UC San Diego
UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Encounters on Contested Lands : : First Nations Performances of Sovereignty and Nationhood in Quebec

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1pr910r7

Author
Burelle, Julie Sara Véronique

Publication Date
2014

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Encounters on Contested Lands: First Nations Performances of Sovereignty and Nationhood in Quebec

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Drama and Theatre

by

Julie Sara Véronique Burelle

Committee in charge:

University of California, San Diego

Professor Emily Roxworthy, Chair
Professor Patrick Anderson
Professor Ross Frank
Professor Simon Harel

University of California, Irvine

Professor Ketu Katrak
Professor Frank B. Wilderson III

2014

The Dissertation of Julie Sara Véronique Burelle is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

____

____

____

____

____

____

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014

EPIGRAPH

Je me suis faite belle
pour qu'on remarque
la moelle de mes os,
survivante d'un récit
qu'on ne raconte pas.

Joséphine Bacon

The very notion of indigenous nationhood, which demarcates identity and seizes tradition in ways that may be antagonistic to the encompassing frame of the state, may be simply unintelligible to the western and/or imperial ear.

Audra Simpson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page………………………………………………………………. iii

Epigraph……………………………………………………………………... iv

Table of Contents…………………………………………………………… v

Acknowledgments………………………………………………………….. vi

Vita…………………………………………………………………………. viii

Abstract…………………………………………………………………….. ix

Introduction: Nation, Spectacle, and Colliding Narratives …………………... 1

Chapter 1: *Neptune* Redux: The (First) Nation(s) enacted in Alexis Martin's *Invention du chauffage central en Nouvelle-France*……………………….................... 17

Chapter 2: Encounters on the Reserve: Yves Sioui Durand's *Mesnak* and Alanis Obomsawin's *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*…….………………… 59

Chapter 3: Endurance/ Enduring Performance: First Nations Women, Diplomacy, and Sovereign Re-mappings. …………………………………………………… 102

Chapter 4: Theatre in Contested Lands: Repatriating Indigenous Remains..… 148

Conclusion………………………………………………………………. 182

Works Cited……………………………………………………………… 192

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the scholars, artists, mentors, and friends I have met on this journey that started in Montreal and led me to San Diego via Vancouver, Boston, and Toronto. I owe to Christine Heitzmann and to our students in Boston my rekindled love for theatre's power to speak. In Toronto, Antje Budde ignited my interest in theory, and inspired me to become a scholar.

I have had the utmost privilege of working with outstanding committee members in San Diego, Irvine, and Montreal. Emily Roxworthy has been an inspiring mentor, and her generosity and intellectual rigor have been instrumental in bringing this project to fruition and in shaping who I am as an academic. Thank you to Patrick Anderson, Ross Frank, Ketu Katrak, and Frank Wilderson for taking me under their respective wings and for teaching life-altering seminars. Finally, thank you to Simon Harel who kindly came on board my dissertation committee despite the distance.

I want to thank the wonderful professors and staff at UCSD for their outstanding and caring professionalism. My colleagues in the department have played a large part in bringing this project to life, and I thank in particular Matt Chapman, Jason Dorwart, Janet Hayatshahi, Sonia Fernandez, Raimondo Genna, Lily Kelting, Melissa Minnifee, Sam Mitchell, Naysan Mojgani, Jade Power Sotomayor, and Heather Ramey.

Erin Hurley, Yumi Pak, Pierrot Ross-Tremblay, and Selamawit Terrefe have all helped me find my way out of what seemed like insurmountable writing impasses: I have learned so much from their guidance and generosity. Thank you also to Mélanie

Carrier, Olivier Higgins, José Mailhot, Alexi Marchel, Ghislain Picard, and to Eddy Malenfant, Philippe McKenzie, Anne-Marie St-Onge André, Évelyne St-Onge, and Fernande St-Onge for the hospitality and conversations in Mani-Utenam.

Thank you to my family in Montréal for their love and encouragement: my father André, my two brothers Yan and Mathieu and their respective families, my sister Pascale Boyer and her family, and my aunt Marie-Thérèse, and the entire Proulx clan. Thank you also to Lorraine Barner and the Barner family, to Ivano Caponigro, Daniel Kane, Nancy Baird, and David Baillot.

I am truly blessed to have David Barner in my life and I am grateful for the supportive and loving space we give each other to pursue our dreams. The incessant questions and avid curiosity of our daughter Anouk who was born as I began this PhD, have been a source of inspiration for me these last 5 years, and I owe her the courage to question even what is uncomfortable.

My mother Nicole Proulx passed away as I was starting my PhD. She was a luminous soul, a wonderful parent and friend, and a profoundly just being. She is present in this work.

Lastly, I gratefully acknowledge that the bulk of my research was conducted on Kumeyaay, Haudenosaunee, and Innu territories. It is not lost on me that so much of the privilege of writing this dissertation stems from my belonging to the very settler colonial structures that I critique in this book. This is my attempt to participate in a conversation about change, justice, and redress.

VITA

2009	Honors Bachelor of Art, Drama Specialist, University of Toronto, Canada.
2009-2014	Teaching Assistant, Department of Theatre and Dance, University of California, San Diego
2014	Doctor of Philosophy in Drama and Theatre, University of California San Diego

PUBLICATIONS

“Theatre in Contested Lands: Repatriating Indigenous Remains” (under review)

“Staging Empathy’s Limit Point: First Nations Theatre and the Challenges of Self-Representation on a Settler-State Stage” in *Theatres of Affect; New Essays on Canadian Theatre, Vol. 4*, edited by Erin Hurley. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, (Spring 2014)

"Ondinnok's Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi: Re-membering Fragmented Lineages" in *TheatreForum*, Spring 2011 issue.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

“Endurance/Enduring Performances: First Nations Women’s Embodied Challenges to Canada’s Indian Act.” In The Balance: Indigeneity, Performance, Globalization Conference, 2013

“Cooking Up a Storm: Pots and Pans and Other Playful Protest During Quebec’s Maple Spring”. Presented as part of panel “The Performative Promise: Liberation, Coercion and the Modality of Play”, Association for Theatre in Higher Education, Orlando, Florida, 2013.

“Self-Consuming Body Politic(s): On Colonial Violence and Chief Theresa Spence’s Hunger Strike”. Presented as part of Uproot-Downroot: Performance Art as Positioning (Antje Budde and Elin Diamond, chairs). American Comparative Literature Association, Toronto, 2013.

“Reclaiming an Unmarked Body: Representations of Indigenous Trauma in Ondinnok’s Transnational Adaptation of *Rabinal Achi”,* Traumatic Structures Working group (Mary Karen Dahl and Katherine Nigh, chairs) American Society for Theatre Research, Montreal, 2010.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Encounters on Contested Lands: First Nations Performances of Sovereignty and Nationhood in Quebec

by

Julie Sara Véronique Burelle

Doctor of Philosophy in Drama and Theatre

University of California, San Diego, 2014

Professor Emily Roxworthy, Chair

Public spectacles, as many scholars argue, perform, shape and solidify a given nation's imagined community, celebrating its perceived commonality, while obscuring elements that might threaten its cohesiveness. For settler communities that are predicated on the erasure of indigeneity and its replacement with settlers, spectacles of nation-ness often coalesce in performances that (re)erase the indigenous "other" whose presence challenges settler legitimacy. *Encounters on Contested Lands* focuses on spectacles of First Nations cultural identity, sovereignty, and nationhood in the

particular context of Quebec, a settler community whose own minority discourse and national aspirations vis-à-vis Canada have monopolized center stage. *Encounters* examines how Quebec's imagined community relies on what Tuck and Yang call "settler's moves to innocence", that is on the province deploying its status as a cultural and linguistic minority within Canada in order to obscure its own ongoing settler colonial relationship with the eleven First Nations whose sovereignty predates that of Quebec and threatens the coherence of its national narrative. Quebec has analogized its minority status with the oppression of First Nations peoples, problematically positioning the Quebecois as allies in a common decolonization struggle against Canada. This dissertation's intervention is two-fold: First, *Encounters* examines performances stemming from the francophone community that actively imagine and stage the nation of Quebec, tracing how these works reify Quebec's moves to innocence, and erase the contradictions within its minority discourse. Secondly, *Encounters* focuses on performances by First Nations artists and activists that interrupt, subvert, and critique spectacles of erasure in Quebec's public sphere, and thus, challenge the settler colonialism that subtends the province's national project. Examining these missed, colliding, or violent encounters between Quebec and First Nations' spectacles of nation-ness, this dissertation meditates on the seemingly irreconcilable divide between these two communities. Drawing from the theatrical work of Alexis Martin and Ondinnok, from films by Alanis Obomsawin and Yves Sioui Durand, from Nadia Myre's visual work, and the Marche Amun's protest march, this dissertation reflects on the multiple sites of resistance that animate First Nations'

decolonizing struggle in Quebec, and meditate on the dissonance at work in Quebec's national project.

Introduction: Nation, Spectacle, and Colliding Narratives.

Among the numerous photos taken during the standoff at Oka in 1990, one iconic image[1] exemplifies the central questions of this dissertation. Captured by Shaney Komulainen at the height of the 78-day conflict between the Mohawks of Kanehsatake and various forces deployed by the Quebec and Canadian governments, the photo immortalizes a tense confrontation between a Vandoo[2] sentry and a Mohawk warrior. The two men, their eyes locked in a face-off, stand on either sides of the perimeter established by the army to seal off Mohawk territory. While they are separated by no more than 10 inches, the structural, cultural, and historical gap between these two men is immense. One represents the apparatus of the settler state, and the other, having struggled at the margins of its civil society for too long, calls it into question.

Private Patrick Cloutier looks painfully young in this photo and his expression betrays fear despite his best efforts to appear imperturbable. Cloutier's face is as bare and open to scrutiny as the face and identity of his Mohawk opponent, known only as "Freddy Krueger" during the standoff, are concealed and illegible. Warrior Brad "Freddy Krueger" Larocque's features are indeed completely masked by a bandana and a pair of dark sunglasses. A student of economics at the University of Saskatchewan, Larocque was not much older than Cloutier during the standoff, but his youth is invisible to the viewer here. Taller than Cloutier by only a few centimeters, Larocque nevertheless possesses a towering presence and dominates the soldier. Interestingly, Larocque's attire

[1] The photo, entitled "Face to Face" can be seen here: http://www.bulgergallery.com.

[2] The Royal 22e Regiment, the most famous francophone regiment of the Canadian Forces is commonly known as "Vandoo", an Anglicized mispronunciation of the French word "vingt-deux" (twenty-two). Québec City is the Regiment Headquarter, and its battalions serve as a local infantry for the province.

echoes Cloutier's military gear but here, his camouflage hat and combat fatigues re-appropriate the very visual markers that are supposed to give his adversary an air of authority and legitimacy. More importantly, Larocque's army gear unequivocally positions the Mohawks as a sovereign nation at war with the invading forces of Quebec and Canada. Larocque reminds us that settler colonialism is not an event of the past but an ongoing and resilient structure.

Many narratives are at play in this photo. For First Nations people across the country who watched the events in Oka unfold in 1990, Brad Larocque represented all the First Nations "others" relegated to the margins of settler society and rendered invisible by settler colonialism's logic of erasure[3]. The people of Kanehsatake's dissent, embodied here by Larocque, catalyzed widespread indigenous support across all of North America, in addition to a sense of common purpose that the 2012 Idle No More First Nations grassroots movement recently revitalized. For their part, the federal and provincial governments found a poster-perfect soldier in private Patrick Cloutier: his pale eyes, his identity as a Quebecois, his seemingly youthful innocence and, above all else, his palpable fear during his encounter with Larocque were fashioned into a narrative of close and imminent danger. So powerful was the narrative that surrounded Cloutier that it succeeded in obfuscating for many Canadians and Quebecois the facts behind the Mohawk uprising, namely, the town of Oka's unilateral decision to transform a Mohawk

---

[3] I draw my working definition of settler colonialism from Patrick Wolfe who writes: "settler colonialism erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base of indigenous populations" (388). This new society is then stratified following an "organizing grammar of race" which positions settlers as superior to natives (388). Settler colonialism is not a discrete event but an ongoing formation, which has elimination as an organizing principle. Wolfe offers the following important distinction: "settler colonialism is inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal" (ibid). Elimination however is never complete, rather this "process of replacement maintains the refractory imprint of the native counter-claim" that settler colonial societies depend on this "replaced other" to maintain their sense of self as communities (389).

sacred pine forest and burial site into a luxury golf course and condominium project. The history of these contested parcels of land goes back to Nouvelle France and includes a series of broken promises first made to the Mohawks by the Jesuits, and then successively by the British, Canada, and Quebec. The Mohawks' expropriation exemplifies what Patrick Wolfe describes as "settler colonialism's logic of elimination" (Wolfe 389). As Wolfe argues, settler colonialism is predicated on the elimination of native societies and their replacement with settlers and thus, the Mohawks had always stood in the way of settler development be it French, British, or Québécois (Wolfe 389).

That the Mohawks had been expropriated of their ancestral land and cheated of their rights did not seem to register in the minds of large segments of Quebec audiences who watched the crisis unfold in the news nightly. In the media warfare that surrounded the crisis, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's voice resonated powerfully with Quebec and Canada's settler communities when he stated: "The Mohawks are terrorists and Canada does not negotiate with terrorists" (in Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*). Mulroney's statement framed the events of Oka as an aggression against Canada and obfuscated their historical context. From a sovereign nation protecting itself against further settler-colonial encroachment, the Mohawks were swiftly recast as terrorists in Mulroney's statement, and Quebec and Canada suddenly became the invaded parties.

