally married at the time of their visit to the US was not reported in the western press. Similarly, American journalists avoided drawing attention to the fact that it was Nikita's third marriage and he was raising two children from his first wife (see Nelson 9).

Nina Khrushcheva continued active career until the beginning of the Great Patriotic War in 1941, when together with her children she moved from Moscow to Kiev and then to Samara due to the German invasion of the Soviet Union. She had occupied positions of the Director of Soviet Party school at the Moscow Electric Machinery

1 The practice of common-law marriage was wide-spread among high-ranking members of the communist party during the 1920s and reflected belief in the new socialist way of life. At the same time, it was caused by the transition from church marriage regulations to civil law, which was promoted by the "Decree on Separation of Church from State and School from Church" (1918).

Plant, and Secretary of the Soviet Council for Scientific, Engineering and Technical Communities. In her own words, these years were the most productive in her social and professional life. Young, active and intelligent, she was able to combine career with household chores, looking after her three children and two step-children. Sergei Khrushchev, third child born to Nikita and Nina in 1935, later recalled that although his father's authority was never questioned, the "real power in the family was exercised by Mama. The uncomplaining, smiling, stout, grandmotherly persona she exhibited during her American odyssey was authentic, but it belied her intelligence and determination" (Taubman, qtd. in Nelson 9).

To American reporters, Khrushcheva represented the classic morals of a true wife, qualities that amidst the 1950s cult of domesticity in the United States were understandable and relatable for the public. She was described as a "simple, friendly woman who worships her husband, respects his words as head of the family as well as the state, and loves his children" (*The Los Angeles Times*, 20 September 1959). In another publication she was said to have "all the aspects of a good woman, in the best connotations of that phrase" (*The Atlanta Constitution*, 16 September 1959). Journalists repeatedly noted Khrushcheva's "grandmotherly affection for youngsters [which] soon became one of her most notable characteristics" (*Newsweek*, 28 September 1959). *The Atlanta Constitution* even suggested that "the word [mother] could have been invented for her" (16 September 1959).

Portrayal of her appearance and simple dressing style made her appealing for the American working class. The articles pointed out her comfortable shoes, "pleasantly solid" physique, emphasized the fact that she did not use make-up and avoided fashionable accessories. Article contrasting the wardrobes of Mamie Eisenhower and Nina Khrushcheva at a formal reception at the White House appeared in *Atlanta Constitution* on 16 September and in *Life Magazine* on 28 September. On 20 September, a full front-page article "Mr. K Hurls Hot Retort at Poulson" in *The Los Angeles Times* pointed out that while Mme. K would never be confused with a high fashion model, "there is something about her, something honest and good." She was presented as polite and unpretentious, thus "evoked the admiration of countless stout, plainly-dressed American women, who perhaps identified themselves with her in the world's spotlight" (*Los Angeles Times*, 20 September 1959, pg.1).

These reports resonated with the baby-boom culture and transcended antagonisms of the Cold War. Focusing on the maternal and domestic, American press successfully obscured the contradic-

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tions that Soviet ideology posed to gender normativity in the United States. As *Newsweek Magazine* from 28 September 1958 reported: "If Americans warmed up to anyone in the group, more than likely it would be the Soviet Premier's modest, plainly dressed, sweet-faced wife with her shy, beaming smile" (qtd. in Griswold 888).

Khrushcheva's media representations also achieved another important goal: drawing attention to her interest in everyday American culture, they trivialized the image of the Soviets, made it less fearsome and daunting. For example, on September 17, Edith Ashbury wrote for *The New York Times* that during her visit to Beltsville, Mrs. K exchanged recipes with her hostess, enjoyed fried chicken, ham, apple pie, and cheese during her lunch, and collected matchcovers for her grandchildren. In another article Ashbury tells a story of Nina Khrushcheva's shopping spree, sharing details about what the wife of the Premier bought and how she paid—the author mentions that Nina bought nylon stockings, took out the money from a special envelope, and paid with ten-dollar banknotes (*The New York Times*, 22 September).

In fact, Khrushcheva's public appeal was transmitted onto the image of her husband. Gwen Robyns in "The Woman Behind Khrushchev" (*The Look Magazine*, 1959) explained that Mme. Khrushcheva had "played a vital part in pushing the rambunctious son of a miner to his present eminence." Robyns pointed out that Khrushcheva persuaded her husband to pursue further education after the war and introduced him to good literature and the arts. The article also made a point that Khrushchev recognized and appreciated his wife's contribution to his success: the author recounted one occasion when Nikita raised a toast to Nina and cried out "May she live long! I owe it all to her" (Robyns 79).

IN PLACE OF CONCLUSION: DEPICTIONS OF SOVIET FEMININITY FOLLOWING THE 1959 STATE VISIT

The next few months after Khrushchev's American tour can be characterized as the most tranquil period of the Cold War. "Categorical statements, threats, and accusations disappeared from newspaper pages, […] the skirmishing over Berlin continued, but without its former ardor and malice" (Kordon 169). One of the direct consequences of the negotiations in Washington was the Antarctic Treaty signed 1 December 1959 between the United States, the Soviet Union and ten other states that internationalized and demilitarized the Antarctic continent. Eisenhower's visit to Moscow was planned to occur in June 1960. However, the period of conciliation was short-lived

and is generally considered to end with the U-2 incident in early May 1960. The relations between the United States and the Soviet Union continued to deteriorate, including Paris summit in May 1960 when the meeting between the American, British, French and Soviet heads of state finished with Khrushchev's leaving the meeting after Eisenhower refused to apologize for the U-2 incident.

Despite the increasing strain in American-Soviet relations, the image of Nina Khrushcheva was presented to the West as a symbol of openness of the communist world. On various occasions, Khrushcheva seemed to be the last hope amidst the threats of the atomic age. When in September 1961 she hosted a ninety-minute meeting with a group of Western anti-nuclear activists, *The New York Times* quoted her statement about peace and armistice: "the Soviet Union was not building air-raid shelters because 'we are not getting ready for war'" (7 October 1961). On November 15, the same newspaper published a short note about Jacqueline Kennedy's and Nina Khrushcheva's joint appeal for world peace. Several months later Khrushcheva recorded an audio message in "accented but flowing" English which was addressed to American women. An article in *The New York Times* from February 19 describes her speech: "The Premier's wife expressed gratification over the 'peace movement' of American women. Her formula for world peace was this: 'Let us sink atom bombs along with the other weapons in the deepest part of the ocean and live without weapons as good neighbors'."

Reports about Khrushcheva's campaigns fell on favorable background in the United States, where in the early 1960s society started questioning the ideology of domesticity. "The baby-boom children who grew up in suburban homes abandoned the containment ethos when they came of age. As young adults in the 1960s and 1970s, they challenged both the imperatives of the cold war and the domestic ideology that came with it" (May 199). In 1963, the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan shed light on non-normative types of femininity and undermined stereotypical gender representations. This helped ignite interest of the American public in the image of a professionally trained Soviet woman who seemed to enjoy social recognition and authority. Consider, for example, attention of the media to Valentina Tereshkova, twenty-six-year-old female cosmonaut aboard *Vostok 6* spaceship in June 1963, the first woman in space. Achievements of Soviet female athletes similarly fascinated the press: in "The Rise of Soviet Athletics" Joseph A. Marchiony wrote that "communist Russia is severely challenging the US supremacy and is fast becoming the greatest nation of athletics in history. […] It was the women who put Russia on the 'athletic map' in track and field" (17).

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This perception of the Eastern Bloc as radically different from the West but nevertheless intriguing and appealing is considered to be a form of orientalism and is more specifically referred to as *Russianism* (Riabov 176). Scholars have argued that discursive practices of orientalism were actively used by propaganda during the second half of the twentieth century, which also included erotization of "exotic" Slavic women. The March 1964 edition of *Playboy* was dedicated to "the girls of Russia and the iron curtain countries." The editorial note stated that "today, any man who can afford to spend some $1500 can be his own jet-propelled Marco Polo anywhere this side of the Urals" (46). Notably, in popular discourse Soviet women always found "awakening" through romantic relationship with a Westerner – as, for example, the heroine of the classic James Bond movie *From Russia With Love* (1963).

Paradoxically, construction of Khrushcheva's image in American mass media followed similar objectives in respect of presenting Soviet femininity as different, fascinating but not frightening. As illustrated by the examples above, her public persona was adjusted to fit the Western understanding of the role and responsibilities of the First Lady: the position that was absent from the Soviet public diplomacy of the time. Media representations of Nina Khrushcheva aimed to prove that the country she and her husband represented was not so hostile after all. She was the first high-rank communist woman who through deliberate attention to her role as a wife and a mother became a symbol of similarities rather than differences between the two ideologies.

In collective consciousness, stereotypes continuously replace each other as required by ideological and cultural diplomacy. Created and popularized through mass media and popular culture, they depend on true prototypes for credibility and vitality. During the time when the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to find common ground amidst antagonisms of the Cold War, Nina Khrushcheva became an important representation of what it meant to be a woman in the USSR. There is little doubt that her public image in the US was manipulated to fit the political and ideological agenda, as much as it was utilized by the Soviet Union for its own purposes. Nevertheless, media image of Khrushcheva presented a powerful message for American public that at the time was searching for the way to celebrate female power and independence.

Abstract: The gender discourse had an important role in the ideological confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union and proved to be an effective weapon of the Cold War. In American imagination, the image of a Soviet woman became an epitome of 'the other' which both personified the threat of communism and eased domestic anxieties about rigid gender roles in the post-war US. However, the Cold War was not a homogeneous process. The period from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s referred to as the Khrushchev Thaw, was characterized by attempts of peaceful coexistence between the two superpowers culminating in Khrushchev's visit to the United States in September 1959. Nina P. Khrushcheva, the wife of the first secretary of the Communist Party, became the first high-rank communist woman to tour the United States with an official visit. The American press took this opportunity to humanize the image of a woman from the other side of the iron curtain and, consequently, defuse tensions on the international stage. Khrushcheva's visit became a turning point in constructing the image of Soviet femininity, introducing a stereotype of different but not intimidating womanhood. Despite the fact that the fragile hopes for peace between the Western and Eastern Blocs were shattered soon after Khrushchev's visit, the popular rhetoric of the Soviet femininity was transformed. The present article analyzes the shift in the Soviet gender codes presented in the American newspapers, and puts them into historical context to show how international policies can gain human face in the press.

Keywords: Nina Khrushcheva, Cold War, gender stereotypes, Soviet femininity, mass media, Nikita Khrushchev's visit in 1959, Cold War history, American history, American culture

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TRAVEL FOR THE DYING
Ceauşescu's Romania as Seen by Saul Bellow

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During the Cold War era, interaction between Romanians and Americans was rare. Even indirect exposure *via* the American media to Romania was virtually nonexistent. Perhaps the Olympic champion gymnast Nadia Comăneci provided American media a basis to portray Romania, and thus gave the nation some attention. The way Romanians lived was largely unknown to Americans compared to other Eastern Bloc countries (e.g. East Germans), which were more familiar owing to the Berlin Airlift as well as rare escapes *via* tunnels or other ingenious means of overcoming the Berlin Wall. Likewise, the Soviet Union, with such events as Nikita Khrushchev's antics at the United Nations, the military invasion of Hungary and the constant threat of nuclear war with the US culminating in the Cuban Missile Crisis, as well as the "spy wars" between KGB and CIA, kept Russians in America's conscience during the Cold War. When Bellow writes about Romania, it is clearly exotic travel writing. Yet Bellow's purpose of the trip was not to gather material for a novel but to accompany his wife, whose mother was going through severe medical struggles. For travel writing, Bellow's fiction is rather unusual. His experiences ultimately result in political commentary about his experiences projected into the plot. Following a pattern set by Andrew Gordon's article "Saul Bellow's Spain" (2017) and Yale Richmond's "Saul Bellow in Poland" (2012), this contribution will consider Bellow's travel to and opinions of Romania, offering the American public a fresh opinion as well as a kind of personal inside look.

In 1982, Saul Bellow published his Nobel Prize-winning novel, which drew heavily on his travel experiences during his visit to Romania in December 1978, and focused on the lives of people who endured

perhaps the poorest living conditions in the socialist Eastern bloc. The Nobel laureate's overtures to the difficulties of daily life in Romania sparked American public interest. In Romania, as Anna-Karina Schneider shows, several of Bellow's novels "had been translated in the 1970s, but [Bellow] became a *persona non grata* after fictionalizing his 1977 [sic] visit to Bucharest in the bleakest terms in his novel *The Dean's December* (1982)" (354). Bellow's novel commands a simple immediacy, as the plot in Romania closely replicates his visit to Bucharest.

BELLOW'S BUCHAREST VISIT IN *THE DEAN'S DECEMBER*

The plot of the novel *The Dean's December* centers around a journalist and academic dean, Albert Corde, who compares the bleak Chicago life of crime and corruption to the totalitarian society behind the Iron Curtain in the late 1970s. Closely based on Bellow's own visit to Bucharest while accompanying his Romania-born wife Alexandra Bellow (*née* Bagdasar), a mathematician who taught at Northwestern University, Dean Corde, accompanies his Romanian wife Minna, an academic astronomer, to visit her dying mother in Bucharest. Alexandra's parents were doctors and communist party members, who served in high Romanian government posts in the immediate post-World War II period. Soon thereafter, her father died of cancer and her mother, after serving for about two years as health minister, suffered political disgrace during the "Stalinist Terror in Romania" (Bellow 931). After obtaining a Master's degree in mathematics in Bucharest, Alexandra defected to the US in 1957 and earned her PhD in mathematics from Yale.

While her family's communist party past might have turned off many Americans, Bellow in the 1930s had been complicit to Bolshevism until the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact was announced in August, 1939. Like Arthur Koestler and other intellectuals in the 1930s, this political position was common during the depression years. David Mikics (192) points out that Bellow knew that the Bagdasar family had bravely hidden a Jewish doctor, Roza Samer Zalozziecki and her family from fascist authorities in Bucharest during the war. In 1975, the Bellows met up with her in Israel, which was described in Bellow's travel memoir *To Jerusalem and Back* (128).

Saul Bellow's mother-in-law, Florica Bagdasar (1901–1978), as the national Health Minister in the years 1946–48, pushed her government to accept American humanitarian aid (i.e., food, medicine) immediately following the war, thus saving lives and helping hundreds of thousands of starving Romanians. However, allowing American

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aid to be disbursed within a socialist country was against the Soviet policy. Additionally, Communists became suspicious, because Florica's husband had studied neurology in Boston, so she was rigorously interrogated about his falsely alleged CIA contacts. Once she was "rehabilitated" in the 1970s while being "a Dubček sympathizer" (Bellow 215), Florica occasionally met with Alexandra in Western Europe in the final decade of her life.

The hardships of her early youth during the war and her mother's severe political difficulties in the 1950s deleteriously distressed Alexandra. While the American novelist certainly found his wife's background fascinating, for Bellow nothing could top his actual visit to Romania for over a month at the end of 1978. Not only did he get to see first-hand the abysmal living conditions, but he noted how denizens of Bucharest endured under overbearing totalitarianism. In his biography, James Atlas paints Bellow as "an innocent American protected by the indulgence of American Democracy, [for whom] the brutal politics of Eastern Europe provided still another opportunity of reality instruction" (484). Corde sleeps in his mother-in-law's decaying apartment, while Minna attempts to master the labyrinthine red tape obstructing her ability to attend to and ameliorate the emotional needs of her dying mother, Valerie, in an ICU in Bucharest. The ugliness of daily life under Ceaușescu is evident, as innumerable examples from this novel reveal. To avoid persecution of innocent people, Bellow's reportorial approach alters the names and occupations of Alexandra's relatives and other Romanians he encountered during this winter travel. As Minna puts it,

> I've been so long in the States that I forgot how things are here. We made such fun of Valerie [Minna's mother] and her shopping lists, but look how people have to dress. The women are so depressed. They have no food, and there's nothing to wear… Now I keep thinking of all the items I could have brought from Chicago. (76)

Albert Corde experiences what could only be classified as vivid culture shock while residing in his mother-in-law's Bucharest apartment:

> The room was dark, the cold mortifying. The toilet, located in a small cell apart from the bathroom, was Gothic. The toilet paper was rough. A long aeruginous pipe only gave an empty croak when you pulled the chain. No water above. You poured from one of the buckets into the bowl… all this was like old times in the States, before the age of full convenience. It took you back. (51)

The derelict toilet facilities and Corde's recollection of his childhood in an immigrant neighborhood in Chicago, the fact how Romania "takes him back" exemplify what Martyna Bryla postulates of the "Other Europe existing beyond the present moment" insofar as the experience of an Eastern Bloc country is "capable of affecting the character in unexpected ways" (486). Corde's wry humor appears in relation to poor heating in apartments in December: "A temperature of fifty-five degrees [Fahrenheit] was ideal for cyclamens" (57).

The perspicacious novelist depicts not only Valarie's neighbors as *Securitate* informers, but even a trusted maid, friends and relatives collaborate with the comprehensive state surveillance system. The paranoid regime had a considerable network of undercover informants. *Securitate* agents kept files on citizens as well as on foreign visitors. Opinions deviating from the party line made people "objects" to be watched. Gabriela Glăvan reveals that "[d]uring the surveillance process, the refashioning of the 'object's' life usually began by infiltrating at all levels of his/her private and professional life, with a clear preference for colleagues and friends" (160). Surveillance is revealed early in the novel: "The fat concierge, Ioanna, was in continual conversation with these loungers. She reported to them. But she was also a friend of the family. That was how it went" (Bellow 9). At the funeral scene, Corde observes "Ioanna beside the coffin, which has just arrived. She was kissing Valerie's hand, laying it to her cheek. She wept brokenly to the dead woman… asking to be forgiven," ostensibly for working as an informer (210). Intelligence-gathering at the most elementary level is brought to light by Dennis Deletant:

> Every block of flats was required to nominate from among its residents a 'caretaker' who would be responsible not only for the upkeep of the building but also for keeping a register of all tenants and visitors who spent more than 24 hours in a flat. Every fortnight the register would be inspected by the local Securitate officer in whose 'beat' the block fell. (37)

The fact that Corde's wife had defected obliged the totalitarian authorities to ruin as much as possible the first visit back to her homeland, culminating in preventing hospital visits with her mother. Minna, like Alexandra Bellow, was "treated as a traitor to the Romanian state and punished by being denied access to her dying mother" (Mikic 194). When the menacing Colonel from the *Securitate* offers Mr. and Mrs. Corde the opportunity to visit the dying Valerie as often as they wished, it is on condition that Valerie be transferred out of ICU to a multi-patient room. Of course, this will lead to the disconnecting of medical instruments regulating her vital signs, thereby resulting in her death

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in a matter of minutes. The cynicism of the Colonel's spiteful offer "was just his way of sticking it to the daughter. A bonus" (Bellow 64). It climaxed the Colonel's way of demonstrating his might over Westerners with their freedom to travel and their pelf which the Colonel candidly envied. His coercion creates extreme emotional anxieties about how doctors might address the illness of Minna's mother and Minna's ensuing guilt that being a "traitor" who had defected to the West might have dire consequences for her mother's medical treatment. Dr. Moldovanu performed a tracheotomy on Valerie, but Minna, still not allowed to visit her, was told by the doctor that more detailed decisions as well as her condition could not be discussed on the phone; she would have to come in person to the hospital (which was forbidden by the Colonel). Bellow fulminates against this mistreatment, "[h]e had come to Europe to interpose himself between Minna and this bughouse country. For clearly the guys in charge were psychopaths. There were no rational grounds for what they did" (77).

In his position as an American witnessing the appalling behavior of Romanian state officials towards his wife, Bellow showed complete loyalty to his wife and her extended family, while trying to use whatever leverage he could muster to help her, such as contacting the US ambassador to Romania, Rudolph Aggrey, an African American official portrayed in The Dean's December (Bellow 58–70), who had been appointed by President Carter the year before. In evaluating Romanian society with the US ambassador stationed in Bucharest in the novel, Corde discusses cultural topics (both Corde and the ambassador worked in Paris) before zeroing in on "the outlook and psychology of officialdom in the Communist world, the peculiar psychoses of penitentiary societies like this one" (Bellow 61). Corde offers a universal "scale of evil" he envisions in reviewing historically oppressive conditions people have been forced to contend with: "A is bad, but B is worse and C worse still. When you reach N, unspeakable evil, A becomes trivial" (63). The wiretapping, the informers and the frustratingly-long wait for bureaucratic permission to make routine hospital visits to a dying relative are modest slights during their brief visit, Corde acknowledges, compared to gulags or the torture Romanian dissidents have perennially endured.

