

Indigenous Poetics in Canada. Edited by Neal McLeod. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014. 416 pages. \$42.99 paper; \$102.00 electronic.

Prosody that developed to create poetry in other tongues—Latin, Italian—carried forward through history by the artist servants of the church and state and claimed its ground in English cultural convention apparently in the age of the Renaissance, ended up feeling to me like an awkward imposition, if not imperial colonization, especially since folks had been doing it for hundreds of years.

—Daniel David Moses, “Getting Back to Poetry: A Memoir”

Daniel David Moses’ journey through imposed English versification to his own poetic voice is mirrored by indigenous struggles in English and French literature and creative writing in classrooms throughout Canada. Contemporary poetry studies in Canada tend to neglect the renaissance in indigenous poetry and poetics; university graduate students are more familiar with English Renaissance and Romantic period poets than the poetry of living indigenous writers, and more likely to have read the fiction of Louise Erdrich than the poetry of Moses and Louise Halfe (Cree). In part, this imposition is the result of historical cultural colonization to which Moses refers, but the dominance of the United States English-language publishing and culture industries accounts for the greater familiarity with fiction rather than poetry. Although ignored in the literature classroom, and on the margins of the already marginalized field of poetry studies in English, indigenous poetry and poetics have become central to cultural and language revitalization movements in Canada.

As Neal McLeod puts it in his two prefatory essays to *Indigenous Poetics in Canada*, poetics opens a dialogue between classical indigenous narratives and “the living Indigenous present” (ix), “a space for mobilizing the living oral tradition in contemporary contexts to awaken alternative political and aesthetic critical possibilities” (7). A collection of twenty-five essays and three interviews arranged in four sections (the poetics of memory, place, performance, and medicine), *Indigenous Poetics in Canada* may be read as a series of dialogues engaging the productive tension between past and present to envision an indigenous future that holds onto an alternative center of conscious being in the world (12). Indigenous poetic narratives in Canada, like most indigenous art in the Americas, move in and out of many worlds and aesthetic practices, indigenous and non-indigenous.

Indigenous Poetics in Canada inaugurates a new chapter in the scholarly study of indigenous aesthetics. Despite the preponderance of chapters devoted to Cree and Anishinaabe poetic narratives, this volume, which emerged from the “Sounding Out Indigenous Poetics” workshop organized by McLeod of the Indigenous Studies Department at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, opens up indigenous-specific subject matter more broadly, opting for inclusivity rather than regional or linguistic exclusivity. Nevertheless, Michèle Lacombe’s “Pimuteuat/ Ils marchent/ They Walk: A Few Observations on Indigenous Poetry and Poetics in French,” is the only chapter that foregrounds cross-cultural and interlingual Innu-French and Québécois poetry dialogues published in anthologies largely edited by non-indigenous writers.

Lamenting the absence of edited volumes that bring together English-speaking and French-speaking indigenous poets, Lacombe points out that government support for translations of indigenous literature is not a high priority (161). Lacombe's interpretation of the 2008 collection of poetry by fifteen indigenous and non-indigenous poets paired by editor Laure Morali in *Aimitiaiu! Parlon-Nous!* stresses the need for more intertextual exchanges, poetic dialogues, and experiments. Similar interlingual poetic exchanges are evident in the epistolary poetry of Jean Désy and Rita Mestokosho published in the 2010 collection *Uashtessiu/Lumière d'automne*. Lacombe contends, however, that Mestokosho has found a larger audience for her poetry among French-speaking European readers than she has at home in Canada.

While publishers of indigenous poetry in English have not assembled the same sort of cross-cultural poetry dialogues, Jesse Rae Archibald-Barber's intertextual analysis of the poetry of nineteenth century Métis nationalist Louis Riel, alongside the settler poetry of Charles Mair, Kate Simpson Hayes, Isabella Valancy Crawford, and the poetry of Mohawk/Métis poet E. Pauline Johnson in "A Poetics of Place and Apocalypse: Conflict and Contradiction in Poetry of the Red River Resistance and the Northwest Resistance" suggests new possibilities for cross-cultural readings of Riel's poetry, published mainly in French and Michif with English-language poetry situated around the same historical events. Archibald-Barber's interpretation of the poetry in the context of Métis resistance to western expansion, and Romantic tropes of apocalypse, the disappearing Indian, and vanishing buffalo will be familiar to US readers of Romantic tropes of the vanishing wilderness and disappearing noble savage.