In 1990, the question of Quebec's place within Canada was still unresolved. It had been a decade since the Parti Québécois held its referendum on Quebec' sovereignty-association, and despite Canada's Prime Minister Trudeau's promises of change, Canada's new constitution, the Canada Act of 1982, had been ratified without Quebec's

consent[4]. In 1987, the Canadian government negotiated The Meech Lake Accord, a series of constitutional amendments proposed to gain Quebec's acceptance of the Canada Act. If some of the proposed changes[5] met Quebec's demands, they left others in Canada dissatisfied. First Nations people in particular felt that the proposed amendments, devised without their leaders' input, relegated First Nations issues to a future and indeterminate round of negotiations. When each province had to vote on the Accord before the 23 June deadline, Elijah Harper (Oji-Cree), the only First Nations elected in Manitoba's Legislative Assembly, raised a feather in dissent and filibustered Manitoba's vote. Along with Harper's dissent, Newfoundland's refusal to vote on the Accord and the public campaign led by Pierre Elliot Trudeau against it sank the Meech Lake Accord. Consequently, when the Oka Crisis (as it has come to be known) erupted in the summer of 1990, many Quebecois still felt resentment toward Canada and toward the role a First Nations leader had played in derailing the Accord.

Like Private Patrick Cloutier, Quebec thus found itself in an uncomfortable and threatening encounter during the summer of 1990. While a more empathic reaction of solidarity could have been expected from the separatist Quebecois who, after all, define themselves, like many First Nations people, as colonized subjects within English Canada, this was not the case. While it would be easy to attribute this lack of solidarity to the

---

[4] On the night of 4 November 1981, in what is known as La Nuit des Longs Couteaux (The Night of the Long knives) in Quebec and as the Kitchen Meeting in English Canada, Prime Minister Trudeau convened the Premiers of all provinces to a round of negotiation in the kitchens of Ottawa's Chateau Laurier, the hotel where Premiers resided. Quebec Premier René Lévesque, having decided to stay in a hotel in nearby Hull, Québec, was not alerted to this round of negotiation and thus did not sign the agreement that was devised that night. The following failed Meech Lake Accord (1990) and Charlottetown Accord (1992) were series of amendments designed to bring Quebec to ratify the1982 Constitution.

[5] These changes were the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society, increased power with respect to immigration in the province, financial compensation for provinces who opted out of federal programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction and input in Senate and Supreme Court appointments.

recent constitutional failures, this interpretation would be too simplistic and miss the deeper structural and ontological questions the Mohawk illuminated in refusing to let Oka build its golf course. Some settler Quebecois did voice their outrage over the government's lack of good faith in negotiating with the Mohawks, but a significant segment of the settler community around Oka resorted to violence and rioting, stoning a caravan of cars evacuating Mohawk elders, women and children from Kanehsatake, and burning the effigy of a Mohawk warrior at a busy intersection in Chateauguay[6]. These public spectacles betrayed a Quebecois settler community profoundly threatened by Mohawk dissent, and struggling to maintain its narrative as a colonized minority in the face of a Mohawk discourse that aligned the Quebecois with the perpetrators rather than the victims of settler-colonialism.

Public spectacles, as Diana Taylor argues in her study of Argentina's Dirty War, are both a "locus and mechanism of communal identity through collective imaginings that constitute 'nation' as 'an imagined political community'[7]" (Taylor ix). Spectacle, she argues, both "builds and dismantles a sense of community and nation-ness", "forges and erases", "stirs and manipulates", drawing a population in while blinding it to the elements that threaten the nation's narrative and sense of coherence (Taylor ix). As discussed earlier, Patrick Wolfe describes settler colonialism as "inherently eliminatory", depending on the erasure (real and symbolic) of native populations for the creation of a new colonial society. However, Wolfe notes that the "process of replacement" that structures settler colonialism, always maintains "the refractory imprint of the native

---

[6] Chateauguay is a town bordering the Mohawk reserve of Kahnawake.

[7] Taylor draws here from the aforementioned concept of nations as imagined communities coined by Benedict Anderson in his famous eponymous 1983 book.

counter-claim" (Wolfe 389). In other words, this replaced but not vanished native "other" serves as the ultimate marker of difference that secures the borders of settler societies. Spectacles of nation-ness in settler colonial societies thus always replay, in one form or another, this organizational scenario of elimination.

Benedict Anderson famously described nations as "imagined communities", constructed through a collective will to simultaneously celebrate commonalities and actively "forget" dissonant elements that might threaten the community's integrity. Building on Anderson's work, Joseph Roach argues in *Cities of the Dead* that Circum-Atlantic societies like the United States and Canada have invented themselves through performances of "incomplete forgetting" (Roach 6). In the case of Canada, this performance simultaneously forgets the genocide of First Nations and invokes its trace as a symbol of settler state identity. This trace or refractory imprint of "Nativeness" then, functions as the condition of possibility for settler state project: the erasure of real First Nations's bodies legitimates settler states' so-called rightful occupation of a *terra nullius,* and the strategic deployment of objectivized "nativeness" signals the emergence of a New World identity that differentiates the settler from its Old World relative.

In Komulainen's photo Cloutier represents the settler state's imagined community and more particularly Quebec's own sense of self. His bare face and legible identity indicate how this imagined community perceives itself as legitimate and as rightfully occupying the land of Oka and Quebec at large. Cloutier is there to defend the integrity of imagined communities – Canada and Quebec – whose sense of self depends on the erasure of the very people that Larocque rendered visible in Oka. Exceeding the mere refractory imprint of the native counter claim that Wolfe describes, Larocque brings to

the fore the threat of the native that refuses to disappear and thus challenges the hegemonic discourses that stabilize settler societies. Larocque renders visible Canada and Quebec's attempts to eliminate his nation's sovereignty, but his presence also hints at a deeper structural violence that Frank Wilderson calls "the genocidal modality of the Savage's grammar of suffering" (Wilderson 153-4). Larocque's defense of his community illuminates the reserve[8] as a genocidal space imagined with the end of First Nations in mind, a space open to gratuitous violence and military deployment.

To read the Oka Crisis though the framework of settler colonialism uncomfortably brings to the fore Canada and Quebec's role as settler societies whose sense of self is not only predicated upon the structural elimination of First Nations societies, but also on what film scholar Bruno Cornellier calls a historical trajectory "culminating in settler colonialism' own self-suppression" (Cornellier, Talk). In other words:

> The decisive triumph of settler colonialism would correspond to this moment when settler societies manage to represent themselves as not colonial anymore, a moment often coterminous with a celebratory repudiation of race understood as the principal visible marker of the colonial "past" (Ibid)

In criminalizing Mohawk dissent and qualifying it as an act of terrorism, both Canada and Quebec attempted to obfuscate their ongoing settler-colonial relationship with First Nations people. To recognize Mohawk's rights to defend their land would amount to admitting that Quebec and Canada's imagined communities are indeed ongoing settler colonial states. This casting of Mohawk dissent as criminal and of the military as peace-

[8] While the term "reservation" is commonly used in the United States to describe lands allocated to Native Americans, in Canada, the term "reserve" is more common. The Indian Act defines an "Indian reserve" as "the tract of land, the legal title of which is vested in Her Majesty, that has been set apart by Her Majesty for the use and benefit of a band." (AANDC, *terminology*)

keepers betrays a form of selective amnesia that defines settler communities who actively suppress the memory of their past as colonial settlers yet retain the power and privileges that come with usurpation. While Canada has adopted the falsely egalitarian language of multiculturalism as a way to erase its colonial past, Quebec has followed the opposite path and adopted a discourse that both downplays its colonial past, recasting it as almost benevolent, and brandishes the province' status as colonized minority in order to advance Quebec's nation project.

Quebec's discourse betrays a form of strategic ambivalence towards settler colonialism. In fact, Quebec's settler population has effectively re-cast themselves as natives to the land they occupy, using terms like "Québécois de souche" or "Québécois pure-laine" to differentiate the francophone majority from newcomers. While "pure-laine" literally means pure-wool and evokes untainted ancestry, "souche" means root or stem and, when attached to the word Quebecois, these qualifiers connote lineage or nativeness. In other words, the Québécois de souche or pure-laine, that is the descendants of French settlers (who may have mixed with First Nations people but have remained part of white settler society) are now as equally "native" as the province's First Nations. In this performance of competing Nativeness, Quebec resorts to a discourse of shared oppression aligning with First Nations communities against Anglo-Canada. The performances I examine in this dissertation engage with Quebec's analogizing discourse of shared dispossession and thus destabilize the province's narrative as an oppressed minority.

The Oka crisis provides the historical starting point of this dissertation, which focuses on First Nations' performances of cultural identity, sovereignty, and nationhood

in Quebec and examines how these instances of self-representation challenge Quebec's minority discourse and own narrative as an aspiring nation. Reading these performances as diagnostic tools, this dissertation meditates on the seemingly irreconcilable divide between the First People of Quebec and the province's francophone settler majority and takes as a starting point Lyle Longclaws' words, "before the healing can take place the poison must first be exposed.[9]". While imagining healing may be currently impossible, undesirable even if it means finding spaces of accommodation within the unethical project of settler colonialism, I believe that exposing the structures of First Nations oppression holding Quebec and Canada in place is both possible and necessary. During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Aboriginal Residential Schools in Montreal in April 2013, a panel of First Nations leaders and intellectuals reflected on the role Quebec could play in reconciliation and in decolonizing its relationship with the Abenaki, Anishinaabe, Attikamekw, Cree, Huron-Wendat, Innu, Inuit, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Mohawk, and Naskapi nations, with whom it currently coexists. Exhorting Quebec to own up to its complicity (past and ongoing) in settler-colonialism and referring to Quebec's historical trajectory from Nouvelle France to a province of Canada, Mohawk activist Clifton Nicholas stated: "It [reconciliation] has to start in Quebec. That's where it all started. They were colonized but they are also colonizers" ("The Royal Proclamation and Reconciliation", April 26, 2013). What follows is an attempt to respond to Nicholas's challenging invitation.

---

[9] Elder Lyle Longclaws words serve as an epigraph for Tomson Highway's play *Dry Lips Oughta Move To Kapuskasing* publishec in 1989 by Fifth House Publisher.

A Note on Nomenclature and Positionality

I recognize that the eleven nations that live in what is now the province Quebec are neither homogenous in terms of culture or language, nor in their respective historical relationship with the governments of Quebec and Canada. Some like the Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabe and Mohawk nations have been in contact with settler communities since the sixteenth century, while others like the Inuit were relatively isolated from the encroaching force of settler communities until recently. While the province of Quebec includes the Inuit in its definition of First Nations, it is not the case in the rest of Canada where Inuit and Métis populations are not legally considered as First Nations, but rather fall under the category of Aboriginal people whose status is not regulated by the Indian Act. For the sake of clarity and succinctness, I refer to the 11 nations whose ancestral territories are located in what is now Quebec as First Nations or First Peoples. I attend to the cultural and historical differences of each nation when discussing specific performances. Furthermore, I have tried when possible to avoid the commonly used expression "Quebec's First Nations" since it reproduces a hierarchy of sovereignty that I specifically want to trouble and take to task.

I am not First Nations and make no claim of speaking in the name of the artists and activists I discuss in this dissertation. I conducted my investigation as a Québécoise both attached to Quebec as an imagined community and extremely critical of its vast blind spots along racial and structural lines. My investigation is fueled by a desire to illuminate the ethical fissures in Quebec's national project, to reveal how and why Quebec's imagined community cannot currently accommodate (let alone comprehend) the concept of First Nation sovereignty. Quebec has struggled to define itself as a

community for more than sixty years now. It has gone through two close-call referendums on separation and a string of separatist governments. Unlike English-speaking Canada where discussions about the nation are less of a political imperative, Quebec's political and cultural spheres are dominated by questions surrounding the province's nation-ness that have yet to be fully answered. As this dissertation argues, Quebec's imagining of nation-ness is currently taking place within parameters that take the extinction of First Nations' lands, modes of governance and sovereignty as a given or a starting point. The performances that form my case studies argue otherwise and they obstinately remind Quebec that there are alternative ways to imagine the future and remember the past of this contested territory. The performances do not only reveal the current state of settler state violence but also labor to imagine an alternate future that is predicated on decolonization.

I am very aware of the legacy of academia in objectifying and silencing First Nations and Native American voices, intellectual traditions and epistemologies. Thus, my analysis of the various performances included in this dissertation has attempted to be as polyphonic as possible, putting voices from First Nations scholars, artists, and activists in conversation with other non-Western and Western traditions. Scholars like Kevin Bruyneel, Joseph Roach, and Dwight Conquergood have offered me clear and inspiring examples of polyphonic works and I am similarly indebted to First Nations scholars Pierrot Ross-Tremblay, Jodi A. Byrd, Taiaiake Alfred, Bonita Lawrence, Mishuana Goeman, Audra Simpson, Robert Warrior, and Frank B. Wilderson III for their theoretical work and critical interventions in deconstructing settler states and the policies and normalizing discourses that keep them in place.

Structure

The chapters of this dissertation are organized around a central motif – the scenario of encounter – and they examine performances that dramatize, subvert, romanticize and/or critique encounters between the eleven First Nations of Quebec and the province's Francophone majority. I use the term performance to categorize a broad ensemble of embodied practices and events that actively shape and/or defy how nations as imagined communities perceive and define themselves. These performances take place on stage, on the big screen, during road protests, in urban settings, on reserves or on contested ancestral territory. Drawing from such a heterogeneous pool of performances demonstrates that settler colonialism permeates all spheres of identity and national discourses. It also renders visible the multiple sites of resistance that animate First Nations's ongoing decolonizing struggle and that Kevin Bruyneel, drawing from Homi Bhabha's concept of a third space of enunciation, calls "third spaces of sovereignty." These spaces that exist on the boundaries of settler colonialism are, according to Bruyneel, "inassimilable" and they "expose both the practices and the contingencies of settler colonial rule" (xvii). In other words, performances that articulate this third space of sovereignty render visible the very structures of power and elimination that the settler state attempts to erase.