In an interview, Romanian novelist Norman Manea stated that "living in a state without liberty, the paths for evil are catastrophically increased" (Stavans 103). As Corde discusses with the ambassador, "I have a fairly complete idea of how things are in this part of the world – forced labor, mental hospitals for dissenters, censorship" (Bellow 63). Furthermore, he witnesses many kinds of more or less "imprisoned"

echelons of Romanian people and differing degrees of "unfreedom," all ominously resulting in greater suffering than his wife's. Nevertheless, as Corde mournfully informs the US Ambassador, "My wife thinks that her mother can't understand why she doesn't come" (64). Corde notes empathetically that not just his wife but all Romanian people "were faced by the organized prevention of everything that came natural" (108). Gustavo Sánchez-Canales notes that "the dean's patronymic surname connoting 'heart' underscores his willingness to communicate with others through the heart" (148), a connotation Bellow intended as Corde strongly empathizes with the masses of suffering Romanians. In an essay published in *Esquire* magazine in 1983, Bellow lays blame for the cruel political and economic situation in which Romanians found themselves in the decades following World War II squarely on President Franklin Delano Roosevelt: "For opinions on his [Roosevelt's] dealings with Stalin I refer the readers to the Poles, the Czechs, the Romanians et cetera" (Bellow 325), whereas no blame is directed to the Iron Guard or any other fascist powers ruling wartime Romania, a position Bellow will later change.

By contrast, Bellow shows how American freedom, especially since the 1960s, has encouraged the disappearance of decency, while ordinary Romanians living under oppression have not lost this essential element of social behavior. Yet Romania offers what Corde appositely perceived as a "miserable damn comfortless life, and scary as well as boring" (118). As Peter Hyland emphasizes, Corde "is largely isolated from those who visit [his mother-in-law] Valerie's apartment by his inability to speak their language, and aware of his impotence in a society in which he is literally 'alien'" (91–92). Broken English and some French make communication between Romanians and Corde barely possible. Accordingly, Corde is linguistically dependent on his wife. In contrast to the non-Jewish protagonist, Bellow's parents emigrated from St. Petersburg, Russia to a town just outside Quebec, Canada, in 1914, a year before the future novelist's birth. Through birthplace, heritage and religious education, he learned as a child English, Yiddish, Hebrew, French and some Russian. Bellow spoke his rusty Russian with Romanians he encountered, communicating better with Romanians than the novel indicates. Bellow's fictional Gentile stand-in, Albert Corde, only speaks some French.

Unlike other American authors, such as John Updike, whose character in his short story "Bech in Rumania" (1966) meets two Romanian fiction writers, or Philip Roth, who fictionalized his visits with dissident writers in Prague during the 1970s (Bryla 16), Corde never meets intellectuals while visiting Bucharest. In contrast, Bellow actually met

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writers "at a small official gathering at the Romanian Writers' Union" and was rudely insulted by communist officials, as Norman Manea affirmed (239). Unlike Roth and Bellow, Updike portrays little oppression in Henry Bech's visit to pre-Ceaușescu Romania and other East Bloc countries in late 1964, which fictionalizes John Updike's travel to Romania. As biographer Adam Begley puts it, "Bech's report from the other side of the Iron Curtain is conspicuously devoid of Cold War angst" (303), and though somewhat annoyed by Romanian officials, Updike's protagonist groused about American government officials in Bucharest as well, in stark contrast to Bellow's protagonist.

Alexandra Bellow commented on her husband's accuracy in recording their December 1978 visit: "He didn't actually have to invent anything… there was so much going on and it was all so dramatic and so brutal. He didn't exaggerate one iota. It was real life, told poetically by a great writer" (Mikics 199). Corde notes how women friendly to Minna and her mother waited for hours in line so that he might experience better food than the vast majority of Bucharest's inhabitants could rarely, if ever, enjoy:

> Aged women rose at four to stand in line for a few eggs, a small ration of sausages, three or four spotted pears. Corde had seen shops and the produce, the gloomy queues—brown, gray, black, mud colors, and an atmosphere of compulsory exercise in the prison yard. The kindly ladies were certainly buying on the black market, since Corde and Minna gave Gigi all the lei, bought with dollars at the preposterous rate of exchange". (51)

Corde perceptively noted that "feeding an American must have diverted these elderly women" (52) who benignly wish him to experience good things while accompanying Minna as her mother suffers her final days. Visiting a communist country undergoing an austerity plan, with strict food rationing and power cuts (Massino 228), Corde presents the social system of Ceaușescu's Romania to American readers as a heterodoxy of democratic political theory. At the same time, he sympathizes with local women who show grace and cordiality: "Corde observed that here was another case of humane cooperation among women in a Communist society… People in reduced emotional circumstances set their affections on something or other. They were pitted against Eros—against the universe" (Bellow 75). After Corde's lobbying with the ambassador, the Colonel permits Minna just one visit to her mother in the ICU; with a bribe of "a pack or two of king-sized Kents" (168), Minna's Aunt Gigi visits her sister as well. Valerie dies later that evening.

BELLOW'S SELF-CENSORSHIP

As Vicente Andreu-Besó succinctly puts it, "It is highly ironical to find the protagonist, Albert Corde, fighting corruption in his articles about Chicago and, at the same time, bribing officials to solve his bureaucratic problems in Bucharest" (35). Michael Glenday likewise observes, "the repressions of the Communist State are too weakly suggested in this novel, and the venality of Romanian officialdom, easily bribed with a packet of Kents, hardly does justice to the unconscionable reality of life in the communist bloc" (147). However, the ethical reasons for under-representing his wife's most egregious experiences, as well as those of the Romanians Bellow witnessed, are well known. According to Mark Connelly, Bellow was "concerned about the book's impact on his wife's family in Romania, who could face persecution because of its unflattering portrait of the regime" (59).

Undoubtedly, Bellow had to be particularly circumspect in how his fictional Romanian characters express themselves. No epithets, for example, nor jokes about Nicolae or Elena Ceaușescu, which were so common among the people, appear in the novel (Glăvan). All the criticism of Romania in *The Dean's December* comes from the mouth of Albert Corde, or the narrator, or the naturalized US citizen Minna Corde, but not once from any fictional Romanian characters. I suggest that Bellow scrupulously committed self-censorship for the first time in his literary career. As a consequence, Bellow wrote about some, but not nearly all, of the difficulties of his visit, even though he safely resided in the US. His motivation was to pass some standard of Romanian censorship lest his novel become deleterious to his Romanian in-laws. This self-designed censorship made unfamiliar demands on Bellow's creative process. He had not been compelled before to write fiction under such pressure. While censorship may have become a developed theme, fears of the consequences of the novel are not directly or indirectly expressed by Corde. Within Romania, Liviu Maliţa reveals that the term "censorship" itself was "purged from public discourse, where censorship was officially presented as a positive one, of 'coordination and guidance' for cultural and artistic activity in Romania. Only Ceaușescu could afford to use [the term] openly" (28). Corde's empathy and frustration focuses primarily on his wife's hospital visits and Romanians' daily struggles. Bellow's letters came out in 2010, revealing an anxiety of his writing and editing process. In a letter dated August 15, 1981, Bellow wrote, "my book may do friends of the family harm; it keeps me up at nights… How could I face Sanda [Loga] if I increase fame and fortune while she…

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[Note: Bellow leaves the last sentence incomplete]. Doing wrong will cause severe suffering in every way and will Alexandra forgive me?" (Bellow 451). Exactly four and a half months later on New Year's Eve 1981, Bellow confesses to Philip Roth, "I may have a breakdown. I'm not pretending, I'm ready for a padded cell, *The Dean* took it out of me" (462). Bellow feared retribution for writing too candidly despite much self-censorship. Given Bellow's tendencies to write according to his personal experiences, it would not require much effort by *Securitate* sleuths.

While fearing the system of Romanian oppression, Bellow nevertheless conveys the systematic daily surveillance of ordinary people going about their own business. His worries about Alexandra's relatives extended to Romanian writers with whom he had briefly met, as he kept that meetings with the Romanian Writers Union out of *The Dean's December* as well. He might have known about the vicious attack on dissident Monica Lovinescu in 1977 arranged by *Securitate* or about other cases. Bellow accordingly held back on promulgating his or Alexandra's worst experiences to the wider American public. As he told Manea in an interview, "I was aware that I was not telling the whole truth about the one place or the other" (Bellow and Manea 172).

According to Martin Corner, the journalist Albert Corde in his article expresses that, whether in Bucharest or Chicago, the unspoken division in human society is between the doomed, those who are tacitly assumed to be disposable, and those who do the disposing (121). In vastly different ways, both systems oppress ostracized groups of their respective citizenry:

> Instances are not being stacked up as evidence of some prior judgement, nor are the details being made to carry Corde's personal feeling. Bellow's description is entirely particular, yet the passages convey much of the truth of Ceausescu's Romania, a public truth of history overshadowed by the pervasive twentieth century realities of loss and death. The domination of arbitrary rules; the surviving strength of families and connections; shoddiness and general incompetence; individual resourcefulness against the odd. (Corner 126)

Bellow brings a vision of a universal wasteland encompassing both the rotten West detailed in the City of Chicago and the iron-curtained East particularized by communist Bucharest. Bellow's treatment of Romania was not criticized by reviewers. The only criticism was that the novel was too softly critical. The fact that Bellow links life struggles in Bucharest with impoverished and imprisoned African Americans and the social ills of crime in Chicago was significantly less well-received, though Corde's ensuing epiphany of enlightened

spirituality enhanced by his amorous marriage enables him to overcome these malicious conflicts.

FOLLOW-UP REVISIONS OF ROMANIANS IN *RAVELSTEIN*

In *Ravelstein*, the final novel published in 2000, when Bellow was nearly 85 years old, Romanians come to the forefront of some debates with considerable revisions. Overwhelming critical attention was paid to Bellow's portrait of Allan Bloom, a classics professor who replaced the retiring Mircea Eliade on the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago in 1979. Aside from outing Bloom as an HIV-positive pedophile, Bellow derided many other colleagues at the university. Begun after moving from Chicago to Brookline in the Boston metropolitan area, Bellow's *roman à clef* centers on Abe Ravelstein, the fictional *alter ego* of Bloom (Salomon 167), who denounces the Romanian Mircea Eliade as a fascist (in the novel Eliade is renamed Radu Grielescu). Eliade was the leading scholar of comparative religions in the US and had taught at Chicago since 1957, keeping his fascist past in the 1930s undercover. Bellow had worked with him on the Committee on Social Thought since 1962, and a close friendship developed. Saul met his wife Alexandra through Eliade in the early 1970s. The two couples—the Bellows and the Eliades (Christinel and Mircea)—socialized at weekly gatherings and dinners on and off campus from the 1970s to the mid-1980s. Eliade had made numerous suggestions on the manuscript of *The Dean's December*, particularly on the Romanian representations. Bellow and Eliade remained close friends until Eliade's death in 1986. The biographical information is significant because, as Willis Salomon maintains, "[t]he intersection of biography and elegy govern the unfolding narrative of Bellow's novel *Ravelstein*, especially in Bellow's construction of character" (167).

At his death, Bellow and Bloom attended Mircea Eliade's funeral held at the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel on April 28, 1986, where Bellow read the funeral panegyric, honoring Eliade's enormous scholarly contributions. Later that year, Bellow was featured for six minutes in a TV recording, "Mircea Eliade—His Name and His Destiny" (1992), praising the accomplishments and personality of his close friend.

Over the course of decades since his death, it has been documented that Eliade had been a fervent supporter of the Iron Guard, a mystic right-wing political force in the late 1930s, which formed a coalition government with General Ion Antonescu, the Nazi *conducător*, who persecuted Romanian Jews during World War II. The fascist coali-

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tion government of the Iron Guard and Antonescu's party enabled Eliade's diplomatic career from 1940–45 as a representative of fascist Romania at embassies in London and Lisbon. In the novel *Ravelstein*, the stand-in character is a contemptible political advocate "in league with the killers" (Bellow 202). Abe Ravelstein sententiously informs Chick, the Bellow-character, of the Romanian's ugly past: "Grielescu is making use of you. In the old country he was a fascist. He needs to live that down. The man was a Hitlerite" (124). However, who really informed Bellow about Eliade's fascist past was not he classics professor Allan Bloom, but fellow novelist Philip Roth. Five years after Bloom had passed away from AIDS, Roth mailed to Bellow in 1997 Norman Manea's article "Felix culpa" issued in *The New Republic*. Detailing Eliade's pro-Nazi articles written in the Romanian language, Manea criticized Eliade for not owning up to his colossal error in judgment. As Mihai Mindra points out, Manea's essay was "considered scandalous in xenophobic Romania but mild in democratic United States" (84). Bellow's letters show how he learns that this friend passionately advocated for pro-Iron Guard politics in Romanian periodicals, including enthusiastic assessments of Hitler's Germany.

One would be remiss not to mention that Alexandra Bellow divorced her husband in 1986 and *Ravelstein* offers hostile references to her. However, savagely depicting a wife or ex-wife ruining the life of her husband has been a common feature for Bellow, much like Bellow had his first wife Anita Goshkin as "Iva" in *Dangling Man* (1944), his second ex-wife Sondra Tschacbasov as "Madeline" in *Herzog* (1964) and disparaging comments about his third wife Susan Glassman as "Denise Citrine" in *Humboldt's Gift* (1975). The advocacy of Romanians in his travel fiction had changed dramatically since Bellow showed no benign Romanians in *Ravelstein*, written two decades after Bellow's trip to Romania. Bellow reverses his sympathetic depiction of Alexandra's deceased mother, Florica, whom the narrator in *Ravelstein* impugns as anti-Semitic, in spite of her successfully hiding Jews during World War II. American readers of *Ravelstein*, focusing on Bellow's portrait of Allan Bloom, will have to be *qui vive* for his attacks on Romanians.

In his review of *Ravelstein*, Norman Podhoretz states that "Bellow takes so little trouble to disguise the characters who appear here that they are all easily recognizable as this or that person. Calling *Ravelstein* a *roman à clef* therefore verges on understatement" (n.p.). Bellow ends *The Dean's December* with an epiphany for the professionally defeated Albert Corde. Dewey Spangler, modeled on the political journalist Richard Rovere (Bellow 422), attacks Albert Corde and ruins his academic career (much like Madeline

ruins Moses Herzog's career in academia in Bellow's bestseller from 1964). Influenced by the muckraking tradition, Spangler is a pundit whose writing is published in the top political journals and appears on prominent TV news programs, such as "Face the Nation." Rovere memorably pursued "dirt" on conservative politicians, especially Senators Joseph McCarthy and Barry Goldwater. However, back in the 1930s, when Bellow and Rovere were Marxist colleagues, they were on the friendliest of terms. In *The Dean's December*, Rovere's stand-in Spangler is preparing to interview Ceaușescu in preparation for an article on developments in Communist countries. Bellow suggests that Spangler's journalism will be very friendly to the dictator.

DISCUSSION

As a *roman à clef*, Bellow's final novel construed as Bellow's "memorial" to Bloom, clearly does more than just fictitiously parrot real people at the University of Chicago, as Podhoretz asserts. As to the Bellow stand-in narrator named Chick, the reader never gets any sense of his peripetia regarding his close friendship with the stand-in for Eliade. That Bellow had closely befriended an Iron Guard philosopher for two and a half decades must have been quite revolting. Saul Bellow became so conservative that he could not see the forest for the trees; he could not recognize neo-fascists standing right before him. Indeed, in one passage in *The Dean's December*, Bellow stand-in Corde essentially expresses sympathy for elderly members of the Iron Guard. At the crucial funeral scene, Bellow tellingly represents older Romanians paying their last respects to Corde's deceased mother-in-law, Valerie:

> They came out with a sort of underfed dignity in what was left of their pre-socialist wardrobe, to affirm that there was a sort of life—and perhaps, as communists or even Iron Guardists (it was conceivable), they had sinned against it—the old European life which at its most disgraceful was infinitely better than this present one. (122)

In this passage, "the old European life," including life under Iron Guard persecution of Jews, is shown to have been "infinitely" preferable to life under Nicolae Ceaușescu. Bellow thereby relativizes the murders of Jews perpetrated by the Iron Guard as they wear their notorious green uniforms to Valerie's funeral. The drastically conflicting feelings on display regarding Iron Guard members in *The Dean's December* and *Ravelstein* could not be any starker. Likewise, Corde's defense of his Communist official mother-in-law when Dewey Spangler associates her with the Romanian Stalinist Ana Pauker (173) is in severe

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contrast with Bellow's representation in *Ravelstein* of Emil Cioran, the Romanian-born French philosopher, who "cling[s] to France, home is disgusting… this applies to somebody like Cioran" (107–108). The real Romania which Bellow visited co-exists with another mental country provided in his final campus novel, and it was his personality which ordained Bellow's method.

Overall, Bellow's artistic achievement in *Ravelstein* is marred by personal swipes directed at his fourth ex-wife, with a penchant for cheap shots at anyone connected to her country of origin, including some minor characters, a complete reversal from his 1982 novel. Indeed, life imitates art, as Bellow's final autofictional novel reveals him to behave like Dewey Spangler, the American antihero in *The Dean's December*, who takes a soul-searching conversation with Corde and transforms it into a sensational interview, publishes it, and consequently ruins the career of a man whose friendship spanned over thirty years. The only difference is that Spangler did his distortions to a living person, Albert Corde, who might defend his name, while in his characterizations Bellow deliberately aimed to ruin reputations of the dead: Rovere, Bloom, and Eliade.

Abstract: Saul Bellow (1915–2005) traveled to Bucharest in December, 1978, to assist his Romanian-born wife who wished to attend to her dying mother. He experienced Bucharest for the first time and realistically conveyed his wife's humiliating experience with the *Securitate* of Ceauşescu's regime in the novel *The Dean's December* (1982). This contribution will underscore the anxiety which Bellow experienced writing the novel, leading him to pre-emptive self-censorship, undermining to some extent his brief look inside communist Romania and its people during its repressive years. Bellow followed up that novel 18 years later with a pronounced anti-Romanian take in *Ravelstein* (2000) in which, among other themes, the youthful fascist past his former university colleague and friend Mircea Eliade is exploited to implicate Eliade in Profesor Ioan Culianu's murder on campus in 1991. *Ravelstein* is revealed as a cruel novel impugning a few stand-in Romanian characters, as Bellow exposes his thoroughly modified perspective on Romania.

Keywords: Saul Bellow, Romania, cold war, communist oppression, self-censorship

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GEOGRAPHIES OF TERROR
Homecoming and Displacement in Global War on Terrorism Fiction

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After the September 11th attacks on New York, the US found itself engaged in a seemingly endless series of conflicts across the Middle East and the rest of the world. While American soldiers certainly saw no shortage of wars in the twentieth century, it is undeniable that the new millennium has—so far—been characterized by an endless effort on the part of the United States to police distant places in order to maintain a geopolitical stability that best aligns with its interests. The hemispheric reach of what could only be described—at the beginning of the twenty-first century—as the last remaining global superpower, coupled with the traumatic moment of 9/11, made sure that American intervention in foreign conflicts in the postwar period (Korea, Vietnam, Iraq in 1990) swiftly turned into an even denser net of military operations as well as large-scale campaigns in which the US openly acted as an invading power. Modern American warfare became ever more itinerant and far-reaching, just as war struck home soil for the first time in decades.

Consequently, throughout the years, American war narratives increasingly focused on the soldier's voyage to distant lands, as in the case of Vietnam, only to recently transition into the realm of diffused, globalized warfare. Accordingly, this article aims at tracking the development of American war narratives as characterized by the global and temporally indefinite nature of US conflicts in the twenty-first century, with an emphasis on the endless movement of people that is generated by—and at the same time fuels—these wars. Focusing mostly on literature produced by American veterans, I argue that, in contrast with previous works linked to other conflicts, recent war narratives of the so-called Global War on Terrorism, such as Phil Klay's

Missionaries (2020) and Elliot Ackerman's *Places and Names* (2019) emphasize the global interconnectedness and temporal indeterminacy of these incessant military operations through the depiction of vagrant characters as well as through formal choices—like the employment of multiple perspectives—that help in undoing the conventional soldier's journey.