When most successful, the contributors to the volume speak to one another in a manner that pries open the central debates between indigenous poetic narratives and non-indigenous material, as well as the dialogue between classical indigenous narratives and contemporary poetics. David Newhouse analyzes Keith Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places* as an ethnography of how Apache "elders who worked with Basso taught him how to read like an Apache, so that he could fulfill his obligation as a human being to become wise," demonstrating how texts from the Southwest US travel and are given new meaning through indigenous interpretive practices in Canada. In contrast, Marilyn Dumont, like Daniel David Moses, writes of her own creative process in "The Pemican Eaters," choosing the sestina form for the poem "Fiddle Bid Us Dance" "to capture the steady cadence of the fiddle while step-dancing" (85).

The personal narratives, interviews, and academic essays in *Indigenous Poetics in Canada* contribute important content and context specific to Canada's history of colonial settlement and westward expansion, and the impact of the centralized administration of colleges and universities on the production of departments, programs, and scholarship. Writing in "Cree Poetic Discourse," the ninth chapter of the volume, McLeod points out that in Canada, indigenous studies departments and programs have been put into the social sciences, which "does narrative violence to the integrity of Indigenous narrative knowing . . . a conceptual shift that often takes the vitality away from Indigenous life-worlds" (89). As a consequence of this disciplinary bias, the number of anthologies devoted to the scholarly study of indigenous

literature in Canada is a small fraction of published studies on indigenous education or economic development.

Scholars and graduate students of indigenous poetry in Canada may come away with the sense of having walked into conversations that have been taking place for centuries. Indeed, many of the essays concentrate on the relationship between indigenous oral traditions and written texts, particularly from Anishinaabe and Cree traditions, but Susan Gingell's contribution, "The 'Nerve of Cree,' the Pulse of Africa: Sound Identities in Cree, Cree-Métis, and Dub Poetics in Canada" and Jamaican-Canadian dub poet Lillian Allen's "Poetics of Renewal: Indigenous Poetics—Message or Medium?" map out new directions for poetic dialogues between indigenous and Caribbean aesthetic practices, spoken-word poetry, and poetic theory. Although indigenous and dub poetics arise out of different linguistic histories of (neo)colonialism, they each challenge the conventions of standard English prosody with an understanding of the subversive potential of formal innovation. However, as Janet Rogers puts it in "Blood Moves with Us—Story Poetry Lives Inside," "the page is part parent of the spoken-word poem. It is birthed there. It is taught protocols and dressed up for public consumption from the page" (254).

Vermonja R. Alston
York University

Junípero Serra: California, Indians, and the Transformation of a Missionary. By Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. 514 pages. \$34.95 cloth; \$39.95 electronic.

On January 15, 2015, weeks before this book's release, Pope Francis announced plans to canonize Fray Junípero Serra, the founder of California's first nine missions. Authors Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz note that the Vatican first attempted to canonize Serra in 1934. Then, in the 1980s, Pope John Paul II revisited the canonization discussion, which yielded a plethora of publications on Serra and the missions. Whereas these publications offer strong opinions for and against canonization, Beebe and Senkewicz steer away from the issue and provide an updated, well-researched biography of Junípero Serra that is based in original evidence. They effectively reference and incorporate primary sources to contextualize major events in Serra's life before and after his 1769 arrival in present-day California. Beebe and Senkewicz provide updated translations of the primary source materials, but they refrain from inserting their own opinions of the sources. As the book jacket states, they successfully "interpret Junípero Serra neither as a saint nor as the personification of the Black Legend of Spanish cruelty." Instead of praising or demonizing Serra and the institutions he oversaw, Beebe and Senkewicz present a "multidimensional picture" of Serra as they focus on two aspects of Serra's life and work: "(1) his sense of self-identity, that of an eighteenth-century Roman Catholic missionary priest, and (2) his relationships with the native peoples he encountered in the Americas" (37, 33).