Chapter one entitled "Neptune Redux: The (First) Nation(s) enacted in Alexis Martin's Invention du chauffage central en Nouvelle-France" begins with a missed encounter between Quebecois playwright Alexis Martin and the First Nations' "other" his play claims to render visible. Martin's 2012 *Invention du chauffage central en Nouvelle France* is the first of an ambitious trio of plays retracing the history of the francophone

community in Quebec from Nouvelle-France until 1998. *Invention* thus participates in the solidification of Quebec's identity through the creation of a national mythscape, a concept defined by Duncan Bell as the symbolic "page upon which the multiple and often conflicting nationalist narratives are (re)written," and a "perpetually mutating repository for the representation of the past for the purpose of the present" (Bell 66). While Martin seemingly re-imagines Quebec mythscape's as *métissé* – the play finds its central motif in a Huron Wendat legend and includes First Nations characters (problematically played by non-First Nations actors) – *Invention* nevertheless falls short of its inclusive mission. In fact, *Invention* echoes in disturbing ways Marc Lescarbot's 1606 *Théâtre de Neptune en Nouvelle France,* an early colonial performance in which French men dressed as "Savages" wilfully offered their land to the King of France. Drawing from Alan Filewod's analysis of *Neptune* as a foundational spectacle of First Nations' erasure in Canada, I trace echoes of *Neptune*'s settler colonial gesture in the ventriloquizing of First Nations performed by Alexis Martin's *Invention.* The play indeed imagines Quebec's becoming as a nation through a parasitic relation with First Nations' presence, bodies, and absolution that echo the wilful surrender of their land imagined and performed by the red face "Savages" in Lescarbot' s 1606 play.

Chapter two entitled "Encounters on the Reserve: Yves Sioui Durand's *Mesnak* and Alanis Obomsawin's *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*" meditates on two cinematic encounters with the reserve and puts in conversation Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin's *Kanehsatake: 270 years of resistance* (1993) and *Mesnak* (2011) the first opus directed by Huron Wendat director Yves Sioui Durand. These two films offer complimentary vantage points on the reserves –which are now euphemistically

referred to as "communities" by settler governments– as spaces of continuous settler colonial violence. Obsomsawin's documentary film focuses on the 1990 events in Oka and present the reserve as a marginal space that seals and secures the borders of settler colonial communities. Her film offers a powerful examination of the violence that erupts when these borders are called into question by the First Nations who exist at their margins. For his part, Sioui Durand explores the intramural conflicts of the reserve and meditates on its inhabitants' internalized violence and colonization. Shaped by the legacy of the Residential Schools and the Indian Act's other tentacles, the reserve is a space of abject filiation and interrupted lineage in Sioui Durand's film, which transposes Shakespeare's *Hamlet* – its protagonist's struggle against a rotten state and within a damaged family structure– to a fictive reserve in Quebec. Drawing from Frank Wilderson's work on the organizational structure of settler civil societies as well as from Slavoj Zizek's reflection on the levels of violence that maintain civil societies in place, this chapter reflects on the reserve not as a protected space but as an abject one, open to the ongoing genocidal violence of settler-colonialism.

The Indian Act lies at the center of the interventions documented in chapter three entitled "Endurance/ Enduring Performance: First Nations Women, Diplomacy, and Sovereign Re-mappings," which provokes an encounter between two seemingly unrelated events/performances. The first, Nadia Myre's monumental visual art piece *Indian Act* (1999-2002), uses a traditionally feminine beading technique to bead over the entire text of Canada's *Indian Act* a law that intimately rules and organizes First Nations in Canada. In what amounts to a veritable feat of endurance, Myre and a group of volunteers rewrote the Indian Act, denaturalizing it with more than 80 000 red and white beads over the

course of three years. The result is a striking visual piece part illegible document, part topographical map of all that was hidden by the law's potent words. Myre's piece finds a parallel in the 2010 Marche Amun, a protest march led by a group of Innu women to demand an end to the gendered discrimination contained in the Indian Act. Collectively and over the course of walking the 500kms that separate the Huron Wendat reserve of Wendake from Ottawa, the women challenged the current lines of exclusion created and naturalized by the Indian Act and remapped spaces in which discussions about decolonization could emerge. Reading these two interventions as endurance performances, chapter three proposes a reflection on First Nations endurance as ontology and as a resistance tactic. Performance scholar Patrick Anderson's work on endurance performance as well as Bonita Lawrence and Mishuana Goeman's reflections on settler colonialism' gendered violence subtend this exploration.

The last chapter of this dissertation, entitled "Theatre in Contested Lands: Repatriating Indigenous Remains", connects the repatriation work performed onstage by Ondinnok, a Montreal-based First Nations theatre company, with the NAGPRA repatriation struggle that currently pits the Kumeyaay nation against a group of researchers from the University of California San Diego. The Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) is a federal law designed to correct the United States' long history of insensitive and unethical handling of Indigenous bones and funerary objects by museums and other federal institution. Leveraging Ann Kakaliouras's anthropological concept of the "repatriatable" to discuss theatre and performance, this chapter argues that, as a nexus of competing narratives and worldviews, the repatriatable remains found at UC San Diego gain a wider performative quality and become what I call

“performative repatriatables”. These performative repatriatables include remains but also living bodies such as those of the performers in Ondinnok’s play that do not fall under NAGPRA and can be repatriated in a more symbolic realm. These “performative repatriatables” embody what Joseph Roach calls “memory and counter-memory” (Roach 20); that is they render visible First Nations’ presence and epistemologies where they have been and continue to be violently erased. Extending the previous chapters’ interventions to a larger North American context, this chapter examines how performances of mourning and repatriation of ancestral remains by Indigenous groups are met by settler colonial institutions’ resistance. This form of resistance, I argue, betrays the same deep-seated colonial anxiety that fueled the reactions in Oka when the violence against Indigenous peoples that underwrites civil society in the Americas and infiltrates even its reparative laws was exposed.

Chapter 1: *Neptune* Redux: The (First) Nation(s) enacted in Alexis Martin's *Invention du chauffage central en Nouvelle-France*.

Invention du chauffage central en Nouvelle-France or *Invention of central heating in New France* is the first of a trio of plays penned in 2012 by Alexis Martin as part of his project entitled *Histoire révélée du Canada français 1608-1998 (Revealed History of French Canada 1608-1998)*. A prolific actor, director, and playwright, Alexis Martin has been a central figure on Quebec's theatre scene since the early 1990s, working in particular with Montreal's Nouveau Théâtre Expérimental (NTE). In a 2012 interview about his trilogy, Martin mused on what he perceived as the relative absence of historical dramas in Quebec's theatrical cannon. Noting the scarcity of texts dramatizing the early days of Nouvelle France, the defeat of the French forces on the Abraham Plains, or the lives of historical figures such as Samuel de Champlain or the Comte de Frontenac, for example, Martin asked whether this silence, this form of cultural amnesia was "the lot of the defeated" (Pépin, 2012).

The title of Alexis Martin's ambitious trilogy –*Revealed History of French Canada 1608-1998*– clearly positions the series as a corrective gesture to Quebec's cultural and historical amnesia, and announces the author's intention of illuminating what he sees as Quebec's obscured past. As its title suggests, *Invention du chauffage central en Nouvelle-France*[10] explores history through the theme of cold and positions frigid temperatures and harsh weather as central driving forces in the formation of the *Québécitude* (or Québécois identity). Explaining this dramaturgical choice, Martin noted

[10] I will refer to the play as *Invention* throughout this paper.

in an interview published in *Le Devoir*: "Cold has really forged our identity. And it still does. From the beginning, cold, for example, has made us create alliances with First Nations people, if only so that we could survive the first winters"[11] (Bélair, 2012). In each of ICCNF's interwoven storylines Quebec's sense of self thus emerges from the thermal shock of winter, from unlikely alliances devised in times of need, and from the ingeniousness required to survive the long winters' extreme cold. The action of the play jumps from the winter of 1608 that led to the formation of *L'Ordre de bon temps (the Order of Good Cheer)* in the colonial outpost of Port Royal, to the "Storm of the Century" in 1971 during which more than 18 inches of snow fell on Montreal in less than 24 hours. Bookending the play is the ice storm that paralyzed the entire province in 1998, leaving thousands without heat for weeks in the dead of winter. Through these episodes of extreme winter weather, Martin imagines, often with humor, a genealogy of Quebec's francophone community in which survival and adaptation, colonial alienation and desire for liberation and ultimately nationhood, produce a narrative of resilient presence on a harsh landscape.

Martin's diagnosis of Quebec's cultural amnesia may come as a surprise to many. Remembrance is after all Quebec's official motto, replicated on every automobile license plates in the province with the phrase "Je me souviens" (I remember). Quebec's cultural industry has been, and still is heavily invested in affirming Quebec's distinct culture through a celebration of its past. Quebecois cinema for example, has consistently mined

---

[11] "Le froid a vraiment forgé notre identité. Et c'est encore et toujours vrai. Il nous a, par exemple, fait tisser dès les départ des alliances avec les Amérindiens, ne serait-ce que pour réussir à "passer l'hiver"" (Alexis Martin in Bélair, 2012, my translation)

and dramatized Quebec's "terroir"[12], or the province's friction with Canada as rich sources of inspiration[13]. Film scholar Bruno Cornellier relates these commemorating gestures to the "will to remember as a political imperative" in Quebec, a province whose cultural institutions and governments (separatist or not) have wielded the concept of collective memory as a defense against assimilation into the Anglo-American sea that surrounds the province (Cornellier 99).

To be fair, Quebec's recent cultural productions have also explored the province's turn towards cosmopolitanism. But as Bruno Cornellier notes: "the immigrant [in Quebecois films] serves to participate in and reflect the stabilization of an identity and a memory from which he or she is nonetheless excluded, like an external witness" (Cornellier 99). Furthermore, these two historicizing currents in Quebecois cinema – terroir or cosmopolitanism– have in common the erasure of First Nations actants who are, when rendered visible, reduced to the roles of one-dimensional artifacts whose "pastness" allows the Québécois to articulate a sense of current Indigeneity on Quebec's territory. As this chapter and this dissertation argue, Quebec's will to remember, then, is contingent upon the commemoration of a history that secures the province's imagined community's ethical coherence, that justifies its narrative as a nation-to-be, and supports its current discourse surrounding identity politics. There is no space for multiple narratives or for a competing discourse of Indigeneity by First Peoples in Quebec, and only that which

---

[12] In cinema, for example, See *Séraphin*: *Un Homme et Son Péché* (2002); *Nouvelle France* (2004); *Le Survenant* (2005); *Aurore* (2005); *Histoire de Famille* (2006); *Le Déserteur* (2008); *Esimésac* (2012); *Louis Cyr* (2013) among other movies historicizing Quebec's rural past.

[13] See *Quand Je Serai Parti Vous Vivrez Encore* by Michel Brault (1999) *Octobre*, or *15 février 1839* by Pierre Falardeau (1994 and 2001).

privileges and solidifies the francophone majority's collective identity can and must be remembered.

Martin's theatrical project participates in the solidification of Quebec's identity through the creation of a national mythscape, a concept defined by Duncan Bell as the symbolic "page upon which the multiple and often conflicting nationalist narratives are (re)written: it is the perpetually mutating repository for the representation of the past for the purpose of the present" (Bell 66). Bell's mythscape echoes the work of Benedict Anderson who famously described the nation as an "imagined community" whose sense of self, articulated on a perceived shared culture and history, is propagated and reified through mass communication (Anderson 1983). As many have argued since Anderson, the nation as a constructed entity finds its emotional and political legitimacy in an ensemble of foundational myths –Bell's "mythscape"– that simultaneously naturalize its members' authenticity and sense of belonging, and often justifies the exclusion of those who lie at the nations' margins.

In his book *Performing Canada: The Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theatre*, theatre scholar Alan Filewod, traces the intimate connection between theatre and the formation of the national imaginary and writes "theatre models the society in the process of enactment… transform[ing] experience into a community narrative and […] materially construct[ing] in the audience the community it addresses in its texts" (xvii). Filewod adds: "theatre as it is imagined formally […] and informally […] is a legitimizing performance of the imagined community that is the nation" (1). For Filewod, nation and theatre produce each other in "the elation of spectacle" (1). Filewod's book explores theatre's capacity to solidify a community's sense of self but it also reflects on theatre's

role in erasing some bodies from national narratives, participating in what Ernest Renan qualified as a form of necessary amnesia in this often cited passage of *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*:

> Or l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses… Tout citoyen français doit avoir oublié la Saint-Barthélémy, les massacres du Midi au XIIIe siècle. (in Anderson 6)[14]

Renan, who wrote a century before Filewod and Anderson, illuminates here the ways in which nations obtain and maintain their cohesion in the tensed balance between shared remembrance and collective amnesia.

Quebec's mythscape rests mainly on three pillars that each stabilize Quebec's sense of self: the first one is the Quebecois' identity as a threatened linguistic and cultural minority, the second is articulated around the province's self-definition as a colonized people and its opposition to English Canada as a colonial force. The third pillar is Quebec's discourse of Indigeneity which surfaces in alarming and recurrent instances through a racialization of the Quebecois people in such categories as "de souche" or "pure laine"[15]. In these categories Euro-white settlers are re-imagined as indigenous to Quebec and thus discursively supplant the 11 First Nations for whom Quebec is ancestral territory [16]. Martin explores and dramatizes these three pillars of Quebec's identity

---

[14] "The essence of a nation is that all individuals have much in common and also, that they have all forgotten much… All French citizens must have forgotten the Saint-Barthélémy, the 13th century massacres in the Midi region" (my translation)

[15] These two terms loosely translate as Quebecois "old stock" or "pure-wool" and imply purity, a genealogy of occupation of the land, and an absence of métissage that belong to fiction rather than fact.