Unlike "traditional" literary soldiers, who lose their innocence after discovering the horrible reality of war, like Stephen Crane's Henry Fleming in *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), GWOT veterans *literally* cannot return home: cyclical deployments to different war zones engulf them in an endless cycle in which violence intersects with economic interests—akin to medieval *condottieri*, they frequently develop into war experts who can remuneratively contribute to the next war. My argument here is that GWOT literature not only displaces the narration of war domestically with a focus on the "home front," but it also widens its scope by showing the global consequences of the United States' involvement in several foreign conflicts around the world. Therefore, in this essay I will suggest that the nomadic nature of the people involved in these conflicts is coherent with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's idea of the war machine, which, theorized in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), appears in nomadic societies and works in open opposition to the power of the State, but is later appropriated by it (420). Once this appropriation is complete, the war machine takes total war as its primary objective, and even surpasses it: "The war machine reforms a smooth space that now claims to control, to surround the entire earth. Total war itself is surpassed, toward a form of peace more terrifying still" (421). This new geography of terror, encompassing the whole globe, bears the trace of American warfare—wherever there is war, the US is present.

The pervasive nature of the war machine ensures that no individual can evade its power, and one of the notable developments of recent American war literature is its attempt at capturing this universal influence by abandoning the lone American's point of view and aspiring to embrace a more polyphonic and varied array of narrators. Noncombatants—especially non-Americans—are depicted as being characterized by the same nomadic qualities as those that characterize American soldiers. Forced to abandon their native lands because of war and its ensuing destruction, these individuals possess far less *motility* compared to their American counterparts. Intended as the ability to move autonomously, or the "specific set of characteristics that allows an actor to be mobile" (Kaufmann and Audikana 41), motility is a concept used in transport studies and sociology

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to assess the capacity for movement as opposed to movement *per se*. Haunted by their initial experience of war, these characters seem unable to escape their connection with armed conflicts because they are quite literally everywhere—the global nature of contemporary warfare, coupled with the limited agency when it comes to their travels, leaves little room for escape for the most vulnerable. GWOT literature often depicts paradoxical encounters between these groups: former American soldiers in search for yet another war meet those that have been displaced by previous conflicts and have inevitably ended up in spaces dominated by organized violence. Travel and war intersect, exposing the complex and uneven nature of human movement around warfare.

War has always been inextricably linked to travel, whether it be an attraction for young and hopeful reporters, desperate civilians seeking refuge, or soldiers stationed in foreign lands. Early American narratives such as James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* (1827–1841) explored war on the American frontier, while Walt Whitman's *Drum-Taps* (1865) and Herman Melville's *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866) addressed in poetry the fratricidal violence of the American Civil War. Indeed, typical war stories of the time are rife with youthful protagonists who want to prove themselves on distant battlefields, only to find out that the stories they have been fed about war, virtue, and honor are a bitter lie. Leo Tolstoy's prince Andrei in *War and Peace* (1867), Stephen Crane's Henry Fleming in *The Red Badge of Courage*, Ernest Hemingway's Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), although set apart by their own specificities, all follow the familiar "post-heroic" plot that works to undo the "dulce et decorum est" adage. Indeed, this trend was not limited to literary fiction—according to Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), British wartime poets like Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon helped in exposing in verse the absurdity of the early twentieth century "conception of war as strenuous but entertaining" (25) propagated by works of popular literature that "demonstrate[ed] how much wholesome fun is to be had at the training camp" (28), and that were often authored by civilians who had little to no knowledge of the war.

American war narratives of the Vietnam-era arguably continued the legacy of modern war stories that rejected the valorization of "naïve" heroism that characterized the Greco-Roman tradition, in which acts of valor in war were memorialized for the benefit of the benefit of the state, which L. V. Pitcher calls a "nexus of war, memorialization, and artistic prestige" (73). Works like, for instance, Thomas Pynchon's

Gravity's Rainbow (1973), as well as novels and short stories by Kurt Vonnegut and Tim O'Brien seem to have been formally impacted by the traumatic nature of combat, and accordingly display the temporal textual features associated with PTSD or, as Mark Heberle puts it in his book about Tim O'Brien titled *A Trauma Artist* (2001), these texts imitate "traumatization through style, organization of narrative, and point of view. Among the characteristic devices of such enactments are repetition; fragmentation; violation of temporal sequence" (15). However, the healing of the wounds of war is not only synonymous with the repetition of the traumatic event and the recollection of one's experience over time, but it also coincides—most often—with the soldier's journey towards their home, a supposed journey towards peace.

The impossibility of adjusting to civilian life after a conflict, and therefore the inability to truly "go home," is a common trope in war stories. Forty years before the war in Vietnam—the event that is most associated with a fallout in military-civilian relations—Ernest Hemingway addressed the topic in "Soldier's Home" (1925), a short story in which an American soldier returns to his hometown after WWI. According to Steven Trout, the story epitomizes the homecoming process for the veterans of the Great War as the nation yearned for a return to the life before the war, which he describes as "a fundamentally backward-looking, escapist impulse prompted by the death, amid the Versailles Conference and the League of Nations debacle, of Wilsonian idealism and all the self-righteous fervor that had fueled the Great Crusade" (11). The struggle that many veterans go through as they switch faraway battlefields for the supposed comforts of home are indeed the subject of many contemporary American war stories, and especially of those written by veterans.

Notably, this allure of war that characterizes American soldiers and veterans is also extended to nonfighting Americans, and is certainly older than the War on Terror. About ten years before the September 11th attacks, in the opening pages of the autobiographically inspired novel *An Afghanistan Picture Show* (1992), William T. Vollman noted the captivating draw that war has on the protagonist's mind and identified it as the primary reason for his journey to a distant land: "once upon a time there was a Young Man who wanted to be more than he really was. This made him unhappy. He decided to go to Afghanistan and take pictures of the bullets whizzing past his ears" (13). In the book, the alter-ego of a young Vollmann—a civilian—is drawn to a foreign war in which the US are involved only in a supporting role, and he decides to travel across the world autonomously to supposedly increase American empathy towards the Afghan refugees

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that the war has created. Yet, as Michele Hardesty has noted in a 2009 article titled "Looking for the Good Fight," Vollmann's ambitions are "linked to the currents of US power" (100). Indeed, both textual and paratextual information make apparent the fact that the protagonist (and Vollmann's) position as an American traveler and storyteller comes with several implications. According to Hardesty, like many American protagonists abroad that came before, Vollmann's "young man" is a stand in for the nation and its global influence, and his experience serves as a representation of the "well-intentioned failure" (104) of American foreign policy and international relations.

Vollman's book focuses on an American character traveling to a foreign war in which his country was not directly involved, but was nonetheless an interested party that actively financed one of the factions. Therefore, the character's presence in Afghanistan serves as a reminder of the power that the US projected in the Middle East during the Cold War, an influence which would soon turn into direct military involvement with the First Gulf War, whose short duration and swift success acted as a misleading red-herrings for the future of American warfare. As Barry Buzan noted during the first few years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in a 2006 article in *International Affairs*, the Global War on Terrorism was strategically modelled on the rhetoric of the Cold War, arguing that it could "offer Washington a dominant, unifying idea that would enable it to reassert and legitimize its leadership of global security" (1101) in the absence of the defunct communist threat. The global and transnational nature of this war, waged against state and non-state actors alike against the *threat* of terrorism, necessarily raises questions about the role that the US and its military play on the international stage.

The literature of the Global War on Terror seems to be concerned with issues that closely resemble those depicted in Vollman's *An Afghanistan Picture Show*. However, rather than following an American protagonist who discovers other cultures during a conflict, a number of recent American war narratives try to embrace more "local" perspectives instead of solely focusing on American experiences: many of the American novels that have been published in the last twenty years have a non-American protagonist, or at least feature sections that show Iraqi or Afghan points of view. Some notable examples are Elliot Ackerman's *Green on Blue* (2015), Roy Scranton's *War Porn* (2016), and Phil Klay's *Missionaries*, just to name a few. The first of these works employs a young Afghan protagonist who rises through the ranks of a local militia, the second contains many sections that focus on Qasim, an Iraqi interpreter, while Klay's book, the last in this list, presents its story from both American and Colombian points of view.

According to David Eisler, compared to the American war literature that emerged in response to the Vietnam war, another innovative feature of GWOT literature is that many of its stories take place in the United States, when soldiers come home from war and, in a way, bring war home for the first time. In his recent book *Writing Wars*, he notes that there has been a "shift in narrative content in which contemporary war novels place far more emphasis on the home front compared with the novels written about the Vietnam War" (109). The issue of homecoming is obviously not new in war literature, and it has been treated extensively by Susan Farrell in *Imagining Home: American War Fiction from Hemingway to 9/11* (2017). According to Farrell, American war writers of the twentieth century, such as Ernest Hemingway, Kurt Vonnegut, or Tim O'Brien have frequently addressed this desire for return, because "their male characters repeatedly imagine domestic spaces as alternatives to experiences on the front lines" (9). Although Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (1990) and *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994), as well as Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" serve as notable examples of texts related to the war in Vietnam and the World Wars that take place partly—or mostly in the United States, Eisler's considerations are fairly accurate. Indeed, a growing number of authors have decided to focus on the aftermath of the War on Terror and, more specifically, on the relationship between American veterans and civilians who seem thoroughly uninterested in their nation's combat operations. This is especially true of fiction after 9/11, which follows the tradition that sees "the domestic realm of the home front and the public realm of the front lines as intimately intertwined" (Farrell 13), but does so almost inevitably, as the violence of the attacks on the World Trade Center quite literally brought war home for the first time in over sixty years.

Indeed, even if the attack on Pearl Harbor proved to be an extremely tragic but powerful moment in American history, acting as the tipping point that ended American non-interventionism, the last trace of warfare on American soil was, compared to 9/11, a distant tragedy that befell the American military on a distant territory, thousands of miles from the continental United States. The attack on the World Trade Center, on the other hand, struck a symbol of American power in the country's most populous city, killing thousands of civilians while shattering the invulnerability that the US seemed to have reached after the end of the Cold War. This event arguably changed the spatiality of the American conception of modern warfare, realizing the fear of terrorism and heralding in the era of endless counterinsur-

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gency campaigns. As the towers dedicated to world trade collapsed, the American war machine became truly global.

It is worth noting, then, that along with the temporal dimension of war and its telling, which has historically been the focus of many critical studies, as Kate McLoughlin (107) argues in *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq* (2011), the Global War on Terror has seen some changes in the exploration of modern war's spatial dimension, which has become one of the most salient characteristics of its literature. Contemporary war stories display the interconnectedness of the "home front" with the countless battlefields where American soldiers are stationed, highlighting the rhizomatic nature of contemporary warfare. In this way, these narratives show how incessant movement constitutes a necessary part of this practice, revealing the nomadic nature of those affected by war in one way or another. If, according to Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), "every story is a travel story—a spatial practice" (115), then war stories, which especially in the case of American narratives see their protagonist traveling to distant lands for the first time while they grapple with the practical and moral intricacies of armed conflicts, are particularly relevant cases of narratives in which travel often corresponds to personal development over time. As Kai Mikkonen explains in his article "The 'Narrative is Travel' Metaphor: Between Spatial Sequence and Open Consequence," travel is frequently used as a metaphor for narrative, and it presupposes a certain understanding of causality and linear time: "The travel concept, and especially the journey plot pattern, manifests a specific model of temporality and causality—travel entails the arrangement of points of actuality in temporal order" (287). As I have already pointed out, modern war stories have been, traditionally, constructed as fairly linear travel stories in which a young soldier departs their land, travels either nationally or internationally to a combat zone, and comes back a changed person. However, many narratives of the War on Terror do not follow this relatively straightforward path.

The stories of what have alternatively been called the "forever wars" disrupt such conceptions of time and space and show the omnidirectional spatial and temporal propagation of violence that results from the US involvement in multiple, simultaneous conflicts around the world. If earlier war stories depicted the difficulties of American veterans in going back home and adjusting to civil society once again while battling with the (in)visible scars of combat trauma, many narratives of the War on Terror alter these homecoming stories to show the postwar peregrination of both soldiers and civilians. Caught

in the network of conflicts that span the entire globe, the wanderings of American veterans resemble those of the protagonists of picaresque novels as they move from one conflict to another or are deployed multiple times to the same war, with "incomplete" homecomings in the middle. The consequences of their actions in country, however, are decidedly serious, as local civilians are killed or displaced by the conflicts in which they are involved and are set on the same path of perpetual travel.

Diasporas and (quasi)mercenarism are not the only issues that play a central role in GWOT literature: the economic entanglements of contemporary war zones are also shown to ensure the unending nature of military mobility. As Achille Mbembe argues in *Necropolitics* (2019), modern armed groups, whether linked to state actors or not, configure themselves as Deleuzoguattarian war machines that are fundamentally different from the traditional armies of the past:

> A war machine combines a plurality of functions. It has the features of a political organization and a mercantile company. It operates through capture and depredations and can even coin its own money. To fuel the extraction and export of natural resources located in the territories they control, war machines forge direct connections with transnational networks (85).

In contemporary warfare, war machines are polymorphous by nature and can, at times, be associated with nation states, while regular armies can "readily appropriate some of the characteristics of war machines" (85). As Mbembe explains, modern wars are not waged to control territory, but to swiftly defeat an enemy while disregarding side effects (84), thus creating zones of unstable and fragmented political power where war machines come to be economically influential in the way resources are extracted from war zones: "The concentration of activities connected with the extraction of valuable resources around these enclaves has […] turned the enclaves into privileged spaces of war and death. War itself is fed by the increased sales of the products extracted" (86). In other words, modern war zones become self-replicating, fertile ground for new armed conflicts to spring periodically and profitably.

These lands bear the marks of total war, which is enacted by states and fueled by the economic interests of capitalism. As Deleuze and Guattari note, "the factors that make State war total war are closely connected to capitalism: it has to do with the investment of constant capital in equipment, industry, and the war economy, and the investment of variable capital in the population in its physical and mental aspects (both as warmaker and as victim of war)" (421). The State war machine, however, also breeds its own opposing forces: "the very

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conditions that make the State or World war machine possible, in other words, constant capital (resources and equipment) and human variable capital, continually recreate unexpected possibilities for counterattack, unforeseen initiatives determining revolutionary, popular, minority, mutant machines" (422). In contemporary warfare, these opposing factions regulate the movement of people as they battle each other, maintaining a complex, symbiotic relationship.

These characteristics are extremely apparent in Phil Klay's novel *Missionaries*, in which State interests are invariably tied to those of guerilla and paramilitary groups. In the novel, various characters belonging to the various groups act as focalizers—as readers, we closely follow the story as it is experienced by one character at a time—while their stories slowly converge towards the kidnapping and death of some of the protagonists. Unlike Klay's previous book, *Redeployment* (2014), a collection of short stories about soldiers and veterans set both in Iraq and the United States, *Missionaries* delves deeply in the interconnectedness of America's wars, and takes place on three continents—that is to say, North America, South America, and Asia. The novel is divided into several sections that focus on one or more characters at once, usually featuring the name of the main character as well as the year on the opening page. Although Klay does not use place names in the same way, the geographic breadth of the interconnected stories of the book is unquestionable. For example, the narration sometimes switches from Colombia to the US, from the US to Afghanistan, and so on, but at the end, the narration converges around an event—the kidnapping of Lisette, an American reporter—that brings the four protagonists of the story together. Some of the characters, but especially Americans, move around the world following conflicts, like in the case of Lisette, who, at the end of the novel, says that she had a rather extensive assortment of wars to choose from before coming to Colombia. Talking to one of the other main characters, Mason, who is a US Army liaison in Colombia and an Iraq veteran, she says: "'When I came here […] Diego promised me a good war.' [to which Mason replies:] 'Consider the competition.' He knew he'd rather be here than in Afghanistan, or the Horn of Africa, or the Philippines" (387).

Diego is another character who has ended up in Colombia passing through the wars in the Middle East. More specifically, he has seen combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and is now in Colombia doing what he considers boring, run-of-the-mill tasks when compared to the action of the war in the Middle East. Unlike Lisette, he is a staunch supporter of the series of military operations that the United States engages in across the world. Being in what he calls his "second decade"

of involvement in America's wars, he tells Lisette: "Look, maybe America hasn't been paying attention, but we've gotten very good at fighting these bulshitty wars. Just look at the stats. Numbers of police trained. Number of independent indig operations. Violence up, violence down. Things are getting better. The numbers don't lie" (252). Even though most of the action takes place in South America and the Middle East, the United States' looming presence is always palpable in *Missionaries*. And not only through the American characters whose decisions influence the lives of countless locals, but also with the constant realization by said characters of the hegemonic pull of American money and American culture.

This acute awareness of the (sometimes not so) subtle ways in which the United States influences faraway lands plays a significant part in Elliot Ackerman's memoir *Places and Names: On War, Revolution, and Returning*, which depicts this global reach while offering the experience of a former Marine traveling to a war zone after multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. In accordance with the title of his book, which gestures towards the famous passage in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* in which Frederic Henry states that in war "only the names of places had dignity" (161), Ackerman demonstrates this preoccupation with space during an encounter with a former Al-Qaeda combatant in Türkiye, in which they silently trace their fights in Iraq on a map, adding the dates to determine whether they had fought each other in the past. Furthermore, the several short stories that compose the memoir are introduced by title pages adorned with topographic lines that resemble a map while featuring the names of the cities in which they are set, with locations as varied as Madrid, Neuchâtel, and London, as well as several places in the US and in the Middle East.

In the book, Ackerman is by no means the only nomadic American: both civilians and former soldiers are depicted as being scattered around the world, continuously traveling in and out of war zones. In one of the stories Ackerman describes his encounter with a fellow American soldier in Berlin, years after their first time on the battlefield, showing just how common multiple tours of duty have become: "for years the two of us deployed in and out of Iraq, then later Afghanistan, never serving on the same battlefield but always finding one another when we returned home" (139). Ackerman's wanderings throughout Europe and Asia start because of another American abroad, Matt, a former professor who wants to set up an aid company in Türkiye to underbid competing agencies providing help in Syria, whom he joins in Gaziantep at the beginning of the Syrian civil war. Other veterans also gravitate around the new conflict: "I often meet veterans of the last

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decade's war, wanderers amidst the Arab Spring's upheaval […] Our current 'professions' are often described with a shrug of the shoulders, […] as if our true profession is the unspoken one—the one we left behind" (72). Like the characters of *Missionaries*, real-life veterans are depicted by Ackerman as needing at least some proximity to a war. Vince, a veteran living in Istanbul, explicitly declares this necessity after Elliot's repeated questions as to his move to Türkiye: "in the end he settles on 'to be close to *it*.' It's the same *it* many of us need to be close to" (75, italics in the original).

Ackerman's presence at the border between Türkiye and Syria as a civilian also allows him to come face to face with many locals that have been displaced by war. Drinking tea in a Turkish border town, accompanied by Abed, a Syrian activist in the revolution, he talks to the aforementioned former jihadist—another Syrian refugee—about their motives for joining the war in Iraq. Abu Hassar has, like him, fought in a foreign country, but explains that as a Muslim, it was his duty to do so. The Syrian Civil War, however, is an entirely different thing, as he clarifies to Ackerman and Abed: "the war we fight in Syria is the worst kind […] if you lose your country, what can you do? How can you make another country?" (20). Abed and Abu Hassar are forced to leave their country for technically different reasons, but the underlying cause of their displacement is, of course, the ensuing war in their home country. War unites the displaced from Syria with those from the United States, even though the Americans in Türkiye have decided to move there of their own free will. The experience of war, however, has forever engulfed these veterans, who are inescapably attracted to it, as this passage in the section titled "Expatriates" demonstrates:

> Like Abed and his uncle, I am, and forever will be, living in a strange type of exile, an expatriate of places like Fallujah, Hit, Haditha, and others that barely dot a map. Like any expat, I am defined by a place I might return to someday, the idea that somewhere on my life's horizon is a time when I'll again walk those streets knowing my war is finished (55).