[16] See for example, Claude Jasmin's letter published in Le Devoir on 30 May 2013: "Je suis fier de ma race" in which Jasmin argues for the "race francaise en Amerique du Nord". (Jasmin, 30 May 2013, http://www.ledevoir.com/societe/actualites-en-societe/379397/je-suis-fier-de-ma-race). See also the websites that have sprung up reclaiming an identity as "Québécois de souche" (old-stock Quebecers). http://www.quebecoisdesouche.info/index.php?qui-sommes-nous

discourse in his play. His re-historicizing of the francophone majority through the lens of cold, a theme that immediately anchors the action of the play in a specific territory and a particular climate, sheds light on the fourth pillar of Quebec's identity discourse that is the province' sense of territorial belonging, its attachment to the harsh beauty of the land on which it has claimed. Martin uses the theme of cold to celebrate an attachment to the land not only for Quebecois but also for First Peoples characters whose pre-existing sovereignty on and relationship to the land that currently forms Quebec challenges Quebec's cartographical integrity. *Invention* features historical figures like the Mi'kmaq chief Membertou[17] as well as fictional characters like Takraliq (an Inuk residential school survivor), among other First Nations characters. In giving them a voice, Martin's play appears to disrupt the aforementioned historicizing trends in Quebecois theatre and cinema and thus, at first glance, *Invention* offers a critique of Quebec's collective amnesia with regards to First Nations people, and revisits history in a more inclusive way. However, the play often falls short of its inclusive mission and *Invention* re-inscribes instead in complex and at times ambivalent ways, the erasure that defines Quebec's relationship with First Peoples and the reductive collapsing of Indigeneity and natural elements that is so central in colonial imaginings of Indigeneity.

If Martin explores Quebec's amnesia as the collective psyche's response to the shame of British colonization ("Is this the lot of the defeated?"), I argue that Quebec's amnesia is symptomatic of a far more complex psychic wound that constantly threatens the coherence of Quebec's sense of self. This sense of a coherent self rests on

---

[17]Characters in the play incorrectly refer to Membertou as the Etchemin (Maliseet) chief. Membertou was the chief or Sagamo of the Mi'kmaqs not the Maliseet. Whether or not this is an error by the author or a dramatization of the early settlers' mislabeling of the First Nations they encountered is unclear in the play.

remembering and elevating Quebec's history as a colonized cultural and linguistic minority within Canada –and this history is real and traceable– as a way to justify Quebec's nation-building project and shield the province from criticism surrounding the discourses and policies it puts in place in pursuit of this goal. In other words, Quebec deploys its own history of colonization at the hands of the British to obscure its own past as a colonizer and justify its ongoing role as a settler community oppressing the First Nations whose territories Quebec identifies as its own national territory. These two positions –colonized and colonizer, oppressed and oppressor– are seemingly irreconcilable and create the amnesia that Martin misattributes solely to the shame of being on the side of the defeated.

This chapter thus traces the ambivalent work performed by *Invention* and meditates at first on the constitutive elements of Quebec's collective sense of self that Martin's historicizing opus reveals on stage. Then, putting Alexis Martin's play in conversation with Marc Lescarbot's 1606 *Théâtre de Neptune en Nouvelle France (Theatre of Neptune in New France)*, a red-face performance and the very first play written and performed in what is now Canada, this chapter examines how francophone identity in North America has always been performed in a parasitic relationship with Indigeneity. Alan Filewod and Jerry Wasserman, who have written at length on *Neptune* as a colonial spectacle, locate in the 1606 performance of Lescarbot's play the genesis of Canadian theatre, the initial moment in which Canada as a nation is articulated on stage through the simultaneous presence and erasure of First Nations bodies. A close examination of Alexis Martin's play, which incidentally features the characters of Marc Lescarbot and of some of the men who performed *Théâtre de Neptune en Nouvelle-*

France in 1606, demonstrates that Lescarbot's gesture of erasure still permeates Quebec's identity narrative. Drawing from the work of Albert Memmi, as well as from the recent interventions of Pierrot-Ross Tremblay (Innu) and Nawel Hamidi on what they identify as Quebec's "Durham Syndrome," I reflect on how the erasure of First Nations presence serves Quebec's narrative as a colonized people in ways that both differ from and echo the rest of Canada.

Finally, in tracing Martin's ambivalent intervention, this chapter explores how *Invention* struggles with the notion of reconciliation with First Nations people. *Invention* indeed labors to imagine and stage reconciliation while sidestepping an admission of the province's complicity in the oppression of these communities. The play both renders First Nations visible and reconsolidates their erasure. Focusing on a scene between Takraliq, an Inuk residential school survivor, and a young Québécoise who witnesses her disheveled testimonial in a bar in Montreal, this chapter reflects on the concept of reconciliation between the francophone majority and First Nations people. Quebec's mythscape forecloses the very first step in the process of reconciliation which is to recognize the province's own role in the violent oppression of First Peoples. Martin's play was written in 2011 and performed in 2012: a period which coincides with the public audiences conducted by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the Aboriginal Residential School System (TRC) which began in 2010. *Invention*'s struggle to name Quebec's complicity in the administration of this school system, one of Canada's most violent genocidal policies, marks a moment of overture in Martin's play. However,

given that non First Nations actors[18] performed the parts of Takraliq and all other First Nations characters in the play, the reconciliation and absolution imagined and performed *in absentia* of First Peoples in *Invention* falls short of its reconciliatory endeavor and echoes in disturbing ways the willful offering of the land performed by the "Savages" of Lescarbot's 1606 *Théâtre de Neptune en Nouvelle France.*

A Nation of Frozen Words: citationality, genealogy and collective amnesia

Directed by Daniel Brière, Alexis Martin's longtime collaborator and co-artistic director at the Nouveau Théâtre Expérimental, *Invention du chauffage central en Nouvelle France* was presented from the 7 of February to the 8 of March 2012 at l'Espace Libre in Montreal. The production then toured the province and was staged at the Théâtre français of the National Arts Center in Ottawa in November of the same year. The cast –Martin himself along with Émilie Bibeau, Benoît Drouin-Germain, Luc Guérin, Pierre-Antoine Lasnier, Carl Poliquin, Danielle Proulx (Dominique Pétin on tour), and Marie-Eve Trudel– portrayed *Invention*'s dozens of characters on an inventive traverse stage covered with a rough pine floor and furnished with an old-fashioned woodstove and rustic pine table and stools, — all evocative of the rudimentary log cabins that housed early settlers.

[18] To my knowledge, no critic commented on *Invention*'s use of redface or questioned why First Nations actors had not been casted in the play. This is perhaps unsurprising given the generally befuddled reactions that followed an op-ed by Nydia Dauphin, a young African Canadian columnist who criticized the use of blackface (a practice similar to redface) at the 2013 Olivier Awards Ceremony aired on Radio-Canada television in Quebec. A flurry of responses by journalists like Lise Ravary (27 may 2013) and Judith Lussier (23 May 2013) referred to her column as "bashing Quebec" or described it as overly sensitive, arguing that blackface in Quebec did not participate in the same violently racist tradition as elsewhere because Quebecers as a minority, were somehow shielded from that kind of racism. While this may not be a position shared by the ensemble of Quebecois, it was nevertheless printed in two widely read newspapers: *Le Journal de Montreal* and *the Metro*.

In Michel Ostaszewski's versatile scenic design, large sliding glass panels enclose the stage on all sides, leaving an open corridor along its periphery on which the Narrator (Carl Poliquin) can circulate and address the audience. The scenic design ingeniously allows winter –snow, wind, and frost– to permeate the stage. When closed, the glass panels seal the playing area, protecting the audience from the multiple snow or windstorms that rage within its perimeter over the course of the play. At times, it is the actors themselves who create the storms onstage with handheld leaf-blowers and artificial snowflakes, while at other times, Nicolas Descôteaux's lighting effects and Anthony Rozankovic's soundscape manufacture the meteorological incidents that structure the play's arc. The audience, removed from the stage's enclosure, witnesses the characters struggle against the elements as if viewing a page of history behind a museum glass display. Dates and locations projected on a large horizontal screen sitting on top of the glass enclosure on stage help situate the audience as scenes change, facilitating the navigation between the multiple temporal and geographical planes that coexist in Martin's play.

Dramaturgically, *Invention* draws its central motif from a Huron Wendat legend about Pipmuacan, a land where words are frozen and await their liberation. The Narrator, standing outside of the sliding panels at the beginning of the play, tells the legend to the audience:

> Les anciens Amérindiens disent qu'il y a, au nord de Tadoussac, un pays où le froid est si grand, l'air si dense, que les MOTS y gisent gelés. Tous les MOTS prononcés par toutes les bouches au mitan de l'hiver et qui s'échappent malgré nous, malgré tout : ces paroles gelées vont rejoindre le

> pays mystérieux de Pipmuacan, à des centaines de pouces de notre bouche et de notre conscience[19]. (Martin, 3)

The scenic design –the glass-box in which Martin's characters search for a sense of Québécois identity– as well as the lighting and sound designs render visible and audible this land of frozen words that serves as the play's leitmotiv. The frozen words themselves are never shown but rather exist as a soundscape of muffled and intertwined sentences heard through scene changes throughout the play or, through the use of lights, as a luminous force that envelops the onlookers. Towards the end of the play, for example, the Narrator and Lucy (Marie-Eve Trudel), his old flame and research partner who now lives as a recluse, meet again in Pipmuacan where they admire its legendary frozen surface under which words lay lifeless. The words are invisible to the audience but are translated instead through a form of radiating heat that emanates from the ice. Lucie, her face bathed in that light, explains that the ice of Pipmuacan contains "une mémoire qui ne peut pas se déployer" (a memory that cannot unfold), as well as a "call for liberation" (112). As the two characters observe almost hypnotically the luminous ice of Pipmuacan on the stage floor, the spectators find themselves gazing at the glass surface of the sliding doors, performing the same reflective gesture as the characters on stage. At other moments during the play, the closed glass doors muffle the words pronounced onstage, effectively holding them captive like the ice of Pipmuacan. The stage's glass panels thus actualize the legend's narrative of a collective memory encased in ice and help inscribe Martin's

---

[19] "Ancient Amerindian elders say that there is, North of Tadoussac, a land where the cold is so great, the air so thick, that WORDS lie frozen. All the WORDS pronounced in the middle of winter and that escape us despite us, despite all things: these frozen words join the mysterious land of Pipmuacan, hundreds of inches from our mouth and our conscience." (my translation)

multiple storylines in a larger narrative of a nation frozen in its trajectory, awaiting liberation.

A chorus of women (Danielle Proulx, Marie-Eve Trudel, and Émilie Bibeau) dressed in old-fashioned long thermal underwear sings to mark the transitions between the play's multiple temporal and geographical planes. Over the course of the play, the women layer costumes over their long insulating underwear when they embody different characters but they always return to this neutral, skin-like apparel when they sing as a chorus, giving these interventions a sense of suspended temporality. The chorus' poetic songs appear at times to perform the premonitory work of oracles in Greek theatre while at other times their voices render audible the torrent of words frozen in Pipmuacan.

> Neige Neige dans ton cortège bleuissant
> Sourires d'enfants qui tombent drus
> Parmi les ménagères de la mort
> Neige Neige sels vaginaux des naissances obscures
> Tabarnac tu vas geler avec tes bottes mouillées
> Neige Neige précipité des oublis primordiaux
> Feuille d'absolu dans la grande déchiqueteuse
> Ah comme la neige a neigé! Ah comme la neige a neigé!
> Ah comme elle a neigé la neige…[20] (14)

The chorus' songs cite or echo the numerous Québécois poets who have meditated on winter as a marker of national belonging. Making their way into Martin's chorus are fragments of Emile Nelligan's 1903 poem "Soir d'hiver" (Ah, comme la neige a neigé!),

---

[20] Snow Snow in your blue-turning procession
Children smiles that fall thick
Among the deathly housewives
Snow Snow the vaginal salts of dark births
For Fuck sake you will freeze with these wet boots
Snow Snow hurling of primordial forgetting
Sheet of absolute in the great shredder
Ah how the snow has snowed! Ah how the snow has snowed!
Ah how it has snowed the snow! (My translation)

echoes of Gilles Vigneault's 1964 song "Mon pays" in which he writes that "My country it is not a country, it is winter". Also present in this particular excerpt are poetic images that align closely with the linguistic and imagistic world of Gaston Miron's 1963 cycle "La vie agonique". Martin's "Ménagères de la mort" for example, echoes Miron's images of the "émancipés malingres" or the sickly emancipated from the poem "Compagnons des Amériques" and emulates Miron's investment of sites of hope and promises with anguish. The chorus also contains a reference to Robert Charlebois' darkly humorous 1967 song "Demain l'hiver" in which the singer invokes children being swallowed by snowplows as one more reason to flee Quebec's winter for warmer shores.

These poetic fragments stem from authors who meditate on and long for Quebec's culture to come to maturity. These fragments indicatively belong to Pipmuacan in Martin's play: they are the words that have not yet succeeded in defining a nation, in bringing it to life. Like the chorus that sings them, these poetic images exist in a moment of suspension in the land of frozen words just like Quebec's repeatedly postponed national project. Interestingly, while all the authors cited in these fragments are men, the chorus is a feminine entity and the images they evoke –"vaginal", "housewives"– problematically mark the unfinished nation of Quebec as suspended in an immature or feminine state.

Like the chorus, the play itself is deeply citational, and there lie some of its strengths and major flaws. In some instances, citationality takes the form of creative anachronisms and moments of poetic license that allow Martin, for example, to humorously attribute the creation of Quebec's iconic Kanuk coat (a fixture of contemporary winter fashion in Quebec) to French writer and explorer Marc Lescarbot.

In Martin's imagined version Lescarbot, upon facing another harsh winter in 1608, fashions a winter coat (a rough version of what the Kanuk looks like today) that allows his men "to keep their French appearance and follow Parisian fashion," while borrowing from the clothing habits of their Mi'kmaqs neighbors (12). From this moment of hybrid colonial haute couture in Port Royal, Martin traces an imagined genealogy of Lescarbots whose most recent incarnation in 1991 is Alain Lescarbot, the C.E.O of a business manufacturing Kanuk-like garments. This modern Lescarbot who, contrary to his ancestor, does not exist outside of Martin's world, is a ruthless businessman who has relocated his business to Chihuahua, Mexico, and who lives in an old religious building converted in high-end condos. Martin maps onto this fictive Lescarbot Quebec's own trajectory from a deeply religious and mostly manufacturing province in which an English minority held most of the economic power, to the radical shift to secularization and francophone entrepreneurship that occurred during the province's Quiet Revolution in the 1960s. The modern Lescarbot of Martin's play, estranged from religion and community, is unhappy, distant from his family and chooses to live in a place that exemplifies the dramatic decline of the Catholic Church's stronghold in Quebec. Martin deploys citationality here to create a genealogy of characters imagined as part of the same project.

While this genealogical writing helps weave a national mythscape, it also serves to critique what Martin sees as Quebec losing touch with its communal roots. In the last scene of the play in which a group of Lescarbot's Mexican workers occupy a company sewing plant in Montreal demanding better working conditions, Martin draws, perhaps unintentionally, an interesting but underdeveloped parallel between the Mi'kmaqs and the

Mexicans. Martin alludes to the ways in which both groups have provided the raw material and know-how for the Lescarbots to produce the winter garments that secure the survival and flourishing of white settlers. Supported by historical sources like Lescarbot and Champlain's correspondences that have documented instances of collaboration between Mi'kmaqs and settlers in Port Royal, Martin portrays the creation of the initial Kanuk-like coat as a collective endeavor. What happened after this initial collaboration – the betrayal of these first instances of collaboration and early alliances –is well documented yet completely absent for *Invention*'s narrative. Writing about one such early alliance, the Great Alliance of 1603 between the Innus and the French, Pierrot-Ross Tremblay and Nawel Hamidi note the discrepancy between how this early accord is still elevated by the settlers to the rank of "a multicultural alliance that founded a new civilization in the Americas" and in which "both parties have made gains" and the reality of this alliance's legacy for the Innu people. Indeed, as the arithmetic of settler colonization and commerce started to favor the French, the Innu people quickly discovered that their allies would not respect the agreement that had perhaps never been signed in good faith. (écueils 5) When Quebec celebrates these early alliances as a sign of a more benevolent form of encounter with First Peoples, it fails to account for the long history of betrayal[21] that followed these alliances and that eventually left First people on the margins of their own territory. While Canada's role in betraying alliances since the

---

[21] Even recently, Quebec signed *La Paix des Braves* with the Crees after years of judicial battles because Quebec failed to meet the terms of the first agreement is signed with the Cree in 1975 (the *Convention de la Baie James et du Nord québécois)*. While Quebec's gesture is positive (the province negotiated on its own without Canada at the table), it was also a strategic gesture that the sovereignist party marked by claiming that the Accord was a historic nation-to-nation agreement between the Quebec and Cree nations. Furthermore, this amendment does not erase the fundamental problems of treaties, which are, in many ways, an extension of the settler-colonial project (see Taiaiake Alfred 2009, 2010 on this).

creation of the country is undeniable, Quebec demonstrates here a form of selective memory that supports its own identity politics and *Invention* does little to disrupt this idealized narrative of the past.

For instance, it is Philippe, Lescarbot's estranged brother who brings the Mexican workers to Montreal to force his brother to rethink the way he treats his employees. While Martin clearly argues that exploitation is currently taking place in Mexico, his critique of Alain Lescarbot centers on his turn to a form of individualistic capitalism that betrays Quebec's roots as a small nation "built on community" (123). In attributing Lescarbot's exploitation of workers in Chihuahua to Lescarbot's loss of value and to his estrangement from Quebec's roots, Martin fails to see how the current exploitation of Indigenous populations abroad is actually a continuation of Quebec's colonialism and the expansion of its parasitic relationship to First peoples. In Alain Lescarbot's lack of attachment to a past that his brother Philippe defends, Martin critiques Quebec's propensity to forget and links this amnesia to a form of uprooted existence that is antithetical to a nation-building project which, as Anderson and others argue, demands a stable sense of the collective. This critique however, has little to do with Quebec's relationship with First Nations peoples even though it is partly the exploitation of Indigenous people in Mexico that serves as the symptom of Lescarbot's disarray. Mexican workers, as Cornellier argue about the figure of the immigrant in Quebec cinema, serve as nothing but a mirror reflecting a Quebecois malaise and they ultimately serve to secure the borders of this identity.

Martin deploys citationality in yet another way when he blurs the line between various levels of reenactment. To be clear, a great number of historical figures like

Samuel de Champlain, Lescarbot, Radisson, and Papineau who are central to Quebec's mythscape appear in *Invention*. In some instances, these characters appear in scenes as themselves, that is the actor portrays the historical figure, while in other scenes, Martin deploys these historical figures meta-theatrically, by making them appear onstage as a persona played by one of *Invention*'s characters. In one scene set in 1608 for example, the historical Samuel de Champlain designs a winter coat with Lescarbot and the scene is presented as a revisiting of a stable past. As the scene ends and transitions to the next, the actor who plays Champlain becomes an actor, Guy Langlois, who, in 1971, joins his friends after portraying the historical figure of Champlain in a local play entitled *La Passion du Sieur de Champlain* (26). The 1608 Champlain who envisions a fruitful collaboration with the "savages" in Port Royal symbolizes in 1971 an identity that Quebecers must shed in order to gain access to modernity and success. Guy Langlois, along with his friends Steeve and Candy, (who all have English sounding names) are fascinated with all things American, seeing in the American dream the response to what they perceive as Quebec's lack of ambition. Speaking to his mother who is a small business owner, Steeve argues:

> United States of America! Calice, ce monde là ont mis un homme sur la lune! Mais icitte, on est fixé sur des vieilles affaires, on est perdu dans nos souvenirs, fuck! Y faut en finir avec les vieilles affaires, la France, la bière d'épinette pis la pêche à l'anguille, tabarnac![22] (30)

As Steeve speaks to his mother, Guy Langlois/Champlain arrives on a snowmobile through the snowstorm and appears as one such "vieille affaire" (old thing or remnant)

---

[22] United States of America! Christ, these people have put a man on the Moon! But here, we're stuck on old stuff; we're lost in our memories, fuck! We have to get over old stuff, France, spruce beer and eel fishing, for fuck's sake!

that Steeve and his group would happily forget in their quest for the American Dream. Upon seeing Langlois in these anachronistic clothes, Steeve exclaims: “Que cé qui fait là en ski-doo pis en habit de français fif?” (What’s he doing there on a skidoo dressed like a French faggot?). Champlain here is a figure of mockery that stands for Quebec’s old attachments to France, a motherland who, more so in 1971, sees Quebec as no more than a provincial curiosity. Langlois (a tongue-in-cheek name since Anglois is the archaic spelling of Anglais or English) openly ridicules the character he plays, adopting a French accent that impresses Steeve’s mother, but is clearly meant as an object of ridicule for Langlois and his generation.

Throughout the play, Martin actively blurs the line between historical events and characters and the imagined genealogy that he draws from them, between dramatization of documented historical events and the impersonation of these historical figures as overt characters on stage. While this strategy links the past and the present and illuminates its traces and repercussions, it only does so for characters of the francophone majority. Indeed, the characters stemming from First Nations who appear in scenes taking place in Nouvelle-France do not have the same genealogical abilities as the other characters that reappear in various echoing forms throughout the play. First Nations characters do not traverse temporality in the same ways that their settler counterparts do and are irrevocably presented as creatures of the past whose trajectory no longer intertwines with that of the francophone majority after the British arrive. This suspension in time, Jodi A. Byrd argues is what defines Indigenous bodies as “figures of transit” in the liberal states. Byrd argues that as figure of transits, Indigenous bodies form the terrain on which “[t]he liberal state and its supporters and critics struggle over the meaning of pluralism,

habitation, inclusion, and enfranchisement…" All the while, "indigenous peoples and nations, who provide the ontological and literal ground for such debates, are continually deferred into a past that never happened and a future that will never come." (Byrd 221)

And thus, from their status as early allies, First Nations characters are quickly relegated in *Invention* to the position of figures of transit, or as I argue, they are recast as operational sites for Quebec's elaboration and cohesion of its sense of self. Membertou, Carinogan the Innu spiritual leader, and the other First Nations characters of the early scenes indeed do not have a genealogical capacity that extends to the present in Martin's play. The Mexican workers who object to Lescarbot's work conditions in Chihuahua are the only exception to this phenomenon but the genealogy they trace displaces Indigeneity to a foreign country rather than seeing its present incarnation in Quebec. As the Mexican workers set the Lescarbot sewing plant ablaze burning alive with Lescarbot and his coat, Martin also forecloses their future, making the workers' trajectory end with the fire that will finally liberate Lescarbot (and by extension, Quebec) from its amnesia, allowing frozen memories to flow again.

The play's citationality, its clever juxtaposition of recognizable signs of Quebec's culture imagines an ideal audience that is limited. Of course, all plays have a target audience but Martin's play in its gesture of historicizing a community, participates in imagining and actualizing this community's constitutive elements. As Benedict Anderson argues, the inclusivity of nations is finite and cannot forever stretches its boundaries without losing its cohesion (Anderson 7). Martin's intended audience is clearly the francophone majority for whom the play's signs are legible and thus the play misses its intended goal of including First Nations audiences. If Martin decries the status of First

Nations peoples as "strangers from within", his play's hermetic citationality further illuminates their estrangement rather than perform a gesture of inclusion or a co-narration of the multiple histories that have shaped Quebec's contested territory.

Citationality functions in *Invention* as a way to embed Quebec's narrative as authentic. The play's reiteration of certain signs that have supported Quebec's francophone majority's mythscape, the so-called founding alliances between the French and the Mi'kmaqs for example, fails to question the stability of the mythic sign itself. Martin plays with historical figures, pointing to the artifice of historicizing play but he goes only so far and ultimately the history he weaves in *Invention* re-inscribes Quebec's three main identity pillars. That is, Martin may revisit the past but he does not question its structural underpinnings and only contemplates decolonization as part of Quebec's francophone community's trajectory. His play, which so clearly writes Quebec's mythscape as a gesture towards the future of the francophone community, fails to ask a fundamental question: is Quebec even capable of imagining itself as a nation outside of the settler-colonial frame in which First Nations are always already subjugated? Martin, it seems, fails to imagine Quebec's decolonization – the complete rethinking of what equal co-habitation with First Peoples might mean for this aspiring nation– as the way to liberate the words frozen in Pipmuacan. The imagined genealogy dramatized in *Invention* relies on First Nations as first interlocutors but fails to rethink Quebec's relationship with First Nations and thus perpetuates their status as strangers from within, alienated from the genealogical ability that Martin grants the franco-Québécois.

Linguistic alienation

Alexis Martin's historical exploration is by no means exhaustive: his play jumps from 1608 to 1635 and then to the Patriot's Rebellion of 1837 and, from there, leaves out two centuries of Quebec history to land in the 1970's. The decades that preceded the 1970's are important: from 1945 to 1959, the province led by Premier Maurice Duplessis went through a period of intense changes and witnessed the rise of the urban population and of a middle class, the creation of a Quebec intelligentsia and cultural elite and all of these changes created a new ideological space in Quebec. The traditional elites– the Catholic Church and Duplessis' conservative government– responded to these rapid societal changes by a tightening of the conservative policies in place. As a result, the province went through a period now referred to as "La Grande Noirceur" (the Great Darkness) marked by censorship and isolationist policies. The 1960's Quiet Revolution marks a dramatic change in Quebec as the new cultural and political elite that emerges under Duplessis comes of age and brings the Québécois who had long been described as "né pour un petit pain" (born to be poor, of inconsequential birth) to international prominence[23]. Under various leaderships, the province nationalizes natural resources, implements social reforms and with the Expo 67 as a flagship event, Quebec forges a place for itself on the national and international scenes.

Invention does not engage with this period and jumps instead from Nouvelle-France to the decade that follows the Quiet Revolution, dramatizing the 1970's emergence of nationalism in Quebec's cultural and political arenas. Martin pays

---

[23] See Erin Hurley's excellent chapter on Montreal' Expo 67 in her book *National Performance : Representing Quebec from Expo 67 to Celine Dion*, on the topic of Quebec's re-branding through this international event.

particular attention to the ways in which the Québécois, inspired by critiques of colonialism by authors like Albert Memmi, begin to define themselves as colonized subjects[24]. Martin dramatizes this emergent consciousness as a colonized people in a scene between Gaston Miron, one of Quebec's important poets whose work meditates at length on the colonized subject's linguistic alienation, and a young Pierre Lebeau, a well-known actor in Quebec and a close friend of Martin's. The scene puts the two in conversation in 1972 at the National Theatre School where Lebeau studies to become an actor. As the two unpack the poetic images in Miron's work, they engage in a philosophical conversation on the liberatory potential of language for colonized subjects. Speaking of Lebeau's experience of moving from his lower-middle class Québécois patois infused with "joual" to the supposedly neutral French taught in theatre schools and other elite-forming institutions, Miron echoes what Memmi calls the bilingualism of colonized subjects. While Memmi refers to the specific situation of North African colonies in which the majority's language is supplanted by the language of the colonial minority (French in this case), the situation of Quebec differs slightly. Indeed, the linguistic alienation in Quebec is felt, as Miron and Lebeau discuss, vis–à–vis two poles: European French as well as English. Referring to Lebeau's experience of being as foreign to Molière as he is to Shakespeare, Miron argues:

> MIRON : Faut que tu passes du français colonial, aliéné, au français tout court; puis là, faut que tu sautes encore jusqu'à la littérature! Ça fait deux sauts. Es-tu bon sauteur Pierre?...