The undetermined temporal nature of the War on Terror has made homecoming impossible, so much so that—at least for Ackerman—homecoming seems to coincide not with a return to an idealized version of the United States, but is instead synonymous with a hopeful as well as improbable peace in the lands that he invaded years prior.

These regions have been, predictably, profoundly changed by the war. During a visit to Fallujah, the site of the fiercest battle between the US forces and the Iraqi insurgency, Ackerman ponders just how much the scars of the battle in which he has participated have forever left

a mark on the city: "I am searching for the marks we left behind. I see them everywhere, commingled with the marks left by others. They have become the city, both battlefield and home" (199). As Kate McLoughlin argues in *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq*, "war involves a particularly intense attachment to location (most often expressed in terms of a relationship with the land) on the part of those fighting it, an attachment that is both cognitive and emotional" (85–86), but Ackerman shows that the affective quality of the former battleground has changed after the end of the war: no longer hostile, the signs of war—inflicted by both Americans and Iraqis—render an otherwise foreign land familiar and welcoming to a former Marine.

Along with the urban modifications that it caused, the American war machine also influenced this faraway land in other, perhaps subtler ways. Shortly before his visit to Fallujah, while having coffee in a chain restaurant in Baghdad, Ackerman explains to the Iraqi photographer working with him that the reason for his abnormally large cup of coffee is to be found in the fact that the kiosk where they are having breakfast happens to be an American chain, and therefore the "medium" size coffee that he ordered is coherent with American standards. Even though Ackerman's status as an American is causing problems with the local administrators, who are reluctant to provide him with a letter of permission to enter Fallujah, US money has already infiltrated the land once again after the formal withdrawal of the armed forces from in Iraq in 2011. The economic forces that feed the war machine now control what had once been the focal point of the American invasion of Iraq, ensuring the Middle Eastern nation remains subjugated to what Deleuze and Guattari would call neocolonial tyranny (456).

The economic power that the US exerts is only rivaled by its cultural influence. In *Missionaries*, during a conversation with Lisette, Diego recalls the random American bits and pieces that surprisingly end up in faraway lands like Afghanistan, and specifically he narrates an incident where he found it necessary to shoot a target that was wearing a Van Halen t-shirt. He says: "This old US culture shit, the excess T-shirts that never got sold, they make their way to these countries like ten years too late […] And then you're looking through the scope getting all nostalgic, like, 'Yeah, man, I danced to that song with Zhanna Aronov at my prom.' And then you shoot the fucker" (318–319). Lisette is reminded of this episode when she is being kidnapped in Colombia because one of his captors is wearing a worn-down Rage Against the Machine t-shirt, another reminder of the cultural reach of what

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she calls "America's not-quite-empire which was always projecting military power across the globe" (318). The Deleuzoguattarian war machine, quite literally manifested on the kidnapper's t-shirt, is at the same time antagonist and supplier, revealing the interconnectedness of the war machine and those who oppose it. In this instance, American cultural hegemony is quickly recognized as standing for the decidedly practical political and military power that the nation exercises across the globe, one that necessarily influences even its fiercest enemies.

US imperialist practices are ubiquitous in *Missionaries*, and the very last chapter explicitly points to the issue of colonialism by including a quotation by French politician Léon Gambetta as an epigraph: "To remain a great nation or to become one, you must colonize" (389). Klay decides to conclude his book by showing Juan Pablo, a former Colombian officer, who has now moved to the UAE to work as a drone pilot for the Emirati government. Unlike my previous examples, this is not an American character that is seemingly doomed to follow the trail of death that their nation has traced around the world, but a citizen of a nation where American interests and influence have had time to alter the course of many lives. And so, a Colombian company that "had a deliberately obscure connection to an American military contracting firm" (391) hires him and catapults him to the Arabian peninsula to pilot drones and fight in the Yemeni civil war.

Here Juan Pablo becomes another cog in the global war machine fueled by American money: "Who is on our side? In our operation center we've got Americans and Israelis and Emiratis and one Colombian. We've got resupply from the United States, arms from half the globe, and if you look closely, see who is supporting this war, you will find that what sits behind us is the entire civilized world" (397–398). The title of the novel reverberates powerfully here, as the religious-like civilizing pretext of western wars is used to justify the use of unchecked and imprecise violence. Juan Pablo, evangelized by American missionaries, has in turn become a harbinger of American civilization in the Middle East and, armed with western technology against the "savages" in Yemen, he becomes a firm believer in a positivist idea of order that cannot stop for trifles like collateral damage. After ending several lives with the push of a button, Juan Pablo is satisfied of his good work, and starts reflecting on his job almost as a sacred, civilizing mission: "What mattered was the global, interconnected system that generated wealth and the technology that ultimately would determine the fate of this war, and the wars to come. That system was civilization. It was progress" (403). Swallowed by American power, Juan Pablo is—in a way—colonized not by the state, but by the military-industrial complex.

Of course, Juan Pablo is not the only character in GWOT literature whose life is upset by foreign military power. Another example of someone that is displaced due to war and American influence in his home country is Haris Abadi, an Arab American former interpreter for the US army, who, after moving from Iraq to the US, ends up traveling to Türkiye to cross the border and fight in the Syrian civil war. Haris is the protagonist of Elliot Ackerman's *Dark at the Crossing*, a novel that does not portray many American characters other than Haris, who obtained his citizenship thanks to his service as an interpreter and through the help of one of the soldiers of the unit to which he was assigned during the war. He is not the typical protagonist of an American war novel: he is an American, but he was born and raised in Iraq, he is not a soldier, but senses the urge to fight in a war in the Middle East as an independent actor. His "homecoming" to the United States is unlike any other: his "return" from Iraq coincides with his first steps in America, since he had never set foot on the continent before. As a consequence, he struggles to adapt to civilian life in the US, just like many other Americans who have experienced war in Iraq.

While it is true that much of the literature of the War on Terror takes place on the "home front," Americans who have been to war never seem quite at home in these books. Instead, they appear to be looking for a home across the world as they follow the conflicts that are constantly generated by the military-industrial complex. In the case of *Dark at the Crossing*, Jim, the sergeant who helps Haris with his citizenship papers, has previously fought in Colombia, and confesses to the protagonist that he exclusively feels at home in combat zones (78–79). According to Jim, the experience of war makes him and Haris akin to brothers who now share the same home—what he fails to account for, of course, is that as an American soldier, he was instrumental in bringing war to Haris' native land. Uprooted from his native land by an American war, Haris is doomed to participate in the same nomadic life of Klay's American "missionaries": soon after leaving Iraq for America, his newly gained "Americanness" seemingly compels him to journey from one war to another, like many veterans of the most recent wars do. The nomadism that generates the war machine is, in this case, reborn as one of its unintended consequences. As Mbembe notes, war machines attempt to "immobilize and spatially fix whole categories of people or, paradoxically, to free them as a way of forcing them to scatter over broad areas no longer contained by the boundaries of a territorial state" (86). And even if Mbembe argues that contemporary wars seem to be fought between two impossibly different groups, those who bear arms against those who do not, these narratives show

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that soldiers manifest a kind of nomadism analogous to that imposed upon noncombatants.

American GWOT literature, then, often substitutes the trope of homecoming with a perpetual hemispheric journey that keeps soldiers and civilians busy even after their first experience of war is concluded. With its depictions of multiple deployments and of the flourishing employment prospects for former members of the armed forces as private contractors that are sent around the world to participate in countless military operations, it ponders the consequences of the choice to switch to a fully professionalized army in the United States. The commercialization of global warfare that is featured prominently in these works seems to thwart the moralizing power of traditional war stories in which youths lose their innocence in the face of war as they realize that it is a horrible and pointless endeavor. War might be horrible, but it is far from pointless in the eyes of those who stand to gain from it: the war narratives analyzed here highlight its dangerously profitable aspects.

Modern wars are shown to be interconnected in a global network of conflicts that are continuously affected by militias and state actors that wield enormous amounts of geopolitical power that is tied to formidable economic interests. Those who live in the Global South are the first to suffer the mortal consequences, and those who survive are forced to embark in perilous journeys to ensure their own safety, while those who fight on any side find themselves engulfed in a never-ending quest to reach the next war. Narratives like Elliot Ackerman's *Places and Names* and *Dark at the Crossing*, as well as Phil Klay's *Missionaries* shine light on a paradoxical consequence of this globalized military market: American soldiers are brought together with the civilians who inhabit the lands were wars are fought in more than one way: not only can they never return home, but they are also "cursed" to be eternal travelers, like the refugees that wars seem to produce as a mere byproduct. Invaders and local populations, divided by agency and power, are all subjected to war's power to destroy homelands and transform individuals into perpetual wanderers.

Abstract: This paper analyzes some of the recent literature of the War on Terror—such as Elliot Ackerman's aptly titled memoir *Places and Names* (2019) and Phil Klay's ironically named novel *Missionaries* (2020)—and explores the spatial dynamics, cultural encounters, and dislocations caused by the series of interrelated conflicts that have characterized the first two decades of the twenty-first century. In doing so, I argue that these narratives highlight the spatially and temporally indefinite nature of the so-called Global War on Terror by portraying displaced civilians and by negating the tradi-

tional journey of the soldier, who is instead depicted as incessantly searching for a home in the next war. Using Achille Mbembe's characterization of contemporary warfare as characterized by *war machines* (theorized by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*) I highlight the way in which war zones are portrayed as the economically significant and self-replicating engines of the global network of power and violence that underlies modern warfare. In this context, the characters of these stories are then depicted as nomadic individuals doomed to perpetually look for their metaphorical home, war itself, across the globe, travelling from one warzone to the next and constituting the threads of a web of smaller conflicts that take place simultaneously, in a seemingly never-ending cycle, around the world.

Keywords: GWOT, war on terror, war literature, travel, displacement, homecoming, American, veteran

Bio: Angelo Arminio holds a joint PhD in American Literature from Sapienza University of Rome and the University of Silesia in Katowice and he is now adjunct professor of English Language at the University of Bergamo. His doctoral dissertation, „On the Frontlines of Fiction: Authority and Fictionality in American Veteran Narratives of the War on Terror," explores themes like authority, memory, trauma, and the rhetorical use of fictionality in narratives related to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. He studied at the University of York and at the Freie Universität Berlin under the Erasmus programme, and he worked as a language assistant in Nuremberg, Germany. His research interests include contemporary narratives of war, postmodern and contemporary fiction, autofiction, narratology, and the works of Walt Whitman. His scholarship has been published on RSA Journal and Iperstoria.

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DECOLONIZING JUSTICE
Indigenous Feminist Activism in Mary Kathryn Nagle's *Sovereignty*

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On March 7, 2013, the US Congress reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) with a new provision (Title IX) that empowered "participating Tribes" with "special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction," authorizing them to prosecute specific acts of domestic violence, dating violence, and violations of certain protection orders on tribal lands, regardless of the perpetrator's Native or non-Native status (*Violence Against Women Act 2013*). Initially passed in 1994 under President Bill Clinton, VAWA was reapproved in 2000 and again in 2005. However, the process leading to the 2013 reauthorization proved contentious. In 2012, when a bill to update VAWA that included a new provision aimed at protecting Native women, immigrants, and the LGBTQ community was introduced, it encountered resistance from some Republican congressmen (Deer 131). Their primary concern was the extension of criminal jurisdiction to tribal governments. They argued that tribal juries, which are predominantly composed of Indigenous members, might not ensure a fair trial for non-Native defendants due to potential biases. This opposition faced substantial criticism from Indigenous communities' members, activists, and writers.[1] They argued that the Republican Party's stance problematically continues a narrative of cultural inferiority entrenched in federal Indian law since the era of removal, a narrative originally formed to justify the conquest of land and the extermination of its

1 Anishinaabe author Louise Erdrich pointedly criticized the Republican Party's attitude and highlighted the severe issues facing Native American women in her New York Times op-ed, "Rape on the Reservation" (*New York Times*). Her 2012 novel, *The Round House*, explores the jurisdictional gaps that hinder the prosecution of violence on reservations.

original inhabitants (Williams 148). This narrative constitutes the basis for the United States Supreme Court's 1978 ruling in *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe*, a decision which stripped Tribal nations of the authority to exercise jurisdiction over non-Native individuals on tribal lands. In the Oliphant decision, Justice William Rehnquist drew on the precedent from the 1823 *Johnson v. M'Intosh* case. In this earlier case, Chief Justice John Marshall declared that Native peoples could not dispose of their land at will or retain their title, because they were considered "savages" and "an inferior race of people," devoid of the privileges of citizens and perpetually under the government's protection (*Oliphant* 209, quoting *Johnson v. M'Intosh* 8). This decision essentially transformed non-fungible Native communal lands into fungible property, emphasizing their loss of sovereignty to the overriding power of the United States.

Notably, the decision to deny tribal courts the authority to prosecute non-natives on tribal lands has grave consequences for Indigenous victims of sexual assault. Tribal governments lack jurisdiction to prosecute non-Indians on reservations, deferring this responsibility to state or federal authorities. As a result, *Oliphant* complicates the protection of all Native peoples from crimes by non-Natives and specifically worsens the suffering of Indigenous women facing domestic assault and sexual violence by ensnaring them in a frustrating tangle of legal systems and investigative delays (Suzack *Indigenous Women* 79).

The 2013 reauthorization of VAWA was seen as a significant step towards the restoration of tribal sovereignty. However, the Act also represents a "partial Oliphant fix," because it allows tribes to prosecute non-Natives for specific domestic crimes, but only if the offenders have significant ties to the tribe, namely "those who reside in the Indian country of the prosecuting tribe, are employed in the Indian country of the prosecuting tribe, or are either the spouse or intimate partner of a member of the prosecuting tribe" (Douglas 772–3). Following the 2013 approval of the Violence Against Women Act, Cherokee playwright Mary Kathryn Nagle, encouraged by two other Native American lawyers and activists who contributed to the campaign for the reauthorization, started writing a play about the topic. The resulting work, titled *Sliver of a Full Moon*, dramatizes the reauthorization of VAWA by blending testimonies by Native women, often delivered by the survivors themselves, with reenactments of discussions between Native activists and federal lawmakers during the law's revision process. A powerful blend of documentary theatre and live testimonies, *Sliver* was performed for the first time in 2013 in Albuquerque, at the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center's conference "Women Are Sacred" and then

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again in 2014 at the US Capitol Visitor Center in Washington, DC and in New York City during the UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, as well as in law schools across the US. The play's title points to the fact that although the reauthorization of VAWA is a step forward, it does not fully reverse the jurisdictional limitations set by the *Oliphant* decision, but instead restores a "sliver" of Native sovereignty.

In her 2018 play, *Sovereignty*, Nagle again takes up the subject of VAWA and its implications, this time crafting a fictional narrative that merges personal and political struggle. The play illustrates how VAWA, similar to other federal legislation, represents a continuation of the historical governmental relationship between Native Nations and the United States. This history of this legal relationship represents a key factor shaping the social context of the ongoing violence against Native women (Agtuca 4). Staged for the first time at the Arena Theatre in Washington DC in 2018, *Sovereignty* unfolds over two parallel timelines: present-day Oklahoma, a young Cherokee lawyer, Sarah Ridge Polson, joins Cherokee Attorney General Jim Ross to defend the inherent jurisdiction of the Cherokee Nation. They advocate for the restoration of their Nation's jurisdiction under the Violence Against Women Act in a pivotal case before the US Supreme Court. This modern struggle is juxtaposed with scenes from the early 1800s when the Cherokee Nation was situated eight hundred miles east in the southern Appalachians. During this period, Sarah's and Jim's ancestors faced a bitter division over a proposed treaty with Andrew Jackson's administration. This historical narrative captures the political and legal events that culminated in the signing of the Treaty of New Echota and the subsequent relocation known as the Trail of Tears. By juxtaposing historical and contemporary events, Nagle illuminates the enduring effects of government policies and laws that continue to render Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women, vulnerable.

In this article, I explore how *Sovereignty* exemplifies Indigenous feminist literary activism through performative counter-storytelling (Maxwell and Sonn 48), which enacts decolonization and reframes the stage as a critical space for asserting Indigenous performative sovereignty and self-determination. Performative sovereignty, as described by the editors of the *Critical Companion to Native American and First Nations Theatre and Performance*, connects the act of making Native theatre to the enactment of Native presence, worldviews, and self-governance. They state: "Native artists make a bold, significant statement: Native theatre is performative sovereignty. This concept arises from continuing the vital role of the oral storyteller in Indigenous cultures,

with every contemporary Native play telling a story about the renewal of Indigenous self-understanding that colonization vigorously worked to eradicate through violence, shame, and silencing" (Darby, Mohler, and Stanlake 192). I employ a reading practice informed by Indigenous feminism to examine how legal and literary representations shape Indigenous women's identities through colonialism, racialization, and gender relations, thus highlighting the importance of these factors in understanding their stories and political struggles. Indigenous feminism represents a critical paradigm that explores how gender injustice against Indigenous women emerges from colonial policies and patriarchal practices that inscribe gendered power dynamics to their detriment (Suzack "Indigenous Feminisms" 261). As a field, it aims to create an intersectional framework that not only views social justice as a goal of community empowerment, but also explains the significance of gender relations in Indigenous emancipation and the practice of tribal sovereignty (Ibid.).[2]

Through this approach, I demonstrate how Nagle constructs an Indigenous feminist subject that advances decolonization by addressing the gendered outcomes of colonial law, challenging patriarchal cultural practices of (mis)representation, and embodying "radical relationality," a concept of collective political organization based on principles of interdependency and responsibility (Hughes citing Yazzie and Risling Baldy 126). In the character of Sarah Ridge Polson, a Cherokee lawyer, and her activism for restoring sovereignty over her body and her nation, *Sovereignty* serves as a powerful form of Indigenous feminist social justice activism through theater. The play reasserts Indigenous women as crucial carriers of culture and guardians of tribal values, demonstrating that tribal sovereignty and gender empowerment are inherently interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

INTERGENERATIONAL STORYTELLING

In *Sovereignty*, Nagle masterfully interweaves past and present through a dramatic structure that challenges linear conceptions of time. In the introduction to the printed version of the play, Nagle provides insightful commentary on this temporal framework: "*Sovereignty* takes place in the early 1800s and the present. We transition back and forth in time fluidly and quickly [...] The worlds coexist, since at any given

2 For a comprehensive source of scholarship that links Indigenous-feminist analysis with intersectionality see Shari Huhndorf and Cheryl Suzack, eds. *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2010.

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moment we are a reflection of our past and present, and we project that into our future" (2). This non-linear time structure is deeply rooted in Native practices, where the boundaries between past, present, and future are fluid and interconnected—a concept Paula Gunn Allen describes as "the ritual nature of time" (94). The ceremonial quality of time is reflected in the play's narrative approach, which seamlessly blends historical and contemporary elements, employing "storying," or "the material act of telling Native story" (Stanlake 118), to shape the plot and inform its staging conventions.

The ritual nature of time is reinforced by the play's vision of place. The opening scene takes place in contemporary Oklahoma, specifically at the Ridge family cemetery, where the young Cherokee lawyer, Sarah Ridge Polson, having returned home after a long absence, meets her aunt Flora, who oversees the cemetery, where their ancestors, Major Ridge and John Ridge are buried. Christy Stanlake notes in her critical work on Indigenous theater that place is so pivotal in Native American plays "that one could argue it carries the same weight as characters as "it dynamically participates in the play's present actions through the relationship forged between human beings and the land" (41–2).

The Ridge family cemetery serves as both a recurring setting and a place of profound historical and personal significance. It reappears mid-play when Sarah's boyfriend, Ben, proposes to her, and becomes central in the play's conclusion, where characters from both historical and contemporary storylines gather on stage. From the start, Sarah Ridge Polson's return to Oklahoma is portrayed as inseparably linked to her family's legacy and the larger narrative of colonization. Set in the cemetery, a sacred burial ground, the opening scene frames Sarah's return as a ceremonial reconnection with her Cherokee identity, her community, and the spiritual realm of her ancestors. Sarah shares with her aunt Flora that she has applied for a position at the Attorney General's office. Flora, however, warns her about the old family tensions, pointing out that the office is run by a descendant of John Ross—a reminder of the deep-rooted conflicts between the Ross and Ridge families. When Sarah considers not mentioning her family background, Flora responds with a blunt warning: "The moment he finds out you're a Ridge, he'll do whatever he can to undermine you, your work, and your reputation. The day you trust a Ross is the day they kill you" (6). Flora's words point to a historical conflict central to the play's narrative: the profound division among the Cherokee people between John Ross's followers, who resisted ceding their sovereign lands in the Southeast, and the Ridge faction, who advocated for relocation to the designated 'Indian Territory' in the West. The Ridge faction's

decision to sign the Treaty of New Echota without John Ross's consent has left a lasting legacy, reverberating through generations and shaping the relationships within the Cherokee community in the present. This treaty ceded Cherokee lands to the United States and triggered the forced relocation known as the Trail of Tears. Following the signing, Cherokee leaders Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot were assassinated by members of their own community, though John Ross consistently denied any responsibility for these murders.

This historical schism drives the plot and exposes the enduring impact of colonialism on Native communities across generations. The cemetery, located just miles from where John Ridge was murdered, becomes a site imbued with historical and spiritual significance. It serves as both a contested space and a sacred burial ground, embodying "the process by which [the old spirits of place] might be made to speak again—how the land may become numinous once more and speak to its dwellers" (Pommersheim 14). As a descendant of Cherokee Nation members who were forced from their homelands, Sarah's personal, cultural, and political perspectives are deeply rooted in her connection to the sacred spaces of her heritage. These spaces are intertwined with the haunting legacy of the Trail of Tears—a deep wound in the heart of the Cherokee community—and the continuing impact of modern federal policies on her life. Her connection to this legacy deepens through the portrayal of her ancestors' united resistance against Andrew Jackson's removal policies. The historical timeline stages the friendship and collaboration among the leaders of the Cherokee nation, John Ross, Major Ridge, and his son John Ridge, alongside Elias Boudinot, as they collectively resist the removal policies of Andrew Jackson's presidency. Nagle introduces them in a scene set in 1827, during which they discuss their opposition to the unlawful policies of the state of Georgia:

John Ross: Major Ridge, sir.
[*Major Ridge turns to see John Ross.*]
John Ross: Two more.
Major Ridge: When?
John Ross: Just last night.
[*Beat.*]
Governor Forsyth's instructed—he's actually ordered the militia to violate our women. Any woman who does not obey their command.
Major Ridge: On Cherokee lands?
John Ross: They say this is Georgia.
Major Ridge: We'll go to Washington. Get this all straightened out.
John Ross: We need to do something more.
Major Ridge: What do you suggest?

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[*John Ross places a draft bill on the table and Major Ridge regards the paper before him*.]
Major Ridge: You drafted this?
John Ross: It's a rough sketch.
Major Ridge [*reading*]: "That any citizen of Georgia—" The law is targeted to citizens of Georgia?
John Ross: We need to make clear the law applies to everyone, Cherokees, non-Cherokees, citizens of Georgia, any non-Indian…
Major Ridge: Whatsoever, who shall lay violent hands upon any female, by ... abusing her person and committing a rape upon such female [...] shall be punished."
John Ross: We will prosecute anyone who rapes a woman on Cherokee lands.
[*Major Ridge nods*] (32–34.)

This detailed historical scene dramatizes the state of Georgia's 1820s assault on Cherokee sovereignty linking it to the violation of Cherokee women. During this period, Georgia passed laws aimed at undermining Cherokee autonomy and eroding their territorial rights. These laws included measures to invalidate Cherokee legal systems, appropriate their lands, and nullify their governmental authority. This legal onslaught was accompanied by physical and sexual violence, illustrating the nexus between legal and sexual violence at the core of the American colonization project. This portrayal illustrates how the systematic dismantling of Cherokee sovereignty was intertwined with broader patterns of exploitation and oppression. As legal scholar Amy Casselman observes, "throughout the history of Euro-American colonization, sexual violence became a central tool of federal law and policy, shaping legal frameworks and policies" (25). In his endeavor to counteract Georgia's unlawful extension of jurisdiction, John Ross embodies what Daniel Heath Justice, in his thorough examination of Cherokee literature and social history, refers to as "Chickamauga Consciousness" (34–8). This term, originating from the nationalist resistance movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, signifies a "spirit of defiance," both physical and rhetorical, within Cherokee culture. The resistant Chickamauga consciousness is contrasted with the Beloved Path, which, as Justice argues, "places peace and cultural continuity above potentially self-destructive rebellion" (39–40). Justice's analysis proposes that Cherokee literature throughout the centuries is deeply influenced by enduring cultural traditions, which involve a balance between negotiation and accommodation, represented by the Beloved Path, and defiance, embodied by the Chickamauga consciousness. While Ross's overt resistance to removal embodies the Chickamauga spirit, Justice observes elements within the Treaty of New Echota that also reflect elements

of rhetorical defiance. Through his analysis, Justice demonstrates that despite historical tensions, both negotiating parties prioritized the best interests of the Cherokee people and that these two approaches "strategic accommodation and tactical defiance, work together to preserve the spiritual commitments, physical bodies, and cultural lifeways of the Ani-Yunwiya, maintaining an ever-fluid balance (42).

RESISTANCE VERSUS NEGOTIATION

Sarah Ridge Polson embodies both the resistant tendencies of the Chickamauga consciousness and the nurturing aspects of the Beloved Path. Her efforts to restore sovereignty over her nation and protect Native women through legal activism align with the Chickamauga consciousness. Simultaneously, she reclaims her role as a Cherokee leader, matriarch, caregiver, and healer. These roles connect Sarah to the historical figure of Nanye'hi (Nancy Ward), whom Justice identifies as embodying the Beloved Path. Nanye'hi, who took up arms in 1755 and gained acclaim as a war leader, became renowned as a Beloved Woman, saving the lives of many Euro-American captives and negotiating with the US government. Justice writes that "Nanye'hi lived during times of extraordinary cultural change and conflict, rising to prominence due to her intelligence, charisma, courage, and endurance, supported by a tribal power structure that provided women with a forum to exercise their abilities. She fought to maintain balance between her people's world and the encroaching European influences" (38). Thus, the character of Sarah not only honors the legacy of Nanye'hi but also challenges stereotypical depictions of Native women. In fact, traditional Western narratives have often portrayed such figures as Sacajawea and Pocahontas as sexualized "traitors" to their communities. These narratives redefined the roles of Indigenous women to diminish their power, serving as instruments of erasure and political containment with enduring consequences in both Native and non-Native communities (Huhndorf 107). By contrast, Sarah honors Nanye'hi's legacy and subverts these damaging stereotypes, transforming them into powerful models for individual identity reconstruction and anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial politics.

A direct descendant of Major Ridge herself, Mary Kathryn Nagle crafts in Sarah Ridge Polson a semi-autobiographical character who embodies the spirit of the resistant Chickamauga consciousness in her role as a lawyer advocating for Native sovereignty and the rights of Indigenous women. During her job interview with Jim Ross at the Attorney General's office, Sarah strategically avoids mention-

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ing her family background. Despite her disagreement with Ross, who labels her ancestors as "traitors," her commitment to restoring Cherokee sovereignty compels her to overlook their differences and pursue the job. When Ross asks, "If you could accomplish one thing while working in this office, what would it be?" Sarah confidently replies: "I want the Cherokee Nation to implement it [VAWA]" (17). The dialogue places the action post-2013, following the reauthorization of VAWA, with a focus on implementing its provisions. Sarah decisively wins the job interview by stating, "for me, VAWA is no different than treaty signing. It's a modern-day treaty from one sovereign to another" (17). She makes it clear that, like treaties, VAWA represents a crucial element of the legal relationship between the US and Native Nations, emphasizing how only their active participation will ensure effective implementation. In doing so, Sarah highlights that without actual implementation, the Act would do very little for Native people, a fact that she reiterates later on: "If Cherokee Nation were to actually get off its butt and implement VAWA, we could prosecute domestic violence crimes perpetrated by non-Indians" (17).

Jim suggests that they travel to Washington DC immediately, representing the Cherokee Nation to discuss the implementation of VAWA with the Department of Justice. Later in the narrative, they return to Washington to meet with the US President, who has "some questions about the legitimacy of tribal jurisdiction" (75). Jim and Sarah's activism indicates the vital relationship between the federal US government and Native nations, highlighting the importance of dialogue and cooperation in order to restore tribal sovereignty. Sarah's willingness to set aside intergenerational conflicts in her collaboration with Jim and to mediate on behalf of the Cherokee Nation demonstrates the "Beloved Path" of cooperation and negotiation. Nagle frames this approach as a crucial aspect of legal and social activism, essential for both Native communities and the US government. In her portrayal of Sarah's activism, Nagle employs counter-storytelling to challenge colonial law and Western legal scholarship, which often detach legal issues from their colonial context. In fact, by placing the federal government at the center of jurisdictional conflict resolution, Western legal narratives obscure the colonial roots of these problems (Cheyfitz 226). Nagle's work uncovers the legal realities concerning historical injustices by addressing the relationship between tribal sovereignty and colonial intrusions. She stresses the importance of dialogue between sovereign nations, pointing out that this sovereign–to–sovereign relationship is crucial for resolving conflicts and ensuring that legal interactions between the US and Native nations do not perpetuate past injustices.

PERFORMATIVE COUNTER-STORYTELLING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

In *Sovereignty*, Nagle employs performative counter-storytelling, a powerful tool for achieving social justice by counteracting conventional narratives upheld by the US legal system that further assimilative governmental objectives. Performative counter-storytelling involves the use of narrative and performance to challenge dominant discourses, reveal hidden truths, and promote social change (Maxwell and Sonn 48). Nagle's narrative exposes the legal realities surrounding historical injustices and connects them to contemporary issues, thereby addressing the gaps and biases in conventional legal and social narratives. In this play, Nagle does more than merely recount past events; she employs storytelling as a transformative tool to redefine the present and future. By highlighting the enduring impacts of colonial intrusions on tribal sovereignty, she repositions jurisdictional conflicts within a colonial narrative, both historically and through the contemporary activism enacted by her protagonist. This approach not only illuminates the legal complexities faced by Native communities but also challenges the erasure of historical gender inequalities that persist in legal discourses.

In the second scene of the play, Nagle sets the stage for a profound exploration of the interplay between legal issues and violence, underscoring the complexity of the challenges that Sarah and her community face. This scene, set in the Cherokee Nation Hard Rock Casino, opens with Ben, a non-Indian Special Victims Unit police officer, and Mitch, a non-Native lawyer, meeting with Watie, a tribal police officer and Sarah's brother. When a drunk man becomes unruly and assaults Watie, a jurisdictional dilemma arises: Ben cannot arrest the assailant on Cherokee land, and Watie, as a tribal officer, cannot arrest a non-Native who attacks a Native person. The absence of federal agents, the only authority capable of intervening, shows the legal limbo and governmental failure to protect Native victims of violence on tribal lands. Nagle adeptly highlights the absurdity and gravity of this jurisdictional conflict, emphasizing the vulnerability of Native communities under current legal frameworks. Her choice to stage this event at a Cherokee Casino is significant. Casinos have brought considerable economic prosperity to Native people. Thus, by choosing this setting, Nagle shows how attacks on tribal sovereignty can occur even within spaces that symbolize Native economic independence. After the attacker leaves, Sarah enters the Casino to find her brother injured. In an exchange with Ben and Watie, Sarah reiterates the history of legal decisions that precipitated such attacks, using storytelling

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to underscore the dysfunction of federal Indian law and its devastating impacts on tribal communities:

> Ben: So crazy to be standing there—you know, two sets of police, and neither one of us could do anything.
> Sarah: Because of *Oliphant*.
> Ben: An elephant?
> Mitch and Sarah: *Oliphant*.
> […]
> Sarah: In 1978 the Supreme Court said Tribes can no longer exercise criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians who come onto tribal land and commit a crime […] You could set my house on fire, graffiti our courthouse, kill someone, basically do whatever you want, and Cherokee Nation could never prosecute you (17).

In this scene, Nagle demonstrates her mastery of dramatic conventions. First, she vividly illustrates the material consequences of the lack of tribal jurisdiction on Native land through the physical attack on Watie and the subsequent inability to arrest the attacker. Then, Nagle stages a dialogue among the characters that is both humorous and educational, effectively engaging audience members—especially non-Indigenous communities—while commenting on the absurdity and gravity of the jurisdictional conflicts on Native lands.

As the play progresses, the historical scenes depicting the fragmented factions led by Ridge and Ross illustrate the political and legal events culminating in the signing of the Treaty of New Echota and the Trail of Tears. These historical vignettes serve as a backdrop to Sarah's contemporary struggles, providing context and depth to her personal story, which further illustrates the enduring impact of colonial legal policies hinted at in the scene at the Casino. Sarah begins working for Jim Ross at the Attorney's General Office and she encounters Ben, a white police officer. The two fall in love and Ben later proposes to her at the Ridge cemetery. Ben affirms that he knows that the cemetery is Sarah's favorite place, adding "I wanted to ask you in front of your family" (49). The proposal, meant to be respectful, is marred by Ben's earlier disrespectful act of urinating on the cemetery fence, symbolizing his ignorance and foreshadowing his racism and violence, qualities that emerge later in the story. This transformation becomes evident as Ben grows increasingly jealous of Sarah's work, culminating in a harrowing scene where he physically assaults and rapes her. Nagle's portrayal of the violence of a white police officer on a Native woman inscribes the broader narrative of Euro-American colonization within the body of her protagonist, taking the history of colonial oppression to the present moment. Sarah's story highlights the inter-

sections of gender, law, and colonialism, addressing the broader implications of legal and sexual violence against Native women. Legal scholar Amy Casselman asserts, "The creation of the United States as we know it was made possible through the violent relocation of Native people [...] to reservations […] This violent process was legitimated both through a legal system that viewed Native people as problematic and in need of removal, and through social discourse that constructed Native women as inherently rapeable and violable" (22).

During her recovery from abuse, Sarah gives birth to her son and decides to pursue legal action against Ben. This decision, despite the complexities of navigating justice within tribal communities, embodies the resistant tendencies of the Chickamauga consciousness. In Sarah's oral argument before the Supreme Court, Nagle stages a powerful legal counter-narrative that challenges the US federal government's authority to define Indigenous identity and sovereignty. Sarah's argument not only contests the power dynamics imposed by the federal government but also secures the sovereignty and safety of Native communities on their own terms. In doing so, she enacts what Scott Lyons terms "rhetorical sovereignty," "the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit [for self-determination], to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse" (Lyons 459–50). In her argument, Sarah compellingly refutes the notion that tribal governments, courts, and laws are inferior to those of the states and the federal government. She passionately asserts that tribal jurisdiction over non-Indians predates the US Constitution, emphasizing that "tribal jurisdiction isn't unconstitutional; it's pre-constitutional" (125). Sarah concludes her argument with a powerful affirmation of her nation's inherent sovereignty: "No sovereign, not even the United States, can strip my nation of its inherent right to protect me and my fellow Cherokee women. Thank you. Wado" (Ibid).

CHALLENGING PATRIARCHAL POLICIES OF (MIS) REPRESENTATION

In the introduction to Muscogee (Creek) poet laureate Joy Harjo's book *Wings of Night Sky, Wings of Morning Light*, Mary Kathryn Nagle emphasizes the interconnection between the cultural representation of Native women and the legal storytelling perpetuated by Supreme Court decisions. She asserts that these representations were deliberately created to propagate a false, demeaning narrative that supported and justified Supreme Court decisions instrumental in the removal and genocide of Native peoples (12). In fact, Red Face

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performances gained popularity in the 1830s, coinciding with Andrew Jackson's presidency and his aggressive removal policies against Native nations. This era saw the proliferation of the so-called "Indian plays" in theater, which became a primary tool for creating and spreading stereotypes of Indigenous people, typically depicting them as either bloodthirsty savages or noble "Indians" doomed to extinction. Nagle points out that these portrayals were often performed by white actors in red face, further marginalizing Native peoples in mainstream culture. This exclusion reinforced harmful stereotypes and denied Native peoples the opportunity to represent themselves authentically. By delegitimizing Native voices and perpetuating false narratives, these performances played a significant role in justifying and maintaining colonial oppression. Both the anachronistic portrayals and the exclusion of Native actors normalized the disappearance. The theater, more than any other artistic genre, played a crucial role in embedding these racial caricatures within American culture. Moreover, Nagle observes that the sexualized image of the "Indian princess," originating in nineteenth-century plays, has persisted in American stage productions, Hollywood films, and even in Halloween costume shops (15). This portrayal reduces Native women to sexual objects, depicting them as figures to be conquered and perpetuating a deeply ingrained stereotype across multiple aspects of American culture. Amy Casselman writes, "American colonization has always been characterized by both legal and sexual violence. Since first contact, law has been used to legitimate the theft of Native resources and control Native communities" (25). The sexualized image of the "Indian princess" constructed Indigenous women as the virgin frontier, the pure border waiting to be crossed. This imagery created a Native female archetype which, as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn has pointed out, could then be "used for the colonizer's pleasure and profit." The enormous popularity of the "Indian princess" lay in her erotic appeal to covetous European males eager to claim "new" territory. This equation of Indigenous women with virgin land, open for consumption, perpetuates their exploitation and objectification (Anderson 270). Moreover, it works in tandem with legal narratives that depict Indigenous peoples as "savages" incapable of self-governance and stewardship of their lands. An example of this dynamic is the above-mentioned Supreme Court decision in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), which established a precedent still referenced today to justify federal actions against Native jurisdiction. Nagle, a direct descendant of Major Ridge, passionately believes that Native activism and discourse can counter injustice. She articulates that assaults on the status of Native women

are, in essence, assaults on Native sovereignty itself. Colonialism, she emphasizes, is inherently gendered, illustrating how the historical and ongoing oppression of Native peoples has always included specific attacks on women's rights and status. In *Sovereignty*, Nagle offers a powerful counter-narrative to damaging stereotypes through the character of Sarah. In staging her activism, Nagle connects Sarah with historical figures Ghigau, or Beloved Woman, who were accorded great honor and responsibility in Cherokee society. Although the role has evolved, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians still recognizes and upholds the title of Beloved Women today. This portrayal challenges colonial stereotypes and highlights the importance of women's knowledge and leadership in preserving and restoring their cultural heritage and sovereignty.

RE-MEMBERING CHEROKEE JUSTICE

In staging the activism of a Cherokee woman and lawyer, *Sovereignty* emerges as a powerful counter-narrative that not only challenges stereotypes but also communicates "radical relationality." This concept was coined by Melanie Yazzie (Diné/Navajo) and Cutcha Risling Baldy (Hupa, Yurok, Karuk) to explain Indigenous feminist actions that provide "a vision of relationality and collective political organization that is deeply intersectional and premised on values of interdependency, reciprocity, equality, and responsibility" (2). Nagle stages radical relationality by narrating a story that reintegrates Cherokee legal values and traditional clan systems, challenging and reshaping mainstream narratives to align with social justice goals. By doing so, the play revives alternative forms of justice deeply embedded in Cherokee legal traditions, effectively intertwining the restoration of personal and communal integrity with the reaffirmation of cultural identity and legal sovereignty.

Significantly, Sarah's decision to prosecute her abusive white fiancé in the Supreme Court aligns with her fully embracing her heritage as a Ridge. She tells John Ross: "I'm a Ridge […] I'm a direct descendant. He is my grandmother's great-grandfather. I should have told you. A long time ago, I know. But then you wouldn't have hired me. Or maybe you would have fired me. And what am I supposed to say? I am who I am. I can't change that." In the same dialogue, Sarah tells Ross that she agrees to fight in court, affirming, "If he [Ben, my fiancée, who abused me] can erase sovereignty over my body, he can erase sovereignty over my nation." Sarah affirms the indivisibility of her body from her nation and the bodies of other Indigenous

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women. Through her actions, she chooses to perform her activism in a way that emphasizes the interconnectedness of Indigenous peoples and the enduring values that sustain their communities. Notably, this speech follows the historical scene in which Major Ridge signs the Treaty of New Echota. By emphasizing these intergenerational connections, Nagle frames Sarah's legal action as one that honors the legal obligation to make decisions considering both past and future generations. Moreover, since the legal decision could set a precedent in Federal Indian Law, her actions have the potential to impact Indigenous peoples in the US. By taking this stand, Sarah embodies the values of interdependency, reciprocity, equality, and responsibility rooted in radical relationality. In affirming her legacy and deciding to pursue legal action, Sarah argues a case that is deeply personal but also, as Jim Ross affirms, significant to the entire Cherokee nation: "Look, I know this is personal to you. Deeply personal. But this case is personal to me too. To most Cherokees. To me, it's a responsibility. A duty. An obligation. It's my grandfather's legacy" (109).