---

[24] Albert Memmi, whose book *Portrait du colonisé* had been circulating clandestinely in Quebec since its publication in 1957, added an extra chapter when his book was finally published in Quebec in 1972. In this chapter entitled "Les Canadiens français sont-ils colonisés?" or "Are French Canadians colonized?" Memmi concluded that despite their relative affluence, the French Canadians presented multiple characteristics of the colonized: internalized shame and sense of inferiority, cultural amnesia, economic and linguistic oppression, etc.

> LEBEAU : Je sais pas.
> MIRON : On a perdu l'instinct du mot français, tu comprends? Y faudrait regagner la bonne berge, mais on a la bouche pleine de miel, du miel anglais mal assimilé, et les entrailles pleines d'amertume; on a perdu l'instinct de la langue bien aiguisée, on est pauvre de mots, les métaphores se filent mal[25]… (60)

Echoing the legend of Pipmuacan, Miron argues that colonialism has frozen Quebec and imprisoned its language in the shame of marginalization. Miron locates in language a liberatory site and claims that through poetry and a re-appropriation of language, one can stage attacks against the "la marée dominante" (the dominant tidal wave). Miron argues: "J'écris des poems comme on écrit des anticorps littéraires contre la Grande Dissolution…" (I write poetry like one writes literary antibodies against the Great Dissolution…) (61). In a later scene, Serge, one of the members of the Comité Action-Chômage St-Roch attests to this state of alienation when he claims that he cannot translate the images that rise in him when he tries to participate in the exercise of self-historicizing:

> Les images veulent pas que les mots les disent! Ok!... disent la peine de… des gens… les images veulent pas que les mots parlent esti!!! Y me semblent (sic) que je suis assez clair, calice![26] (74)

Words fail him, Martin suggests, because the pain and shame of colonization have suspended the capacity to name and speak a reality that hurts. It is this reality repressed in a hidden part of his psyche that Serge can no longer access and verbalize.

---

[25] Miron: You have to go from colonial French, alienated, to French, and then you have to jump again to literary French? That's two jumps. Are you good at jumping Pierre?
Lebeau: I don't know.
Miron: We have lost the instinct for French, do you understand? We would have to reach the right riverbank again but our mouths are full of honey, non-assimilated English honey, and our guts are filled with bitterness; we have lost the instinct for sharp language, we are word-poor and metaphors no longer flow, I tell you.

[26] The images dont want the words to speak! Ok! … Speak the people's sadness… the images don't want the words to speak Christ ! Fuck! It seems pretty clear!

Henri de Valence further embodies this notion of the alienated colonized subject in the second half of the play. De Valence, the fictional character of a well-known actor for the publicly funded television channel Radio-Canada, is kidnapped by members of the Cartel de Libération du Québec, a separatist group who despise the actor as a lackey of the federal propaganda machine. The scene echoes here real events, namely the two kidnappings performed by the Front the Libération du Québec (FLQ), a nationalist terrorist organization active in Quebec in the 1960s and 70s.[27] De Valence's character, whose real name in the play is Gratien Patenaude and whose affected European French accent is meant to hide his lower-class background portrays the historical figure of Radisson for Radio-Canada. The Cartel refers to Radio-Canada as the "Empire's official organ" and equate de Valence's work, his affected accent and denial of his roots, with a form of prostitution for the masters. That de Valence portrays Radisson on television is yet another sign of his complicity in advancing English Canada's project of assimilating French Canadians in his abductors' eyes: Radisson was a French coureur-des-bois who switched allegiances from the French to the British in the fur trading business of early colonization.

With this scene, Martin captures the very real anger that led to October 1970: English Canada did aggressively pursue assimilation policies towards the Francophone communities, especially the ones residing outside of Quebec, and the balance of power in Quebec favored heavily its Anglophone minority until the last three decades of the 20th

[27] In 1970, the FLQ abducted two government officials and killed one in what is referred to as the 1970 October Crisis. At the demand of Montreal's mayor and the Quebec Government, Canada's Prime Minister Trudeau deployed the War Measures Act in Quebec to address terrorism threats in the province. The widespread arrests and suspension of *habeas corpus* sparked controversy in Quebec.

century. In jumping from the 1970s to the 1990s without touching on the real gains achieved by francophone community politically, economically, and culturally, Martin suggests that despite these gains, Quebec's liberation has yet to happen and that it demands the healing of a much deeper wound. Martin employs the legend of Pipmuacan as a metaphor for the identity crisis that plagues Quebec and hampers the Quebecois' becoming as a liberated people. As Lucy argues vehemently in the aforementioned scene with the Narrator, Quebec's sense of identity cannot emerge from the irreconcilable nature of its foundational and colonial descriptors –*Canadiens* and *Français*– two words that Martin's play attempts to exorcize.

Exorcising Colonial Descriptors?

Invention's exorcizing of Quebec's colonial descriptors aptly begins with a tense exchange that positions these irreconcilable poles (Canadien and Français) in the audience's minds. The scene takes place in 1998 in a restaurant in Old Quebec City where a couple of tourists from France, Ségolène (Marie-Eve Trudel) and Damien (Benoît Drouin-Germain), are breaking up in the midst of Quebec City's famous Winter Carnival. Damien and Ségolène are unemployed in France and in a gesture that mimics the impulse of the first settlers of Nouvelle France, they left Dieppe and came to Quebec on an "open ticket" in search of renewal, opportunities, and adventures. Damien is aggressively drunk (because as he argues, that is what one does when visiting the colonies) and he openly despises Quebecers as hicks, imitating their accent with open disgust. (Martin 5). Perhaps to mark the split between France and Quebec, Martin wrote the dialogue between Ségolène and Damien in a form of French argot that exacerbates difference rather than commonality between Quebec and France. Verlan, which consists

in transposing or inversing syllables, (verlan: l'envers) is a typically French form of popular speech. Words like "ouf" (for fou) or "keum" (mec) and "meuf" (femme) are not commonly used in Quebec where the argot reflects North American influences. Reflecting on this gap, Charles (Luc Guérin), an amateur historian from Quebec City who witnesses the couple's altercation and helps Ségolène send Damien on his way, remarks humorously: "Quatre siècles nous séparent, mais une langue blessée nous réunit, si je puis dire, ah ah!" (Four centuries set us apart but a wounded language unites us if I may say so, ha ha!) (7).

Ségolène, the lost soul from Dieppe, and Charles, the amateur historian leading history workshops for the unemployed and disenfrenchised, embody two pillars of Quebec's identity discourse in Martin's play. Ségolène stands in for the early colonizers who left a hostile environment in France to try their luck in Nouvelle-France while Charles embodies Quebec's collective memory threatened by what Pierrot Ross-Tremblay and Nawel Hamidi call the "Durham Syndrome", a form of amnesia specific to Quebec's status as a colonized-colonizer. Ross-Tremblay and Hamidi borrow their appellation from the infamous 1839 *Report on the Affairs of British North America*, commonly known as the Durham Report. In this report commissioned by England after the 1837 Patriots' Rebellion in Lower Canada, Lord Durham recommended that the freedoms granted to French Canadians under previous proclamations be rescinded and

assimilation policies put in place to fold the French Canadians who, according to Durham, had no history and no culture, into the British fold[28].

The Durham Report is a wound in Quebec's psyche and it is frequently invoked to shape and solidify Quebec's imagined community. Ross-Tremblay and Hamidi locate the roots of Quebec's Durham Syndrome in the string of assimilation policies that followed the Durham Report and positioned French Canadians as colonized within Canada. For the two authors, this marginalization led to the francophone majority defining itself through a discourse oscillating between abjection and desire vis–à–vis two poles –the colonizing English Canadians and the "Savages." Ross-Tremblay and Hamidi identify in the French Canadians' fear of being "savages" the "collective interiorizing of a will to not mix with them (the savages), perhaps as a way to gain the approval of the new British masters" (234, my translation). They continue:

> Et à la peur d'être « sauvages », […] s'ajoute souvent, comme pour se déculpabiliser, « Moi aussi j'ai du sang indien ». Cette quête d'indianité, liée à une fiction sanguine et génétique, révèle un élément central de la crise identitaire québécoise. La racialisation de l'identité, outre le fait de révéler un complexe colonial et sa reproduction, fait en sorte d'occulter sa dimension culturelle. En fait, si l'identité culturelle québécoise souffre d'anémie, c'est en raison de son amnésie et de son désir d'oublier une partie de son expérience. Voilà notre hypothèse. [29] (234)

Ross-Tremblay and Hamidi argue that intermarriages and métissage were commonplace in Nouvelle-France (out of necessity, love or coercion), but that this entire early history

---

[28] Durham famously wrote that the conflict between Upper and Lower Canada was essentially ethnic and that he had found "two nations warring within the bosom of a single state" (http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.32374/6?r=0&s=1, p.6).

[29] Added to this fear of being "savages" is the opposing gesture, an attempt to assuage one's sense of guilt by claiming "I too have Indian blood". This quest for "indianness" linked to the fiction of blood quantum and genetics reveals a central element of Quebec's identity crisis. The racialization of identity, aside from revealing and replicating a colonial complex, obscures identity's cultural dimension. In fact, if Quebec's cultural identity suffers from anemia, it is because of its amnesia and its desire to forget a part of its experience. This is our hypothesis. (My translation)

was erased and rewritten by the Canadiens Français when the British arrived in a desire to align with those in power rather than with the "Savages". While métissage may be at the core of the early experience in Nouvelle-France, the structural positions occupied by the French settler and the First Nations woman were never fundamentally challenged by this early period of cohabitation. Indeed if French settlers could move to and from "indianité," the same could not be said for the women with whom they formed unions. Despite what Champlain (Luc Guérin) says to Membertou in *Invention*: "Un jour, si Dieu le veut, nous formerons un seul people, issu du marriage de nos fils et de nos filles,"[30] the reality would turn out quite differently (11). When British colonization occurred, most French Canadians became lesser citizens, indeed, but citizens nevertheless. Their assimilation was imagined by the British Crown as taking place within the structural family of White citizenry (Durham mentioned two nations, the French Canadians and the British, warring within the bosom of a single state). The "Savage," however, became a ward of the state who could only, and much later, become a citizen through a process of total cultural assimilation. In other words, French settlers could play at being Indian but it was understood, in the racializing discourse of colonialism, that they remained part of the large family of those who, like the British, had the capacity to colonize and civilize, a capacity that the "Savages" had not.

The characters of Ségolène and Charles embody the elision of Nouvelle France's early métissage in scene 9 during the second half of the play. In that scene, members of Charles' group– Le Comité Action-Chômage de St-Roch– engage in an exercise in which

[30] " One day, god willing, we will form one people, stemming from the marriage between our sons and daughters." (my translation)

they reenact segments of Quebec's history dressed in period costumes in honor of Quebec's famous Winter Carnival taking place outside. This exercise is meant to encourage the participants "to become more than passive witnesses of their own narrative" and instead become "the authors of their history," as one of the members, Madame Circé-Côté (Danielle Proulx), explains (65). This theatrical game takes place in Madame Circé-Côté's house, near a woodstove that she fuels by feeding it "fresh copies of the Durham Report," effectively positioning the report's impact on Quebec as still effective (64). While the game is supposedly intended to empower the disenfranchised members of the group, it effectively constructs a desired community by enacting its narrative onstage. Dressed as Papineau, Captain Perry, or as a member of Port Royal's Order of Good Cheer, Charles' group rewrites the past, and while they vehemently decry anachronisms, they seem oblivious to the ways in which their exercise reinscribes the erasure of First Nations through a process of surrogation that replays a very early colonial gesture.

Indeed, it is Ségolène, the French woman, who is assigned the role of a First Nation's woman in the group's reenactment, thus marking First Nations as absent in the group's collective rewriting of Quebec's history. Madame Circé-Côté gives Ségolène "un costume Etchemin[31]…un costume de squaw en peau que ma mère avait mis au Bal du Gouverneur quand la reine était venue en '56" (an Etchemin costume… a buckskin squaw costume that my mother wore to the Governor's Ball when the Queen visited in 56" (64). The layers of surrogation contained in this embodiment of an Etchemin woman are numerous and echo Philip Deloria's famous work on America's habit of defining

[31] The Etchemin are now known as the Maliseet or Wolastoqiyik.

itself through and against symbols of "indianness." In *Playing Indian*, Deloria traces in such historical events as the Boston Tea Party and the scouting movement the appropriation of Native American symbols as markers of America's cultural difference. In donning faux "Indian" costumes during the Boston Tea Party revolt for example, Deloria argues that participants were asserting their new American identity and marking their rupture with Britain (Deloria 7-12). Ségolène's "squaw costume" similarly marks Quebec's identity through difference. Worn by a French Canadian woman (the mother of Mme Circé-Côté's mother in the play) at a colonial ball in honor of the Queen of England's visit to her colony, the costume signifies many narratives of affiliation and contestation. Given that the original wearer was part of the colonized francophone community, this masquerade of Indigeneity may have been deployed to perform what Ross-Tremblay and Hamidi described as the fear of "being savages" exteriorized here through a turn to the carnivalesque. The costume may have also performed the political gesture of aligning her original wearer with a form of Indigeneity to the continent, signifying a refusal of Britain's assimilation policies towards the French Canadians. Even in the latter gesture, French Canadians' claim to Indigeneity on First Nations' territories could only happen through the erasure of its original inhabitants. This instance of racial masquerade thus marks the erasure of First Nations bodies, their marking as figures of transit[32], as a precondition for a white Quebecois identity to emerge.