In the previous scenes, while recovering from the abuse at the hands of her white fiancé, Sarah expressed doubts about prosecuting her fiancé due to the potential consequences of losing the case in the Supreme Court. She says, "If we drop the charges, if we let him go, his constitutional claims will be moot and there won't be anything for the Supreme Court to decide." John Ross responds, "We've worked so hard for this," to which Sarah replies, "We could lose our jurisdiction. The court could say tribal jurisdiction over non-Indians is unconstitutional" (109). By staging Sarah's doubts about the fairness of Supreme Court judgments, Nagle highlights the limits of Federal Indian law, which has the tendency to "harmonize" ongoing political conflicts and, as Cheryl Suzack observes, provides a barrier to "alternative accounts of Indigenous political authority and cultural practice" (*Indigenous Women* 8–9). I argue that in *Sovereignty*, Nagle employs performative storytelling to explore what justice means for Indigenous people and she proposes that lawsuits are essential acts of decolonization that enact "radical relationality," because, as Bethany Hughes observes about Nagle's 2015 play *Fairly Traceable*, such legal actions "dismantle settler colonial harms and authorities rooted in historical and material reality" and are inherently relational, as "every decision handed down impacts both the present and future" (139). However, Hughes also argues that "the playwright also realizes that utilizing settler colonial laws is insufficient to fully express the resistance and sovereignty of Indigenous nations" (Ibid). Although in *Sovereignty* Nagle stages legal activism as essential for restoring tribal sovereignty

and protecting Native women, she also expresses the limits of Federal law and the necessity of what Richard Knowles terms "embodied cultural re-memberment" (136). This approach provides an alternative response to the individual and community dismemberment caused by colonial violence. It emphasizes Indigenous cultural practices as vital to restoring sovereignty and re-centers women's roles as powerful agents of healing and cultural continuity across intergenerational and tribal lines. This approach offers a vital response to the individual and community dismemberment inflicted by colonial violence. I use the term "re-membering" because this concept aligns with the usage by legal scholars Eva Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, who emphasize "re-membering" as a critical process in addressing and overcoming the impacts of colonization. Knowles uses the term to make visible the artistic task of reconstructing "coherent psychological and social subjectivities through embodied cultural memory" (143). Similarly, in their article "What Justice Wants," Tuck and Yang argue that "demands for justice *re-member*; they are a kind of ghosting that refuses to forget abduction, violation, displacement, dispossession, and death. They also re-member the fragmented social body back together as life that matters in ways beyond the ontological cages of pained plaintiff or object in need of subjection" (7, emphasis mine). In articulating what justice means for Indigenous people, Nagle employs re-membering as an act of decolonization. Specifically, the character of Sarah Ridge Polson *re-members* Cherokee matrilineal law by acting as a healing agent for her family, community, and nation.

Midway through the play, we are introduced to Sarah's family when she and her fiancé, Ben, go to lunch with them. Sarah calls her father and asks him to come back to Talequeqaus for her wedding. The dialogue escalates as Roger learns about Sarah working with John Ross and being engaged to Ben, whom he does not like. Roger asks Sarah and Ben if they are planning to have children.

[Sarah and Ben look at one another.]
Sarah: I think so, yes.
Ben: Yeah.
Roger [to Ben]: They'll be Cherokee Nation citizens?
Ben [looks around for help]: Can they? I don't have any Indian blood.

Ben's argument gestures at the issue of blood quantum, a concept rooted in white settlers' conception of race relations and historically used to disenfranchize Indigenous peoples from their lands. During the allotment era, the federal government connected the title to the land to "competence," determined through blood quantum distinctions. This

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indicates the process of moral regulation to which American Indian peoples were subjected. Through the application of the procedures for land allotment in the General Allotment Act of 1887, blood quantum codes also became the means to acquiring citizenship[3] (Suzack *Indigenous Women* 145n12). The theory behind blood quantum, rooted in the legacy of the General Allotment Act and its legislative successors, defined Indian identity based on measurable "Indian blood," erasing considerations of kinship duties and obligations. These communal bonds were far more significant to Cherokee nationhood than the arbitrary designations of blood authenticity. Justice affirms that since distinctive kinship practices and understandings have been primary sources of Indigenous strength and resistance, they have also been primary targets of settler-state policy and practice, with devastating results. Sarah opposes the idea of blood quantum when she affirms: "Sovereignty isn't about race. It's about citizenship" (63), and she answers her father's question: "My kids will be Cherokee because I am Cherokee" (Ibid). Here Sarah is reaffirming the matrilineal clan law which in determining legitimate membership in the Cherokee Nation." Under the traditional clan system, Cherokee tribal membership was conferred by birth to a Cherokee woman; as a matrilineal society, the Cherokee were indifferent to the father's race. The formation of the Cherokee Nation disrupted this system, displacing the exclusive right of Cherokee women to define tribal membership.

Sarah affirms her agency in response to an incredulous Ben, who embodies the white settler mentality that invades the private space of the home, just as he previously invaded the cemetery. When Ben asks, "Do Cherokees follow their mother?" Sarah reaffirms the centrality of women in the clan system and the Cherokee community, emphasizing the importance of women in maintaining and defining tribal identity. Cultural continuity and tradition are further reaffirmed through Sarah's agency in the healing of family wounds caused by settler colonial actions. During the lunch, Sarah accuses her father of abandoning the family. However, the birth of Sarah's child restores the father–daughter bond as we witness Roger's transformation from a cranky and, given his past actions, irresponsible man, to a loving grandfather who babysits the child. The audience

3 For a comprehensive treatment of blood quantum codes and their role in defining membership rights for Indigenous peoples see Joanne Barker, *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity*, Duke University Press, 2011.

understands the reasons behind Roger's abandonment of his family from the stories he tells the child:

> ROGER [holds BABY RIDGE, asleep in his arms]: OK, first things first. When you wake up, Mom's not gonna be here. And that, well, it might feel like a surprise. And you'll be like, who is this guy? He smells like cashews. And Lucky Strikes. But don't tell your mom I smoke. She thinks I stopped. I'm your grandpa. You're my first grandkid. So, you know, I've never done this before. But I raised your mom. And your uncle. They think they had it rough. But me, shit, I was ten when I went to Chilocco. I know the slap you get for speaking your language, and I know the laugh when someone's laughing at you 'cause of who you are. Your mom named you Ridge. Ridge, John Ridge, was my mom's great-grandfather. That's something to be proud of-he was a brilliant man, a fighter. His blood runs through your veins. Never forget that. Just don't tell anyone you're named after him. It's, like, between you and me. Our little secret. The day they find out you're a Ridge is the day they kill you. (101)

Roger shares his story with his infant grandson, illustrating another way colonialism attacks Native sovereignty by severing cultural ties. He reveals that he attended Chilocco, a residential school founded in 1883 to civilize, Christianize, educate, and transform American Indian youth. The purpose of boarding schools, such as Chilocco and others across the nation, was to remove Native Americans from their cultures and assimilate them into white society, under the infamous motto coined by founder Richard H. Pratt, "Kill the Indian, save the man" (Barrows 46). Despite this attempted cultural genocide, where children were forbidden to speak their languages and engage in cultural practices, many used traditional stories to make sense of their experiences afterward (Lomawaima 167). Roger demonstrates the power of stories and cultural continuity that he retained despite the attempted cultural genocide he experienced firsthand. When he relates the traditional Cherokee creation story, partially in the Cherokee language, to his infant grandson, he is affirming the inherent sovereignty over his cultural heritage, encapsulated in his ancestor John Ridge's words: "Sovereignty is when I speak my language" (70). Affirming her role as a matriarch and mother, Sara is able to restore and heal the wounds of colonial oppression and transmit the sovereignty of her cultural heritage to her child. In the final scene of the play, we return to the cemetery where Sarah Bird Northrup is burying her husband, Major Ridge, who has been assassinated after signing the Treaty of New Echota and prepares to flee to Arkansas with her children. Jim Ross and Sarah Ridge Polson enter the Polson Ridge Cemetery with Sarah's infant son. At this moment, the two sets of characters occupy the same space, erasing temporal divisions. The returning of the cemetery as a setting

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evokes an Indigenous cosmological world with a cyclical and circular understanding of responsibilities. This longer temporal horizon of legal obligation is evident, showing that actions in the present are driven by responsibilities to the past and, presumably, to the future. Nagle stages the powerful healing effect of Sarah's actions to mend the wounds at the heart of her community. As Jim Ross carries Baby Ridge in his arms, this act symbolizes the resolution of the longstanding conflict between the two factions within the Cherokee community. The newborn embodies the reconciliation and newfound strength that the community has achieved. This process of reconciliation is mediated through Sarah and subsequently passed on to her son, allowing him to acknowledge and honor his ancestors' legacy and carry it forward:

JIM ROSS [to BABY RIDGE]: This is your great-great-great-grandfather Major Ridge. Your grandfather, John Ridge, fought to save the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation. And he won his case in the Supreme Court. Just like your mom.

The reconciliation between the Ridges and the Rosses occurs through Sarah's regained role as a matriarch, where she embraces the responsibilities and obligations inherited from her ancestors. This extended temporal perspective of legal obligation contrasts with Western linear understandings of time, emphasizing responsibilities rooted in the past and extending into the future, represented by Sarah's son.

In the final lines of the play, Nagle blurs the distinction between past and present, enabling Major Ridge's wife, Sarah Bird Northup, and Sarah Ridge Polson to engage in an intergenerational dialogue across time:

SARAH BIRD NORTHRUP: Someday, my children will return.
SARAH RIDGE POLSON [to BABY RIDGE]: Your name is Ridge.
SARAH BIRD NORTHRUP: I want them to find him. [Sarah kneels next to John's body.]
JIM ROSS: You were born with sovereignty in your blood (130).

Staging a dialogue between future and past generations, Nagle offers a model rooted in Indigenous epistemologies that centers on "relationality, obligation, and active caretaking" (Hughes 146). This model of "radical relationality" encompasses acts of decolonization and the creation of a future that sustains Indigenous sovereignty, communities, and relatives. As Hughes affirms, "radical relationality is a how, not a what; it is a way of being and acting that aligns with specific values – values that depend upon and demand kinship, obligation, reciprocity, and action" (128). Thus, Nagle affirms that radical relationality goes beyond decolonial

legal actions, emphasizing the intrinsic link between relationality, responsibility, Indigenous existence, and the future (ibid.). By challenging colonial narratives, *Sovereignty* highlights the crucial role of Indigenous women in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage and matrilineal traditions, ensuring the continuation of Indigenous sovereignty through future generations.

CONCLUSION

This article has shown how *Sovereignty* exemplifies Indigenous feminist literary activism through performative counter-storytelling. The play enacts decolonization and reframes the stage as a space for asserting Indigenous performative sovereignty and self-determination. Using an Indigenous feminist literary critical approach, it has explored how Nagle constructs an Indigenous feminist subject that advances decolonization by addressing the gendered outcomes of colonial law, challenging patriarchal cultural practices of misrepresentation, counteracting stereotypes, and embodying "radical relationality." Through the character of Sarah Ridge Polson, Nagle powerfully illustrates the interconnectedness of tribal sovereignty and gender empowerment, showing how these elements are mutually reinforcing. Her character bridges past and present, emphasizing the fluidity of time in Native practices and the continuous impact of historical traumas on contemporary struggles. Far from just exposing historical wrongs, the play's engagement with intergenerational storytelling and the reassertion of matrilineal clan systems underscores the resilience and continuity of Cherokee cultural and legal traditions. Sarah's journey highlights the importance of reclaiming Indigenous women's roles as cultural carriers and guardians of tribal values, countering the erasure, marginalization, and stereotypes perpetuated by colonial and patriarchal narratives. By staging this narrative, Nagle challenges conventional legal frameworks that often marginalize Indigenous voices and reaffirms the importance of Indigenous legal and cultural practices in the fight for justice and sovereignty. *Sovereignty* thus emerges as a powerful example of how storytelling in theater can serve as a powerful tool for social justice, decolonization, and the affirmation of Indigenous sovereignty.

Abstract: This article offers an analysis of the 2018 play *Sovereignty* by Cherokee playwright, lawyer, and activist Mary Kathryn Nagle. First performed at the Arena Stage Theatre in Washington DC, *Sovereignty* unfolds over two parallel timelines: present-day Oklahoma and the early 1800s in the southern Appalachians. In the present day, young Cherokee lawyer Sarah Ridge

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Polson and Cherokee Attorney General Jim Ross defend the inherent jurisdiction of the Cherokee Nation under the Violence Against Women Act in a pivotal case before the US Supreme Court. This modern struggle is juxtaposed with scenes from the 1800s, where their ancestors grapple with a proposed treaty with Andrew Jackson's administration, leading to the signing of the Treaty of New Echota and the Trail of Tears. By juxtaposing historical and contemporary events, Nagle illuminates the enduring effects of government policies and laws that continue to render Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women, vulnerable. This article explores how *Sovereignty* exemplifies Indigenous feminist literary activism through performative counter-storytelling, a method that enacts decolonization and reframes the stage as a critical space for asserting Indigenous performative sovereignty and self-determination. Using an Indigenous feminist literary critical approach, this article shows how Nagle constructs a counter-narrative that advances decolonization by addressing gendered outcomes of colonial law, challenging patriarchal cultural practices of misrepresentation, and embodying "radical relationality"—a concept of collective political organization based on principles of interdependency and responsibility. Through the character of Sarah Ridge Polson and her activism to restore sovereignty over her body and her nation, *Sovereignty* exemplifies Indigenous feminist activism through theater, reasserting Indigenous women as agents of cultural transmission and tribal values, illustrating that tribal sovereignty and gender empowerment are inherently interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Keywords: Cherokee literature, Native American theater, Indigenous feminist literary activism, performative counter-storytelling, radical relationality, decolonization, tribal sovereignty, Mary Kathryn Nagle, Cherokee Law, Federal Indian Law

Bio: Sara Riccetti is a PhD candidate in Studies in English Literatures, Language, and Translation, enrolled in a joint degree program between the University of "La Sapienza" in Rome, Italy, and the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. Her doctoral research focuses on exploring the intersection of law and literature in contemporary Indigenous drama by women playwrights from the US and Canada. In 2023, Sara Riccetti was awarded the International Council for Canadian Studies Graduate Student Scholarship, facilitating her research at the University of Victoria, BC. Alongside her academic pursuits, Riccetti is an experienced theatre director and practitioner, having received professional training as an actor in the UK. She also holds an MA in directing opera. Her Italian translation of the play *The Unplugging* by Algonquin playwright Yvette Nolan received the Translation Grant from the Canadian Council for the Arts in 2024. She is currently curating and directing a performance of the play set to premiere in Naples, Italy, in October 2024. An alumna of the Emerging Scholars program of the International American Studies Association, Sara Riccetti is co-editing a special issue of *JamIt* (Journal of American Studies in Italy) on Indigenous resurgence, scheduled for publication in 2024. She is actively involved in several academic associations including IASA (International American Studies Association), AISNA (Italian Association of North American Studies), and AISC (Italian Association of Canadian Studies). Her research interests encompass North American Literature and Theatre, Indigenous Drama from North America, Law and Literature, Indigenous Feminist Theory, and Decolonial Studies.

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LAND-BASED THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE IN SOVEREIGN ARTISTIC CEREMONIES OF SELECTED INDIGENOUS ARTISTS FROM CANADA

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RESURGENCE OF INDIGENOUS THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE IN CANADA

In the past four decades in Canada there has been a remarkable development of Indigenous theatre and performance engaged in the anti-colonial and decolonial struggle against diverse racist colonial practices of exclusion, misrepresentation and denigration of Indigenous cultures and philosophies, which led to the disconnection of Native people from their cultures and intellectual traditions. Indigenous artists,[1] however, have been effectively engaged in the processes of cultural reclamation and rebuilding of Indigenous cultures. They have been developing theatre and performance projects aiming at Indigenous theatrical sovereignty, both in theory and practice.

The achievements of Indigenous artists in the sphere of performance arts in Canada have been staggering and testify to their remarkable creativity, especially when one realizes that currently they represent only about 1,807 million of First Nations, Inuit and Métis population[2] residing in this country, as of 2021 Census (Statistics). Many of them have been reshaping the theatrical landscape in Canada, among others: Tomson Highway (Cree), Muriel Miguel (Kuna/Rappahannock), Margo

1 I use the word *artist* as an inclusive term related to individuals whose work embraces several disciplines, as they are not only playwrights, actors, artistic directors, dancers, but also theorists, critics, reviewers—the term is used here as a holistic concept encompassing a variety of disciplines used in the work of decolonization, which also reflects the pluralistic nature of Indigenous worldviews.

2 Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples: Indians (more commonly referred to as First Nations), Inuit and Métis. "These are 3 distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs" (Indigenous Peoples).

Kane (Cree-Saulteaux), Marie Clements (Dene-Métis), Kevin Loring (N'lakapamux), Corey Payette (Oji-Cree), and Tara Beagan (Ntlakapamux). A long list of published and staged texts by Indigenous theatre and performance artists residing in Canada, called an "Indigenous body of work" is available online, and it is updated and continually growing—in May 2024 there were 268 names on the list with several hundreds of plays/scripts to their credit ("Indigenous body"). Unfortunately, due to the geopolitics of knowledge production, favoring ideas coming from the dominant Euro-American critics and theorists (Mignolo), many of these authors are not familiar names in the country or abroad, although their work is of big interest to academia and theatre aficionados.

This resurgence[3] of Indigenous artistic expression in Canada coincides with the revival and development of Indigenous thought on self-recognition by such Indigenous scholars, critics and artists as Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene), Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe), Audra Simpson (Mohawk) or Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee). Their call for intellectual, cultural, artistic and political sovereignty has been heard by many Indigenous artists but some of them have been involved in this kind of activist and artistic work for several decades. My reflections on Indigenous theatre and performance art focus on selected examples of work by artists of diverse cultural backgrounds, who reside on the territory of contemporary Canada: Floyd Favel (Plains Cree), Monique Mojica (Kuna, Rappahonack and Ashkenazi) and Kim Senklip Harvey (Syilx, Tsilhqot'in, Ktunaxa and Dakelh).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO DISCUSS THE WORK INDIGENOUS ARTISTS

I place the work of Favel, Mojica and Harvey in a theoretical framework that I derive and adapt from ideas by such Canadian critics as Ric Knowles, Lindsay Lachance (Algonquin Anishinaabe), and Jill Carter (Anishinaabe/Ashkenazi). It allows me to trace the development of Indigenous theatre and performance interventions into colonial theatre practices that vary from thematic to more innovative experimental approaches, which represent diverse strategies of decolonization and indigenization. This could be a syncretic theatre characterized by cross-culturality and hybridity or a theatre employing a strategic

3 Glen Coulthard explains the concept of resurgence as "an intellectual, social, political, and artistic movement geared toward the self-reflective revitalization of beliefs, practices and other embodied experiences that best reflect Indigenous realities" (156).

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reappropriation/adaptation of canonical texts (Knowles). I am interested, however, in theatre and performance practices aiming at theatrical sovereignty that can be achieved through the creation of alternative Indigenous methodologies and aesthetics. Lachance divides them further into land-based, place-based and community-engaged practices, representing a three-pronged relational dramaturgical model ("The embodied politics"). Indigenous productions belonging to the first two categories still negotiate within the structures and practices of Western theatre. Those that can be placed in the model proposed by Lachance, such as the works by Favel, Mojica and Harvey, privilege alternative sovereign Indigenous processes that affirm Indigenous cultural and intellectual traditions. I concentrate on their work on Indigenous theatre which foregrounds land-based theatrical processes in theory and practice.

The theater and performance artists have been engaged in the processes of cultural reclamation and rebuilding of their specific Aboriginal cultures. This work has been achieved through the decolonization and indigenization of Western theatre conventions, created both in on-reserve and off-reserve/urban locations, which result in the development of alternative land-based Indigenous processes and methodologies. In this study I address the following aspects of decolonizing and indigenizing theatrical practices: 1) theater as artistic ceremony and 2) theater as a research methodology and an episteme, a knowledge building practice. These practices challenge the Aristotelian views on theater as imitation of reality, and the notion of theater as an artificial literary form which foregrounds the importance of text in artistic creations. The artists oppose the mainstream Western's theater focus on naturalism, psychologically driven characters, dialogue-heavy linear narratives, and such rigid theatrical conventions as, for instance, unities of time, space and action. Instead, they are interested in the concept of physical theater conceived as a process.

INDIGENOUS THEATER AS ARTISTIC CEREMONY

The transformative nature of theatrical processes proposed by the artists who aim for artistic sovereignty can be compared to the transformative nature of Indigenous ceremonies. The roles, aims and functions of their work differ from the mainstream productions, because they transform theater processes into acts of healing, community making, resurgence and survivance. Gerald Vizenor's concept of 'survivance,' once it is used with reference to theater, replaces the notion of theater as entertainment with the idea of theater as a process of survival and resilience to be achieved through

"a sovereign return to the rites, languages, lifeways, and application of knowledge systems that constitute the birthright of a living, active People" (Vizenor vii). These words encapsulate the cultural distinctiveness of Indigenous theater and its important political role in the decolonization processes taking place in Canada, and globally.

Ceremony in theater, as Yvette Nolan (Algonquin, Irish) reminds us, is "about reconnecting: reconnecting the artist to her ancestors, the viewer to lost histories, the actor to the audience" (55). The concept of ceremony—or 'artistic ceremony'—has been used by several artists to describe their ideas on Indigenous theatre and performance. Favel employs the term with reference to his vision of Indigenous theatre as a healing process and its spiritual role in restoring balance and wholeness to the world. Participation in ceremonies is an important aspect of his concept of theatre, as it prepares participants for a transformative experience in the non-urban space on the Poundmaker Cree Nation reserve, where he works on his ideas on Indigenous theatrical practices. For Jill Carter, residing in Toronto, theater is an "urban ceremony, in the sense that it unites a scattered body politic"; it creates communities, it may offer "real healing, and permanent transformations," and, moreover, it "can also be a gateway" to Indigenous cultures (Petkar). The word 'artistic ceremony' is also prominent in Harvey's conceptualization of Indigenous performance. When she reflects on her play *Kamloopa. An Indigenous Matriarch Story* (2019), she states that it is an Indigenous artistic ceremony, a storytelling ceremony ("Protocols"). Moreover, her concert documentary hybrid project is titled *Horizons: A Rocking Indigenous Justice Ceremony* (2021). Harvey also looks at stories as ceremonies, and one of the theater methodologies she proposes is named by her a Fire Creation Ceremony ("The Indigenous").

The concept of ceremony has also been used to describe research into Indigenous cultures. It can be employed as useful interpretation tool when research is conducted through a theatrical process, which is an important strategy in the alternative vision of Indigenous theater as a research methodology. The seminal work on Indigenous research methods by Shawn Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree), titled *Research is Ceremony* (2008), provides insight into methods that might be used in Indigenous theatre. Indigenous research is considered by him as a life-changing ceremony (61), a means of raising consciousness and awareness (69), and a process of healing and transformation, which, to use Wilson's words, if it "doesn't change you as a person, then you haven't done it right" (135). His concept of Indigenous research as ceremony clearly defies the traditional western sci-

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entific research paradigms grounded in the concept of rationality and objectivity of knowledge, which, as history shows, misrepresented, dehumanized and denigrated Indigenous people and their cultures and knowledges.

FLOYD FAVEL AS A PIONEER OF A SOVEREIGN INDIGENOUS THEATER METHODOLOGY

My discussion of Indigenous theater as a research methodology and episteme is based on Favel's pioneering theory of theater and performance practice which he calls Native Performance Culture (NPC).[4] His goal is to achieve intellectual and cultural/theatrical sovereignty; thus he privileges Indigenous concepts, rather than allowing settler colonial frameworks to establish the terms of discussion. Favel proposes a conception of Indigenous theater as a new artistic genre which, as he makes it clear, is not "a form of "sub-theatre" ("Dwellings" 229). He insists on the novelty of theater for Indigenous people, because although there are, as he claims, "theatrical elements in storytelling, dance and ceremonies," which many scholars read as early forms of theatre, this does not "make them theatre" ("Poetry" 33).

This new genre is not limited by any ethnic criterion or the western concept of identity, which foregrounds individualism and is anti-relational. Favel rejects the concept of ethnic identity in favor of the notion of indigeneity as a land-based social paradigm,[5] based on kinship relations, a spirit of care and sharing, which in his case is grounded in Cree values ("Identity Bending").[6]

4 Favel presented his ideas on NPC in texts published in diverse venues, which can serve as examples of Indigenous theories reframed as stories, expressed in a variety of genres, and frequently written in a metaphoric language, which defies expectations of traditional western highly analytical theoretical discourses. My discussion of Favel's work is based on his selected texts and interviews, for instance, *Poetry, Remnants and Ruins: Aboriginal Theatre in Canada*, "Theater: Younger Brother of Tradition," "The Artificial Tree: Native Performance Culture Research, 1991–1996," "Artist statement. Monsieur Artaud and I: Peyote has a lasso," "The Theatre of Orphans/ Native Languages on Stage."

5 Favel's ideas on indigeneity are similar to those by Jeannette Armstrong, who looks at Indigeneity as a social paradigm, as a way of interacting with the land to gain wisdom and knowledge. In her dissertation, Armstrong discusses the topic with reference to Syilx language; she points out that Syilx peoples' identity is literally tied to perpetuating life on the land, not just human life, but all life forms (1).

6 In Favel's words: "Cree is not an ethnicity, or a blood, but a culture that absorbs People from all backgrounds, that is the strength and power of Cree Culture. My understandings of the broad issue of Indigenous identity come from my Cree

For this new genre Favel developed the first documented Indigenous "system of theatre creation" ("Artist Statement" 102), or a theory of Indigenous performance and theater, which he proposes to all Indigenous artists who choose to revisit their specific cultures for artistic inspiration. It is then a pan-Indigenous theory, both in conception and in practice; it is culturally specific, and can result in a variety of culturally grounded NPCs, be they, for instance, Cree, Anishinaabe or Salish.

The essence of this theory is encapsulated by the artist in the following general formula or equation: Tr (traditions) + Pr (process) = Th (theater, public performance) ("Artist Statement" 99). The theorem evolved in recent years into a more detailed model outlined by another equation[7]: Fa [H (Tr X Pr)] = Th^2, which looks like an alchemy or a healing formula (H stands for healing) describing a transformative process similar to ceremony. This is exactly what this concept of Indigenous theatre, grounded in family (Fa), community, and a broadly understood tradition (Tr), presupposes. Tradition embraces both material and immaterial elements of culture, be they artifacts, cultural objects, artistic patterns or designs as well as oral storytelling, philosophies, worldviews, knowledges, histories and value systems. They can be used by artists as cultural sources to be staged but not in their original form. They are to be transformed into theatre or performance (Th), through a transformative theatrical process employing culturally specific "techniques and methods of performance and staging" ("Poetry" 33). According to Favel, the whole process is a "life-enhancing journey" ("Poetry" 33), and the "system of theatre creation based on the ruins of [his] culture," derives from his search for "origin, and feelings of fracture and angst" ("Artist Statement" 102).

The idea of wholeness in this theater process is indicated in the notion of "theatre doubled" (Th^2), which brings to mind Artaud's vision of theater[8] developed on the basis of his research into Indigenous cultures. The concept of the "double" in Indigenous theatre, as Favel explains, relates to the Spirit World (Sen-Podstawska and Favel 200), and hence this idea of theater embraces both physical and metaphysical/spiritual realities. He points out that the proposed methodology is sacred, as the vision

Culture, taught to me at the feet of my ancestors where I have sat with my head bowed" ("Identity Bending").

7 For more information see Sarasa Performance Lab Inc. (previously Miyawata Culture Inc.): https://sarasaperformancelab.com/about. This formula evolved from Favel's earlier conceptions of Indigenous performance.

8 Artaud's vision of theater was published in his seminal 1938 work *Théâtre et son Double* (The Theatre and Its Double); it was impacted by his experience of the Balinese gamelan and dancers at the 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris.

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of this sovereign Indigenous theater comes from the Great Spirit. Indigenous theater "did not exist prior to colonization," and therefore the basis of any Indigenous contemporary theater methodology are Indigenous "pre-existing expressive sacred arts and structures" (Favel "On sacredness"). Favel's concept of "theatre doubled" draws on Indigenous holistic philosophies that are inclusive of spirituality, and for the Cree artist, it is the Cree view of pluralistic reality that guides his thinking. He envisions theater that creates a sense of balance and harmony, which is central to the Cree view of life. This view of Indigenous theater as a sacred form of expression, similar to "storytelling, movement, writing, and any other form of expression" (Favel "On sacredness"), is what distinguishes his concept of Indigenous theater from the dominant culture's ideas on theater practices, as well as from the syncretic or hybrid forms of Aboriginal performance. One might say that Favel proposes a program for rebuilding spirituality, which is a valuable proposition and an important contribution to theater theory, as it shows the importance and role of this type of Indigenous theater in the process of re-indigenization of the contemporary world that is plunged in spiritual crisis. Favel believes that we are all Indigenous ("On sacredness") and we need to restore Indigenous values. One way of doing it is through a culturally specific NPC as an act of decolonization and empowerment.

THEATER AS A RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND A KNOWLEDGE BUILDING PRACTICE

The crucial aspect of the NPC formula is the theater process, which is privileged more than the final performance, and in many cases, the dramaturgical process, becomes "an end in itself—the process is the work," as Lachance points out ("The embodied politics" 2). The theater work becomes both a research methodology[9] and a knowledge building practice guided by a specific cultural episteme, Indigenous worldviews, philosophies, values and principles, be they Cree or Salish, as they are situational and therefore pluralistic. The theatrical process, the way it is conducted by Favel, Mojica and Harvey, honours these Indigenous research perspectives. The artists look at theater as a means of self-study and self-exploration in the context of reclaiming Indigenous axiologies, ontologies and epistemologies.

9 The use of theater as research methodology has been a fast-growing area in the recent decades, especially in the participatory and documentary theatre practices. The research in the form of artistic experimentation becomes more a narrative enquiry or a development of performance text.

They are engaged in Indigenous research that differs in its purpose and values from the western one because it is designed, to follow the arguments of Kathleen Absolon, as a tool for reconnecting to ancestry, the land, culture, anguage, history and Indigenous knowledges (77); such research is a portal to "learning about self and self-in relation to Creation" (Absolon 69), and it must be guided by the principles of "respect, reciprocity, and relationality" (Wilson 86). In contrast to the western scientific thought, which privileges the concept of objectivity, universal truth and neutrality, Indigenous research is a personal and subjective process which honors Indigenous worldviews and is supportive of family, community or nation obligations (Wilson 59). In theoretical texts and interviews,[10] the artists position themselves in their specific cultures and provide appropriate identifications. This is one of Indigenous protocols related to self-presentation, which is also a way of affirming cultural heritage and language. This act of self-positioning is a way of affirming their relationships to families, communities and nations and at the same time this is an acknowledgment of responsibilities. Their theatrical projects are grounded in personal, family and community histories.

Favel identifies himself as a Cree theorist, artistic director, playwright, community historian, activist and cultural leader, who was the only Indigenous student of the Polish revolutionary theater director Jerzy Grotowski in his Pontedera Centre in Italy. He uses his family and community stories in the NPC theatrical process and engages his family and community members in the diverse culture-reclaiming activities he organizes on the reserve, and Grotowski's name is also evoked as his father figure (Forsythe 356). Monique Mojica depicts herself as a Kuna and Rappahonack playwright, artistic director of Chocolate Woman Collective, stage and film actress and social

10 See footnote 4 for several texts by Favel; some of the texts and interviews by Monique Mojica which examine her sovereign artistic strategies are "In Plain Sight: Inscripted Earth and Invisible Realities," "Monique Mojica: reclaiming Indigenous history and culture through theatre," *Staging Coyote's Dream. Volume 3* (edited with Lindsay Lachance), *Chocolate Woman Dreams the Milky Way: Mapping Embodied Indigenous Performance* (with Brenda Farnell). Kim Senklip Harvey's hybrid theatre/performance texts and critical discourses serve as a good example of decolonizing and indigenizing practices of Indigenous interdisciplinary artists. For instance: her blog and podcast episodes "The Indigenous Cultural evolutionist" in the years 2018–2021 (the blog is currently unavailable online but many of the ideas from these texts have been recorded by Harvey in her podcasts) (see Works Cited); *Kamloopa. An Indigenous Matriarch Story, Horizons: A Rocking Indigenous Justice Ceremony*, and an insightful interview of Harvey by Molly Cross-Blanchard, "Indigenizing Theatre: An interview with *Kamloopa* Fire Creator Kim Senklip Harvey," among many other texts.

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activist. She makes it clear, however, that her artistic practice has been impacted by her involvement in the Spiderwoman theater established by her mother and aunts. Kim Senklip Harvey describes herself as a Salish[11] storyteller, Indigenous theorist and cultural evolutionist, who uses a variety of modalities, including playwriting, TV writing and blog and podcasting to work towards the equitable treatment of her peoples" (The Indigenous Cultural Evolutionist). In her blog she frequently references her attachment to her family and cultural community and responsibilities she honors in her work. All of the artists foreground their commitment to projects of artistic sovereignty and resurgence, and they develop methodologies that center Indigenous knowledges relative to their specific backgrounds. They also reflect critically on the values that guide their theater work. Harvey, for instance, formulates her own ethical guidelines for research as impacted by Seven Grandfather teachings and, when interviewed by Molly Cross-Blanchard, she discusses her ethical responsibilities with reference to the development of Indigenous Matriarchal Theatre practices, with a matriarchal protocol which states that "[e]veryone gets a voice" (Cross-Blanchard).

Apart from the above axiological categorizations, Indigenous theater, as it is conceived by Favel, Mojica, Harvey and other theater artists, functions as a practice for reclaiming Indigenous onto-epistemologies,[12] for restoring, affirming and re-envisioning of pre-contact philosophies, ways of life and values which colonizers tried to eradicate with "violence, shame and silencing" (Darby et al. 192). The artists are interested in the development of dramatic techniques informed by Indigenous holistic philosophies rooted in the land, by the belief in the plural nature of reality, not a universe but a pluriverse, reality that embraces the physical and metaphysical. They honor non-anthropocentric perspectives, and a relational worldview that is based on responsible relations between human and other-than-human beings. They also recognize the importance of the plural ways of knowing or accessing knowledge, including dreams, visions, intuition, prayers, ceremonies and various types of stories.

11 Harvey's ancestry is Syilx, Tsilhqot'in, Ktunaxa and Dakelh—which belong to the Interior Salish Plateau people living in the territories of contemporary British Columbia.

12 I draw on the term onto-epistemology as discussed by an Indigenous scholar Vanessa Watts (Mohawk and Anishinaabe Bear Clan), who argues for non-separation of these areas in Indigenous philosophies, and proposes the concept of place-thought as a "non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated" (20).

The above artists inscribe Indigenous onto-epistemologies in their artistic projects. Favel acknowledges the pluralistic vision of reality when he advocates developing Indigenous "theatre systems that reflect supernatural realities" (email), or when he reveals alternative sources of accessing knowledge, such as dreams. The idea for the play *Governor of the Dew. A Memorial to Nostalgia and Love* (1), for instance, as the author points out in the introduction to the text, came to him in a dream. The concept of pluriversal reality is excellently shown in Harvey's *Kamloopa*, where different ontologies are interrelated when the trickster enters the space of the physical urban reality, and other "shifter animals can travel between all worlds" (*Kamloopa* x). The non-anthropocentric and animistic perspectives are enacted in the text, where personhood is granted not only to humans but to all Creation, including animals, plants, rocks, the Earth and all elements; beings from multiple realities move easily between them, ancestors interact with urban characters, and there is a constant identity bending between humans and totem animals. Harvey designed the text as 'presencing' (Simpson 96–97),[13] a multidimensional reality with matriarchal, ancestral and animal worlds interconnected, and all of them, as she stresses, are real, as they represent valid ontologies. A Native perspective exhibits a spiritual view of the universe and expresses an Indigenous concept of spirituality that relates to the belief in the holistic notion of the interconnectedness of all creation with no hierarchy between humans and non-humans, where everything is interrelated, where the spirit world is never separated from the ordinary experience of the solid material world (Grieves 364). Favel's statement, "we live in a multidimensional world. We do not 'believe' in ghosts, but we live with them and are in communication with them" (email), corroborates the idea that Indigenous beliefs are not based on the notion of trust but on the direct experience of multiple realities.

LAND-BASED THEATER PRACTICES

Favel proposes a vision of Indigenous theater which can be classified as land-based, but to use Lachance's categorizations, it is also a community-engaged practice. It is impossible to make strict divisions between these types of theater performances due to the fact that they are interrelated, and it is the Indigenous conceptualization of "land"

13 'Presencing' is a term used by Leanne Simpson to show the importance of any act of showing that somebody/something is present in spite of being silenced by any systems, ideologies, etc. Acts of presence are integral to Indigenous resurgence; they relate to our human and other-than-human relations.

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which is foundational for Indigenous land-based practices. The artists under discussion in this study provide in their essays and interviews ample reflections on the Indigenous concept of land and its impact on their artistic processes.

Land is recognized by them as a bedrock of Indigenous life. Favel, for instance, asserts that "the land, the energy and the laws of the land are the basis of life for Indigenous people on the Turtle Island. From them come architecture, ceremony, worldview, languages, which are diverse but bound by the same natural and supernatural laws" ("Dwellings" 225). He also adds that land and landscapes are "the first teachers of Indigenous peoples, they carry the people's languages, histories and ethical principles" ("Dwellings" 226). In Indigenous earth-centered philosophies, land features as alive, sentient and sacred, not simply a matter with special capabilities, which shows that Indigenous people have an overtly spiritual-materialistic understanding of the environment. Land is also conceptualized as a 'storywork' (Archibald), an archive of stories, a storyscape or a storied landscape covered with/in stories, as Mojica and Harvey frequently point out. This notion of the land as a living story, both human and more-than-human, encapsulates the vision of land-based theatre. Favel makes it clear that "the earth and the ancestors, spirits of this land will inform the style, methodology of what the work shall be" ("Dwellings" 227). Land-based theatre, as Lachance argues, may "involve physical interaction with land and waters" or land may be "invoked philosophically," and the stories and languages explored in the process may be considered land-based resources ("Tiny Sparks" 54). The land itself, as a holistic Indigenous concept and a living entity, is treated as a collaborator in the three stage NPC practice (tradition–process–performance). For all of the artists discussed here the land-based process involves a physical interaction with the holistic concept of the land.

FLOYD FAVEL'S LAND-BASED THEATER PRACTICE

Favel develops his NPC theory and practice on his ancestral land, the Cree Poundmaker reserve. His research and practice of reclaiming Indigenous stories is part of the process of re-storying traditional Cree territories. When he works with non-Indigenous stories or classical drama, he metaphorically plants them in the Cree land, thus establishing a relationship which leads to their transformation. Thanks to Favel's land-based work, the Poundmaker reserve has become

a center of Cree culture.[14] The artist has been at the forefront of Cree cultural movement, reclaiming, restoring and revitalizing Cree culture traditions, histories and stories which were silenced by colonial policies. The whole process has also been an important element in Favel's self-healing after years of struggling with the legacies of colonialism in his life. He developed the NPC methodology through a long process of theater work which engages his family and community first, and later many participants from all over the world, who are invited to learn the theater theory in practice, reclaim their own indigeneity, and gain alternative philosophical perspectives and knowledges.