Genealogical performance: *Neptune* at the Comité Action-Chômage

This collapsing of Ségolène (herself a French character played by a Quebecoise) with the Etchemin woman harkens back to the first western theatrical performance

---

[32] See Jodi A. Byrd *The Transit of Empire*, 2011.

recorded in what is now Canada (the continent's First Peoples had of course been performing before that date). On the 14th of November 1606, a group of French men from the outpost of Port Royal (now Nova Scotia's Bay of Fundy) staged *Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France*, a nautical masque written by Port Royal interim leader Marc Lescarbot. Lescarbot wrote the short play to celebrate the return of Samuel de Champlain and the Sieur de Poutrincourt from a long exploration voyage that had left Port Royal vulnerable to mutinous discontent. Lescarbot and his men had faced a difficult and deadly winter and, on the eve of the new cold season, the men's morale was in dire need of an infusion of patriotism. Emulating the public masques and nautical extravaganzas in vogue in France since the Renaissance, *Théâtre de Neptune* was performed on the open waters of the Annapolis Basin for the French men from the outpost, and the neighboring Mi'kmaq people assembled on the beach (Doucette in Wasserman 23). Traveling on the Annapolis water aboard "a small flotilla of boats decorated with classical motifs," Neptune, six tritons, and four "Indians," or "Sauvages" as they were called in French, welcomed Champlain and Poutrincourt's returning party, offering praise and sustenance to Poutrincourt as the representative of the King of France (Filewod xii). Following the Tritons' welcoming speech to Poutrincourt, the four "Sauvages" (French men in redface) pledged submission to the king of France embodied in Nouvelle France by the Sieur de Poutrincourt:

> THIRD INDIAN:
> *It is not only in France*
> *That Cupid reigns,*
> *But also in New France.*
> *As with you he also lights*
> *His firebrand here; and with his flames*
> *He scorches our poor souls.*

And plants there his flag[33]. (Wasserman, 79)

This nautical masque was more than a source of entertainment to rally French morale: it served to inscribe through enactment the imagined community of Nouvelle France. As Jerry Wasserman writes in the introduction of the 400th Anniversary reprint of Lescarbot's playtext: "Through the symbolism of performance, the play dramatically reinforces the contract between ruler and ruled that promises the subjects' survival and prosperity in return for their fealty" (Wasserman 24). The colonizers ventriloquized First Nations peoples as a way to reaffirm and legitimate their colonizing project at the eve of another winter that could undermine their resolve. Survival may have necessitated friendlier interactions with the Mi'kmaqs, but colonizing nevertheless necessitated their submission. The Masque performs here an ideal scenario of desired conquest, the "Sauvages" willfully offering their land. This scenario never happened of course: Quebec and the Maritime provinces still stand for the most part on un-ceded territories for which, aside from a few exceptions, no treaties were ever signed (see chapter 3).

This ventriloquizing of First Peoples by settlers serves then and still serves today to consolidate the settler-community' coherent sense of self. Meditating on the possible reactions of the Mi'kmaq spectators upon seeing their identities reenacted by colonizers who pledged allegiance to a foreign king in perfectly phrased couplets, Filewod writes: "We don't know because of course, nobody asked them" (xiv). Alan Filewod observes that for the Mi'kmaqs viewers, the spectacle of Lescarbot's *Neptune* was probably incomprehensible as text and as performance, and that "two sets of eyes" (the French and Mi'kmaqs) "saw two very different events" that day in 1606 (xiv). This perceptual and

---

33 Translated by Benson and Benson in Wasserman.

representational gap as Filewod calls it, still organizes the ventriloquizing relationship between First Nations and settlers today.

Invention creates a similar ventriloquizing moment by imagining and staging what amounts to the idealized missing reaction shot in which an imaginary camera captures the Mi'kmaqs' reception of the Masque as they stood on the shore in 1606. The reaction shot, a basic element of film grammar, supplies the audience (here the francophone community) with images of an interlocutor's response in a dialogue or after an event, thus often guiding the audience's emotional response. To be clear, *Invention*'s reaction shot is a delayed one since it takes place two years after the 1606 performance of Lescarbot's play, but the scene I will discuss features the same historical figures who participated in or witnessed *Neptune* two years earlier. The scene takes place between Lescarbot (Carl Poliquin), Champlain (Luc Guérin), Membertou (Pierre Antoine Lasnier), and other Port Royal settlers. Since the winter of 1606, the men of Port Royal have created *L'Ordre de Bon Temps* (The Order of Good Cheer) as a mutual aid society in which settlers and Mi'kmaqs join force to provide food for the settlement during winter.

The scene begins with a scenario that closely echoes *Neptune*'s encounter. Champlain addresses Membertou, thanking him for his exemplary hospitality, wisdom and kindness. The French explorer remarks that if not for their lack of religion, Membertou's peoples (who were Mi'kmaqs not Maliseet as Martin's use of the word Etchemins might suggest) would be equal to Frenchmen on all points (11). Membertou replies: "Visage pale parle avec sagesse et Membertou et les Etchemins l'en remercient… La terre est assez grande pour accueillir ta tribu" (Pale face speaks with wisdom and

Membertou and the Etchemins thank him. The land is big enough to welcome your tribe (11). The rest of Membertou's speech is poetic but in its attempt to convey Membertou as a newcomer to French, Martin nevertheless flirts with stereotypical renditions of First Nations characters as speaking in primitive forms. Numerous accounts, western and non-western, attest to the great oratory traditions of many First Nations[34] and Martin's writing performs ambiguous work here. More importantly, Martin's reaction shot, the moment in which the audience turns to Membertou and hears his support of the settlers' enterprise replays a scenario in which the First Peoples willfully surrendered their land and offered their friendship to the Europeans. As Filewod and others argue, no historical documents surrounding the *Théâtre de Neptune* attempts to understand or account for the Mi'kmaqs' response to the performance: their reaction is of no consequence in the historical records of the French empire. As Filewod writes: we do not know because no one asked. Martin's imagined scene in Port-Royal two years after Lescarbot's Masque imaginatively closes this area of uncertainty and legitimates French settler-colonialism by staging yet another moment of First Nations consent. Indeed, two years later, Membertou is still an ally. That Martin chooses to imagine a reaction shot in early Nouvelle France and then remove First Nations characters from most of *Invention*' scenes taking place after early colonization betrays a selective memory. A reaction shot in 1971, or in 1990 during the Oka Crisis would disrupt Martin's benevolent narrative of alliances between the French and First Peoples and surely circumscribe this prelapsarian moment of comradeship to a very short

[34] See Olive Dickason, Gilles Havard, Georges Sioui, Robert Warrior, the correspondence of Marc Lescarbot and that of Champlain on the subject of First Nations' great oratory traditions and skills.

moment in time that should not be deployed as a extenuating factor in Quebec's current relationship with First Nations.

Reconciliation in absentia

Nowhere is the surrogation process that began with Lescarbot's play more palpable than in the scene in *Invention* between Mireille and Takralik, the Inuk women who survived the residential school system put in place by Canada and enacted in each province by various Churches and provincial and federal governmental agencies. Residential Schools in Canada and their mission of "killing the Indian within the child" lasted for over a century and their effects were devastating on First Nations communities. Beside the direct attacks on the fabric of First Nations cultures and communities, the schools proved to be deadly places: malnutrition and epidemics in unsanitary conditions account for most of the high death toll in the schools. Physical, sexual, and mental abuse left many more wounded, a pain that trickled down to the following generations. Parents and communities left behind also suffered an immense trauma and the federally mandated Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools (TRC) has recently attempted to illuminate. The TRC, while flawed in many important ways, provided a public and safe space for these harrowing testimonials of multigenerational trauma. While the lack of transparency from various institutions ranging from various levels of governments to different Churches complicit in the residential school system have been and should continue to be criticized as preventing reconciliation, the public audiences and various testimonial rooms allowed survivors to come forward and name the crimes perpetrated against them. Many survivors spoke of their testimonials as a gesture of self-healing and questioned the settler communities' willingness to participate in a real

dialogue, in real reparation and healing given their governments and institutions' lack of transparency. During the TRC, First Nations witnesses and supporters asked critically how they could reconcile with a government that would not come forward and recognize trnasparently the entirety of its participation in the residential school system and who continued to oppress them on other fronts.

This is the pain that Takralik nurses in a bar in Montreal in *Invention*. The scene, which takes place during the 1998 ice storm, begins as Mireille, a young Qallunaat[35] seeks refuge from the storm and enters a neighborhood bar on Ontario Street. There she meets Takraliq whom the barman describes as "a paquet de troubles," a heap of troubles (52). The stage directions describe Takraliq as "a fifty-something Inuk women standing in front of a strange disco light, in a state of tranquil stupor" (ibid). On stage, the disco lights' bluish hue envelope Takraliq and evoke the frozen surfaces of Pipmuacan. Takraliq is in the midst of an inner monologue in which Inuktitut, French, and English collide, all language proving inadequate in naming the woman's hurt.

> TAKRALIQ**:** The white man came the same day it was the same snow as today
> L'homme blanc a dit que mes parents auraient plus les allocations familiales si leurs enfants allaient pas à l'école des blancs.
> À l'école des blancs
> Huit cent miles de chez nous! 800 mailinik anarraniivanga
> Au Sud!
> At the beginning I was alone, for days alone
> Empty beds around me and the silence
> Heavy
> Falling snow.[36] (53)

---

[35] Qallunaat: People who are not Inuit, typically a white person, in Inuktitut.

[36] The white man came the same day it was the same snow as today
The white man said that my parents would not receive the government's family allowance if their children did not go to the school of the white.
The school of the white.
800 miles from my home. 800 mailinik anarraniivanga
At the beginning I was alone, for days alone

Words pour out of Takraliq at the very moment in which the Qallunaat city that normally pays so little attention to her is imprisoned in ice and forced to a standstill. Martin seems to suggest that it takes this moment of suspension for Takraliq's words to be heard. Perhaps this is why Mireille decides to listen to Takraliq while all the other customers ignore the woman. Takraliq, sensing Mireille's interest, interrupts her monologue to say: "you want my photo Qallunaat? Pay me a drink!" (ibid). While drinking together, Takraliq tells Mireille about her residential school experience, naming the shame she felt when she left school and the sensation of cold she experienced for the very first time when she started wearing the Qallunaat clothes the school provided. Takraliq's story, recalled in French, English and Inuktitut betrays how Churches, among which the Catholic Church (Quebec was, before the Quiet Revolution, staunchly Catholic), the provincial and federal governments are all complicit in the implementation of the residential schools that broke families and imposed a regime of shame and violence on generations of First Nations children.

Takraliq alternates between the three languages that have shaped her life under the settler-colonial regime of Canada and Quebec and her inclusion of French signals Quebec's complicity in the residential schools system that is too often simplistically described as a federal policy. While the federal government did create the schools, they functioned with the assistance of the provinces and the local churches that generally turned a blind eye on the violence that took place within the school walls. In having

---

Empty beds around me and the silence
Heavy
Falling snow.

Takraliq speaks in these three languages at a moment when Quebec is forced to a standstill Martin hints at the violence that subtends Canada and Quebec's civil societies, a violence that was tolerated at as a way to solidify the borders of civil society (One was Canadian or Quebecois because one was shielded from, could not be, as "savages" were, sent to these residential schools). Martin seems to suggest that this shameful past can only emerge in the fissure in time created by the Ice Storm, a moment that rendered Quebec's community vulnerable.

If Martin seems to open a space of repentance here, he quickly closes it. When Takraliq's torrent of words comes to an end, Mireille shivers and responds "J'ai froid" (I am cold) (56). The world that Takraliq describes is threatening, a thermal shock for Mireille's conception of herself. In response, Takraliq offers Mireille a piece of seal blubber, "qu'on donne au chasseur quand y fait froid" (that which we give to the hunter when it is cold) and in the process of chewing the blubber together, the two women seem to reach a point of reconciliation (56). The stage is then bathed in warmer shades of light and fog appears on the glass panels suggesting that Takralik has offered a form of absolution to Qallunaats translated here by the warmth that permeated the stage. Mireille does not say much in the scene, she mostly listens to Takraliq's testimonial and this certainly embodies a first step in the right direction when it comes to the silence surrounding the horrors of the Aboriginal Residential School System in Canada.

To be sure, Mireille's few words ("J'ai froid") reflect a form of empathy and her sense of accessing and indentifying with Takralik's pain and cold loneliness. While this gesture of communion can be read as potentially liberating and healing, bringing the two parties to a sense of understanding, I would like to reflect for a moment on the gesture of

consumption –the sharing and chewing of blubber– through which Martin imagines this closure. Saidiya Hartman has compared empathy to a form of "facile intimacy" in which the empathizer in the process of making the other's pain her own "begins to feel for [her]self rather than for those whom this exercise in imagination presumably is designed to reach" (Hartman 18). In other words, empathy is slippery and facile precisely because it brings the empathizer back to herself through the consumption of the other's pain. Mireille's consumption of Takraliq's pain leaves her feeling cold, a malaise that Takraliq heals through the sharing of the blubber. This time consumption signals Takraliq's absolution and closure.

Despite its good intention, there is something troubling in Martin's staging of this theatrical reconciliatory act *in absentia* of a real First Nations' audience. This is not to say that reconciliation with First Peoples should not enter Quebec's definition of itself as a community but the reconciliation that Martin imagines is a one-way street. Martin's play meditates at length on the francophone-settlers' resentment and on the ways it can be purged, but *Invention* leaves little place for First Nations' resentment. This is because First Nations resentment would expose the fissure, the ethical incoherence in Quebec's discourse. Quebec's sense of identity as a colonized minority is indeed irreconcilable with its role as a settler community in the past and ongoing oppression of First Nations's cultures, languages, and territories. Where the resolution of the francophone majority's identity crisis leaves the First Peoples of Quebec is unclear in Martin's narrative. What *Invention* makes abundantly clear however is that it is once again through First Nations people that the francophone settlers will weather that (identity) storm. Indeed, as stated in the play when the words of the land of Pipmuacan will finally be freed, it is not the

identity crisis of the Huron Wendat (Pipmuacan is part of their oral tradition), or any of the First Nations of Quebec, or even the relationship between these First Nations and the francophone majority that will be resolved. The resolution that Martin envisions will liberate the francophone majority from its colonial forbearers: Canada and France. It will "give birth to a child liberated from resentment" (Martin 112).