An important part of this theater process is the immersion in tradition, in the Cree way of life, participating in ceremonies (e.g. Peyote ceremony, sweat lodge, Sundance), and such traditional activities as dancing, singing, storytelling or Indian sign language classes. The participants build relations with the land and its human and other-than-human beings. Collecting and braiding sweetgrass, for instance, is a way of establishing this kind of connection. Staging such ceremonies, songs, dances and other activities which are considered sacred, alive, possessing spirit and ancestral knowledge encoded in them, would be an act of desacralization, pseudo-mysticism or exoticization. What Favel proposes is the decoding of knowledge inscribed in these sacred traditional activities, stories and objects, by distilling their patterns and structures and revealing principles on which they are based, which eventually become the foundations of new dramaturgies, performance or a script. Through this transformational process the sacred Indigenous knowledges are protected, and performances based on "Native ways of montage, composition and structure" ("Dwellings" 230) shape a unique form of Indigenous theatre.

The study of Favel's essays, a number of them translated into Polish in a book titled *Piszący z ziemi. Teatr indygenny Floyda Favela i inne eseje* [Writing from the Earth. Floyd Favel's Indigenous Theatre and Other Essays] (Głowacka and Sojka), shows that the artist developed Indigenous dramaturgies on the basis of principles abstracted from the following elements of Plains Cree cultural traditions: the Plains Indian Winter count system, Plains Indian sign language, Cree narrative systems (storytelling), Plains Indian pictographic language,

14 Notice the big variety of cultural activities organized by Favel on the Poundmaker reserve, including the annual Indigenous Performance Festival, Pipon Maskanaw Winter Trail Sacred Stories project, Plains Indian Sign language workshops. Favel heads a Sarasa Performance Lab Inc. (previously Miyawata Culture Inc.), which are Indigenous companies based on the Poundmaker Reserve, Saskatchewan, Canada. For more info see: https://sarasaperformancelab.com/about.

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Plains Cree tipi structure, traditional Cree hand shadow storytelling techniques and the string game/string figures. He develops specific exercises and training methods, experimenting with voice and movement, and explores the concept of Indigenous architecture, a special place for artistic ceremonies.[15] Favel is a pioneer of a sovereign Indigenous theater/performance, of sovereign Indigenous methodologies and aesthetics as acts of decolonial indigenization that are grounded in Indigenous knowledge. His theory and methods are consciously created from and specific to Aboriginal culture(s). He stresses, however, that it is a pan-Native practice to be employed by any Indigenous artist who chooses to revisit their culture for artistic inspiration ("Theatre: Younger Brother").

MONIQUE MOJICA'S LAND-BASED PRACTICES

Mojica started formulating her theory of the theater process, also rooted in the NPC ideas, at the time of her collaboration with Favel. Her version of land-based theater foregrounds her hybrid cultural background as Rappahannock (Virginia), Guna (Panama) people, and Haudenosaunee (Great Lakes Region) by adoption, and she engages in the land-based projects related to these specific cultural areas. Similar to Favel, Mojica offers a land-based research methodology which is an embodied, practice-based research process. Being an urban Indigenous theater artist, she is committed to long-term land-based theater projects which also involve archival and studio research. She privileges, however, the land-based embodied experience, a physical interaction with the land and the embodied exploration of traditional elements of cultures she is related to. This theater process requires ample traveling to distant locations, but this is where she enters into the relationship with the land in specific Indigenous sacred areas, where she performs deep listening to stories of the land, reclaims them, carries in her body to the studio, and eventually transforms into a script or performance text. Apart from entering into a relationship with other human participants of theater research projects, she also builds a relationship with the land and rivers ("Inscripted Earth"). She explains that she practices "an Indigenous artistic research methodology that speaks to the embodiment of place," and her statement about her relation to the land sounds like a manifesto of a land-based performance practice: "[t]he land is our archive and our embodied

15 To see examples of Indigenous architecture—the sacred space for Aboriginal storytelling and performance, see the website of Favel's Sarasa Performance Laboratory: https://sarasaperformancelab.com/about/.

relationship to the land defines Indigenous identities, history, science, cosmology, literature—and our performance" ("In Plain Sight" 219). And again, similar to Favel, she has been working on decoding "performance principles in theory, process and practice, and in the practical application of these investigations and principles as the structural base from which to construct a performance, design a set or dramaturge a script" ("In Plain Sight" 219).

Mojica's published work and interviews show her development as an Indigenous theorist and scholar. She started her decolonizing practice with the publication of *Princess Pocahontas and Blue Spots* (1991), but she soon moved to the land-based theater practices. She participated in several research projects that aimed at recovering Indigenous epistemologies encoded in pre-contact cultural forms and practices which were to be used for the development of contemporary Indigenous performances, each of them based on different cultural forms of specific Indigenous regions.[16] Her performance *Chocolate Woman Dreams the Milky Way,*[17] for instance, was developed on the basis of her research into structures and principles abstracted from the textile art of Guna people, the mola[18]. The storywork was a therapeutical process for Mojica, and it involved her reconnection with the Guna community and the land of her ancestors; she performed research not only into the traditional art form of mola, but also into Kuna healing medicinal chants, and the contemporary art of Oswaldo Kantule. She reclaimed the culture of image and sound, whose structural elements became the basis of her performance text. She integrated them into performance using a story-weaving principle. Visual principles abstracted from molas, such as abstraction, duality, repetition, metaphor and multidimensionality (Mojica "From the Grounds"), were used by Mojica to devise her script. She believes that the multidimensionality of knowing inscribed in mola is the central feature of her dramatic writing. In this theatrical process, Mojica transformed tradition into performance and reclaimed and affirmed Indigenous knowledges.

16 See, for instance, the project "Indigenous Knowledge, Contemporary Performance" described on the website: https://www.uoguelph.ca/arts/sets/indigenous-knowledge-contemporary-performance.

17 Unpublished script; see Mojica's comments on the project in "Chocolate Woman Dreams the Milky Way" and the most recent publication with Brenda Farnell, *Chocolate Woman Dreams the Milky Way: Mapping Embodied Indigenous Performance* (2023), which is an excellent documentation of the long and complex embodied research project and performance practice.

18 Molas are pieces of textile art worn on the clothes of Kuna women living in the Kuna Yala area of coastal Panama—they are layered, embroidered; they contain stories/narratives.

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The performance principles and structures based on her embodied research into pre-contact earthworks, which Mojica formulated with a group of researchers, is one of the most distinctive processes in her theater work. This research reclaims such cultural texts as Indigenous mounds and earthworks on the territory of North America, which Chad Allen considers an Indigenous writing system, the first Indigenous literature on the land (*Earthworks* and *Trans-Indigenous*). Mojica's performance project titled *Circus Freaks and Sideshow Injuns* involved an extensive research into various types of Indigenous earthworks and mounds, some of which are effigy or burial sites. It allowed her to reflect on the colonial history of her family in the context of the erased history of Indigenous people from the landscapes of America,[19] which, however, has been inscribed on and in the land. Mojica performed a mound embodied research which required walking on the land, feeling it, smelling it, entering into a relationship with it, talking to the rivers and allowing the mounds to speak. She received songs and stories from the mounds, as she made herself available as a conduit to what the land was telling her. From that embodied research she went into the process of deep improvisation from which eventually a text was generated ("From the grounds"). The research into mounds shows that they were built with a deep awareness of cosmology and astrology, by layering different kinds of soils one upon the other; and this deep structure of mounds has been used as a structural base for her dramaturgical model, which renders several levels of reality, the pluriverse. The principles abstracted from the mounds have become the foundation of the theater process, which has been encapsulated by her and the team of researchers working on the project "Indigenous Knowledge, Contemporary Performance," in the following terms: duration, alignment, frequency, convergence, integration ("From the grounds"). The storyscape and the structures of the ancient earthworks were applied to scriptwriting and performance "in order to reanimate Indigenous ways of knowing" and to "dislodge the colonizer's gaze" ("Performance"), and in this way to push aside the traditional structures of western theatre and achieve a goal of Indigenous theatrical sovereignty.

19 Mojica's family performed in amusement parks and danced for tourists. Many Indigenous people were used in exhibits in savages section. They were marked as freaks and exotics, objectified, culturally othered and exploited like human freaks in the shows popular at the beginning of the 20th century.

Harvey's theater research process is also rooted in the land. The artist's interviews reveal that her theater practice entails frequent trips to the land of her ancestors to reclaim the sacred bond between her and the land, to reclaim the knowledge the land carries and which the elders epitomize in a phrase "we are the land" (*Kamloopa* 3). Such knowledge entails important responsibilities and respect for the land and hence to all Creation. The land in Harvey's work features as a storyscape, which is conveyed, for instance, in her statement about the land "drenched with the stories of our Ancestors […] where the Ancestor glaciers mix with the Spirit of the mountains" ("The Mystics"). The land is then an archive of stories and an archive of Salish knowledge.

Harvey's theater methodologies are inspired by her strong relation with the land. She uses the term 'Salish Earthing' to refer to her theatre process which she describes as a "Relational and Land based creation methodology," which for her is "[a]n approach that embraces full body listening, courageous exploration, and centers relational responsiveness to explore and deepen our ability to listen to the land to conjure ideas from physical and ideological earthing sessions to steward in stories" ("Salish Earthing"). In *Kamloopa*, for instance, she introduces a trickster to teach about the need to reconnect with the land and ancestors. The structure of the play is guided by the awareness that the land is sentient and living. The land features as one of the characters in the text, and the titles of its several sections are related to the land as a living body, e.g. The Land Breathes, Embodied Land, Landing Together (v). The Ancestral Matriarchs are presenced[20] as embodying the land: "We are the mountains, the rivers, the sky, the animals, the wind, the breath of our worlds […] We are the Land, our home for you to return to" (*Kamloopa* 3).

Harvey's 'Fire Creation Methodology' also rests on one of nature's elements. The artist designs the artistic ceremony of Indigenous theater as a fire ceremony, because, to use her words, "fire is connected with one of the oldest ceremonies which is telling a story," it "opens a portal between us and the cosmos" and it "may be one of our oldest partners" ("Merendiando"). The outdoors ceremony allows to connect to the earth. Harvey uses the concept of fire for her unique vision of a land-based theatre. She provides new definitions which indigenize the western concept of theatrical practices. In the new terminology, Indigenous theatre is a Fire Company with such positions/functions

20 The word refers to presencing as described in the footnote 13.

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as Fire Creator (playwright), Fire Tenders (playwright, directors, producers, dramaturgist), Fire Holders (actors, technicians), and Fire Igniters (the design team) (Harvey "Indigenizing theatre"). What is important in this relational dramaturgy is the creation of "a reciprocal relationship with the land and its people" (Harvey "Land based").

The land-based Indigenous theater processes and practices examined in this study can be read as a declaration of theatrical sovereignty by the discussed Indigenous land-based theater artists. They developed dramatic techniques that are informed by their holistic concept of the land, and grounded in their specific cultures. They focus on embodied research and embodied knowledge that reconnects humans with their community, with the natural world/landscape and ancestors. Their decolonizing and indigenizing theater methodologies, developed on the basis of Indigenous traditions, philosophies and knowledges reclaimed from the land, are a significant contribution to the global theater scholarship. Not only do their artistic projects challenge the western traditional theater misrepresentations of indigeneity, both thematically and in terms of the structural approach to storytelling, but they also offer philosophical insights of crucial importance to humanity at the time of contemporary global social, environmental and spiritual crises. Floyd Favel, Monique Mojica and Kim Senklip Harvey have been working on holistically oriented projects which aim at the re-indigenization of the world, understood in a broad sense of the word: including respect for the land and all creation, and the acceptance of pluriversal perspectives which honor Indigenous onto-epistemologies.

Abstract: The article focuses on the problem of Indigenous theatrical sovereignty which is examined on the basis of theater/performance theories and practices by such Aboriginal artists/theorists/performers from Canada as Floyd Favel, Monique Mojica and Kim Senklip Harvey. The theoretical framework of this study focuses on the decolonization and indigenization of theatrical practices, and specifically on theater as artistic ceremony and theater as a research methodology. The selected artists vehemently oppose colonial violence, exploitation and marginalization of Indigenous populations, their lands and cultures. They are interested in the reclamation and revitalization of Indigenous philosophies and traditions *via* theater/performance. They explore the development of dramatic techniques informed by Indigenous philosophies rooted in the Indigenous holistic concept of the land as sacred, as a living entity, and an archive of stories. They believe in the plural nature of reality, and they honor non-anthropocentric perspectives and relational worldviews. Each of the artists is discussed with reference to theories and methods informed by research into their specific cultures and knowledges, which they reclaim and transform into performance. Favel is discussed as a pioneer of Indigenous dramaturgies whose principles were abstracted from selected elements of his

Plains Cree cultural traditions. His "Native Performance Culture" is the first documented theory and method consciously created from Aboriginal heritage. Mojica's methods are shown as developed from her research into structures and principles abstracted from mola, the textile art of her ancestors, Kuna people, as well as from her embodied research into pre-contact earthworks and mounds. Harvey's innovative theater methodologies, "Salish Earthing" and "Fire Creation Methodology," are reflected upon as grounded in her strong relation to the Salish land. The artists challenge the Western theatre conventions, and replace them with sovereign land-based Indigenous theater/performance processes and methodologies, aiming to create the acts of healing, community making, resurgence, survivance, as well as the respect and care for the land and all creation. They offer hope at the time of diverse global environmental, social and cultural crises.

Keywords: decolonization, indigenization of theater, land-based theater, theatrical sovereignity, First Nations, Floyd Favel, Monique Mojica, Kim Senklip

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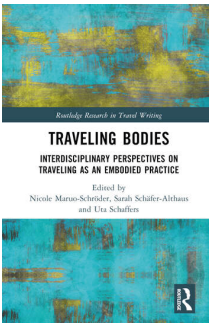
TRAVELING BODIES: INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON TRAVELING AS AN EMBODIED PRACTICE edited by Nicole Maruo-Schröder, Sarah Schäfer-Althaus, and Uta Schaffers

(A Book Review)



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Interest in travel writing is certainly strong, and the field experiences a continual steady evolution, even if perhaps in the last couple of years this has been a bit slower. The recently published contribution to *Routledge Research in Travel Writing* series: *Traveling Bodies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Traveling as an Embodied Practice* promises to effect a major change in how travel discourses are perceived and addressed—whereas indeed there has already been a lot said and written about travel writing *per se*, academic positions offering a broader look at travel writing, especially from the perspective of interdisciplinary embodiment studies, have been few and far between. *Traveling Bodies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Traveling as an Embodied Practice* has the potential to address this niche. This is also a timely intervention in our covid-marred post-pandemic times, when a truly unprecedented thing has happened—as the authors note, "the world has come to a standstill … [and] forms of traveling and the experience it comes with have fundamentally changed" (Introduction, 11). The editors of the collection—Nicole Maruo-Schröder, Sarah Schäfer-Althaus, and Uta Schaffers—rise to the challenge of this new reality and explore the complexity of travel from the position of the one who, while "still mobile and traveling" (Introduction, 12), experiences their body's being "immobilized, forced to remain in one spot" (Introduction, 12), a predicament both liberating—we have, after all, learnt to become "location-independent," and unsettling—it is a whole new dimension to come to terms with. In this light, an academic volume concerned first and foremost with the mutual entanglements of body (politics)

and travel as well as travel writing is indeed a well-timed intellectual project that is bound to be in growing demand.

The concept and methodology of *Traveling Bodies* merit praise. The authors and editors have made it their goal to address a relatively scant researched tenet of travel writing: its intersections with body/embodiment studies. The works collected in the volume investigate the centrality of the body in traveling practices, approaching the issue from a variety of perspectives, thus fostering a true inter-/ and trans-/disciplinary endeavour, provoking impulses and incentives for fresh directions in future research. The volume is logically divided into four parts: *The Body as Concept and Metaphor*; *Other Bodies*; *Crossing Borders: The Body and Its Liminal Zones*; and *Mobility, Perception, Experience*.

In the first section, contributors look at the physicality of the travel experience and how landscapes encountered by the travelers influence their ways of conceptualizing exploration, both inwards and outwards. This is further enriched in Part Two by accounting for the voices of 'others'—e.g. animals, and allowing them to be heard, recorded and thus represented. In Section Three attention is guided to transgressing borders and immersing oneself—or one's body, for that matter, in liminal zones and actions related to them, such as eating practices, modes of clothing, and issues of medical interventions performed on and/or for the traveling/traveler's body. The final section expands the discussion of cultural implications of travel, at the same time bringing it down to the original *genius loci* of traveling, which the authors aptly prove to be the body in its performance of the traveling act, both externally and internally, through, for instance, the tradition of inscribing the body with meaning acquired in the course of the journey. Each section promises to offer a refreshing and original take on the diversity of traveling practices and addresses these in a complex and nuanced way. The whole volume is written from an original perspective and constitutes a brave new approach to the field, definitely on the leading edge of the area. The structure and organisation of the volume is logical and transparent, and promises to take the reader on an intellectual adventure into the meanders of travel and travel writing.

One of the work's greatest strengths is that it offers a refreshing and uncommon look at a topic and a field of study and research engagement which for some time might have seemed all too well explored. The editors and contributors manage to come up with a volume that opens new research paths and poses previously unstated questions, offering complex, though not definitive, solutions. As such, the volume will principally appeal to researchers and academics engaged in the broad area of travel literature, as well as literary scholars

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and intellectuals with a background in the humanities pursuing their investigations of cultural theory, and race and postcolonial studies. Additionally, given the volume's involvement with body/embodiment studies, it will surely also be of interest to scholars of various interdisciplinary proveniences who in their work address the entanglements and interconnections of body discourses, material culture and history of body representations in the humanities.

As stated in the Editors' Introduction to the volume, the attitude that the authors and contributors embrace with regards to travel and travel writing rests on the premise whereby "the (re-)presentation of the bodies of the so-called others has been discussed in travel writing … the traveler's own body and her sense perceptions have played a much lesser role" (Introduction, 2). It is this gap that *Traveling Bodies* sets out to address, seeing how it is long overdue that attention has been paid to the "lived" body and how it deals with the assault on its senses, which traveling frequently proves to be. In fact, already Introduction is a delight to read. The volume has all it takes to captivate both more "seasoned" travel theory scholars and neophytes—the former will be given fresh and innovative vantage points from which to explore and analyse travel discourses, while the latter will be introduced to the field in a state-of-the-art manner, which accounts for more historical approaches and investigates the core issues of the field, as well as presents the newest, just emerging trends in travel studies. Also, personally I was thrilled to discover that *Traveling Bodies* includes Sofie Decock's text on Annemarie Schwarzenbach and Ella Maillart, and that the very Introduction relies heavily on references to Schwarzenbach's and Maillart's journey to Afghanistan—I could not be happier that these two outstanding personalities, indomitable travelers and pioneering women drivers are finally getting more due attention in English-language academic sources.

Surely another asset to the volume is its editorial team, made up of dedicated scholars representing different stages of an academic career. Their choice of contributors is diverse, both geographically and research-wise; the editors have taken great care to collaborate with scholars who all share a defining interest in travel and travel writing, but who represent these from multiple positions and a plethora of academic proveniences. This intellectual variety directly translates into a wide-reaching research profundity and scholarly originality, which single out *Traveling Bodies* as an innovative intervention occupying a place all of its own in the field of travel embodiment studies. It does not feel as an exaggeration to assert that as of early 2024, the volume does not have a "direct contender."

Abstract: The present review looks at the recent contribution to the Routledge Research in Travel Writing series—*Traveling Bodies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Traveling as an Embodied Practice*, edited by Nicole Maruo-Schröder, Sarah Schäfer-Althaus, and Uta Schaffers. The review discusses the contents of the volume, the concept and methodology employed in the work, as well as the major aspects pertaining to its position within the broad field of travel writing. It offers an evaluation of the originality of the collection and assesses the quality of the contributions included in the volume, highlighting how the gathered articles enrich the ongoing academic debate on travel, travel writing and the embodied experience of mobility and movement. The present review looks at the recent contribution to the Routledge Research in Travel Writing series—Traveling Bodies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Traveling as an Embodied Practice, edited by Nicole Maruo-Schröder, Sarah Schäfer-Althaus, and Uta Schaffers. The review discusses the contents of the volume, the concept and methodology employed in the work, as well as the major aspects pertaining to its position within the broad field of travel writing. It offers an evaluation of the originality of the collection and assesses the quality of the contributions included in the volume, highlighting how the gathered articles enrich the ongoing academic debate on travel, travel writing and the embodied experience of mobility and movement.

Keywords: travel, travel writing, body politics, travelogues, new media, animals, automobile culture, sensory journeys, photography, film, migration

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