The TRC was circulating when *Invention* premiered and it held its public audiences in Montreal in April 2013. The TRC is based on the premise that listening and bearing witness are the first steps towards reconciliation. If the TRC like any other reconciliation process involves testimonials or "truth-sharing" (an appellation meant to appease those who might see the TRC as a tribunal), it also demands that perpetrators recognize their own role in the conflict. In moments of truth-sharing in Montreal, witnesses simply listened to a survivor's story, offering their support in the release of the survivors' personal narratives. As Catherine Cole argues in her book on South Africa's TRC, so much of the reconciliatory potential of these commissions has been located in the liveness of its hearings and in the fact that victims and perpetrators had to face each other when presenting their testimonials. The audience, she argues is then simultaneously called upon to bear witness to the victims' trauma and to act as judges of the offenders (Cole 91-92). Philip Auslander argues that there is an assumption of truth in liveness, "an unexamined belief that live confrontation can somehow give rise to the truth in ways that recorded representations cannot" (128-129). Echoing Auslander, Cole argues that this assumption needs challenging and that testimonials and the act of witnessing do not necessarily give access to, or open up the truth.

If live testimonials cannot grant access to the whole truth, a reconciliation performed by a settler voice in absentia of First Nations' voice reveals very little truth if any at all. It presents the audience with the possibility of empathic identification without making any demands on them. No discomfort, no real face-to-face encounters with the survivors of the Residential Schools that existed close to one's settler community, no responsibility as a witness. If Martin comes close to a moment of discomfort for his intended audience, he quickly finds a way to restore the relationship between Mireille and Takraliq to where it has always been in Quebec's imaginary: Takraliq reaches out and provides the blubber that will warm up Mireille, that will appease the part of her that might have been unsettled for a moment upon hearing Takraliq's story. Takraliq's offering strangely resembles that of the three "Savages" in Lescarbot's play. In all cases, the figure of the Savage voluntarily offers up land, knowledge, sustenance in a gesture that gives coherence and legitimacy to the settler's sense of self. In sharing the blubber with Takraliq, Mireille is somehow absolved.

Conclusion

Invention is the first of a trilogy of play, the last of which should premiere in May 2014 at the Festival Transamériques in Montréal. Alexis Martin's cycle of plays belongs to a moment of in Quebec in which First Nations art in particular is garnering unprecedented attention. Short films by the young First Nations filmmakers of the Wapikoni Mobile project receive consistent praise in festivals in Quebec and abroad, and musicians like Samian (Anishinaabe), Shauit (Innu), Florent Vollant (Innu), and Elisapie Isaac (Inuk) all have a growing fan base among the francophone community. While this climate of relative openness is undoubtedly positive, it is important, as this chapter

argues, to remain vigilant about the narrative and the status of First Peoples as figures of transit that these gestures of inclusion perniciously re-inscribe. As *Invention* demonstrates, the narrative that holds Quebec together as an aspiring nation demands the affirmation of Quebec's status as a colonized minority vis a vis English Canada, the racialization of its Franco-European population and the erasure of First Nations in order to elevate the francophone community to the status of rightful owners of the land. Even it its inclusive mission, *Invention* cannot accommodate the competing narrative of presence, sovereignty, and cultural survival of the First Nations whose Indigeneity competes with Quebec's narrative of belonging. Instead, it re-inscribes their willful surrender, relegates their presence to a distant past and, when First Nations presence erupts in the present, the play quickly ventriloquizes a form of absolution of the Quebecois and a reconciliation that solidify Quebec's identity as if not an oppressed minority, at least a lesser evil than English Canada has been towards First Peoples.

Chapter 2: Encounters on the Reserve: Yves Sioui Durand's *Mesnak* and Alanis Obomsawin's *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*.

Filming Settler Colonialism's Violent Margins.

This chapter examines two films that meditate on the reserve as a marginalized space in which ongoing settler colonial violence serves to maintain and solidify the borders of Quebec's settler majority. One film, the 1993 documentary *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* by acclaimed Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, examines the 1990 Oka Crisis during which the Mohawk[37] (Kanienkehaka) community of Kanehsatake[38] became a highly visible and contested space in Quebec's public sphere. Filmed at the barricades separating the Mohawks from various governmental forces, Obomsawin's film illuminates the disproportionately violent response deployed by settler colonial forces to repress the Mohawks' defense of their land. The other film, a 2012 fiction film entitled *Mesnak* by Huron-Wendat director Yves Sioui Durand transposes Shakespeare's *Hamlet* from Elsinore to a fictional reserve in Quebec and meditates on the violent intramural dynamics of the reserve as a settler colonial space. Continuing Obomsawin's examination of the reserve, *Mesnak* unflinchingly dramatizes conflicts that find their roots in the genocidal policies deployed by the settler state against First Nations and that have transformed the reserve into a space of internalized colonial oppression and tortured filiation.

---

[37] The Mohawks use alternatively Mohawks and Kanienkehakas (People of the Flint) to refer to themselves. I will use both terms in this chapter to reflect the film's participants' usage of both terms.

[38] For legal reasons, Kanehsatake was not technically a reserve in 1990 even though the Mohawks had repeatedly petitioned the Canadian government to officially grant the community the land in the Oka region on which Mohawk occupation is historically documented. Though not a reserve and thus not benefiting from the few protections this title grants a community, Kanehsatake was perceived as such by many in the media.

In putting Obomsawin and Sioui Durand's films in conversation, this chapter reflects on violence towards First Peoples not as a historically circumscribed event but as a continuously operative force. *Mesnak* was filmed 22 years after the events in Oka yet the movie illuminates the same violence and despair Obomsawin captured in *Kanehsatake*, demonstrating that despite recent economical agreements with the Cree, Inuit, and Naskapi in Northern Quebec[39], the crisis in Oka did not fundamentally alter the structural relationship between Quebec and First Nations people. These two films' meditations challenge Quebec's amnesic identity discourse by holding a mirror to the reserve and demanding that audiences truly contemplate the oppressive nature of this space as an enclave of exclusion, tortured filiation and violence created and maintained by Canada and Quebec as settler colonial forces. By turning their cameras to the reserve, both filmmakers demand that audiences measure the ways in which their own access to privilege, land, community, and regeneration rests on the reserve as the ultimate negative space of settler communities in which First Nations' structures of filiation and belonging are under constant attack.

Before turning to Sioui Durand's 2012 opus, this chapter begins with an analysis of Obomsawin's 1993 film and focuses in particular on the moments in which the filmmaker's images exceed her narration's reconciliatory language and contradict any attempt to see the events of Oka as a crisis. Instead of laboring toward Obomsawin's

---

[39] Without diminishing the importance of *La Paix des Braves* a treaty ratified in 2002 by the Cree, Inuit, and Naskapi nations and Quebec, it is worth notion that this agreement operates within the confine of settler colonialism that is, within an asymmetrical structure of power in which settler states or provinces grant recognition to First Nations so long as such a recognition does not threaten the ethical or cartographical coherence of settler communities. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the negotiations of such agreements always stem from judicial pressure imposed by First Nations and not from settler communities' desire to redress past and current land appropriations or other forms of injustice.

bridging mission, these moments attest to a deeper form of violence at work on the reserve and reframe the so-called Oka crisis as but one modality within the continuum of this violent structure. Sioui Durand's adaptation of *Hamlet* dwells for its part on the intramural conflicts that arise as a result of this ongoing structural violence and presents a community struggling against and within the reserve as a space of settler colonial violence.

Crisis on Ancestral Land: Oka and the Criminalization of First Nations Dissent.

If *Mesnak* examines settler state violence through a fictional lens, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance,* meditates on a historical moment in Quebec's history, the 1990 so-called Oka Crisis, in which reality echoed Shakespearean drama in vivid ways. The events in Oka began like *Hamlet* with ancestors whose disturbed burials unleashed dramatic confrontations in the present (a scenario repeated in the events explored in chapter 4 of this dissertation). While the ghost of his slayed father visits Hamlet in Shakespeare's world, it was an entire Mohawk (Kanienkehaka) burial site that was threatened in 1990 when the nearby town of Oka decided to expand its luxury private golf course and add a series of high-end condominiums to the project. This expansion project, unilaterally devised by the town of Oka and its mayor Jean Ouellette, planned to utilize as its building site the disputed pine forest at the border of Oka that forms the Kanienkehaka burial ground. Obomsawin's movie documents the Mohawks' response to this invasion and her camera captures what began as a peaceful occupation of the contested burial site and surrounding dirt road, but quickly escalated to a violent 78-day standoff opposing the Mohawks to the full array of governmental forces of repression.

The Kanienkehakas of Kanehsatake and most particularly a small militant faction called the Warriors indeed resorted to armed resistance when the municipal and provincial governments failed to come to an agreement to protect the pine forest and its burial site. Soon, Warriors from the nearby reserve of Kahnawake showed their support by blocking the Mercier Bridge, one of the main links between Montreal and its suburbs. As Obomsawin tells the viewer in her documentary's narration, this blockade created a traffic nightmare for the 60,000 vehicles that crossed the bridge each day. An overwhelmed Mayor Ouellette then asked the Sureté du Québec (SQ)[40] to intervene, going against the council of Quebec's Minister of Native Affairs, John Ciaccia. Ciaccia, a well-meaning negotiator, was well aware of the SQ's long history of brutality[41] towards Quebec's First Nations and wanted to avoid an escalation of violence. When SQ agent Corporal Lemay died in a chaotic gunfire exchange[42] in the pine forest on 11 July 1990, the Kanienkehakas sensed that retaliation would be brutal and built a barricade around their land, preparing for siege. Ellen Gabriel, a soft-spoken leading figure from Kanehsatake recalls the tension within the community after Lemay's tragic death but argues: "I think we all conducted ourselves in honorable ways. We tried to avoid violence but we knew why they came. Something bad could happen, we could almost taste it in the air." After the warriors erected barricades on several other routes including highways 132, 138, and 207, the SQ responded with their own barrages around Kanehsatake. The

---

[40] The Surete du Quebec (SQ) is the provincial police force that was first called by the Mayor of Oka to break the barricades. When they failed, the Canadian army was called in.

[41] The SQ's infamously repressive approach to law enforcement in Quebec's First Nations communities was documented by Alanis Obomsawin in *Un Incident a Restigouche* (1984), a documentary about a violent SQ attack on the Restigouche reserve. See also John Ciaccia's account of the Oka Crisis *The Oka Crisis: A Mirror of the Soul* (47-49, 80-81)).

[42] While theories abounded suggesting that Lemay died in an instance of friendly fire, the Coroner's report later demonstrated that Lemay died from a bullet coming from the Mohawk side.

Royal 22nd Regiment of the Canadian Army (or the Vandoos[43]) was subsequently deployed when it became apparent that Quebec and the SQ could not (or would not) resolve the conflict in Oka.

In his memoir *The Oka Crisis: A Mirror of the Soul*, John Ciaccia discusses how the Quebec government seemingly sabotaged each of his attempts at finding a peaceful resolution with the Mohawks. For instance, Quebec's Premier Robert Bourassa refused Ciaccia's proposal that the provincial government buy the disputed land in Oka and keep it in trust until a land agreement could be ratified between all parties involved, namely the federal, provincial, and municipal governments as well as the Kanehsatake band council. The government also reneged on its promise to let food and medical supplies enter Kanehsatake, blocking convoys in an effort to isolate and weaken the community. Documenting this, Obomsawin juxtaposes images of press conferences in which government officials maintain that food and medical supplies freely enter Mohawk territory with footage that clearly shows the opposite —supply trucks being turned away or their content arriving in Kanehsatake spoiled and barely usable. In his book, Ciaccia observes in disbelief that Quebec seemed determined to let matters escalate to violent confrontations, perhaps as a way to transfer the burden of solving this crisis on to the Federal government. Canada's First Nations are a federal matter under the constitution but the community of Kanehsatake (for reasons that reveal how governmental inertia is yet another weapon against First Nations) is not an official reserve but a series of non-contiguous parcels of Mohawk land interspersed between lands and roads expropriated

[43] The Royal 22e Regiment, the most famous francophone regiment of the Canadian Forces is commonly known as "Vandoo", an anglicized mispronunciation of the French word "vingt-deux" (twenty-two). The regiment's headquarters are in Québec City, and its battalions serve as a local infantry for the province.

by the settler community over the years. The contested territory for which the Kanienkehakas have fought for decades[44] reveals the successive waves of encroachment on First Nations territory that have marked urban coexistence between First Peoples and settlers since early colonial times.

Ciaccia, who underwent a major crisis of conscience during the events at Oka, deploys his book to question openly the motivations of the various levels of government involved in the crisis. Obomsawin herself shows Ciaccia as a man under great stress whose authority seems undermined by an ensemble of local, provincial, and national forces. His affirmations during press points, for example, are often followed by images that demonstrate a vastly different reality and it becomes difficult for the viewer to evaluate if Ciacca was willingly misinforming the media or if he found himself caught in a drama that exceeded his acting power. On the violent SQ raid that led to Caporal Lemay's tragic death, Ciaccia recalls: "I didn't know what to think. My advice had been totally ignored. I didn't want to believe that my government had authorized this raid"(70). Ciaccia seems unable to reconcile his own reading of Quebec as a tolerant community with Premier Bourassa's stalling tactics that ultimately led to the escalation of violence that Ciaccia was hoping to prevent. Ciaccia's encounter with a form of structural violence that criminalized First Nations' dissent in order to insure Quebec's stability clearly scandalized his liberal belief-system and left him struggling.

---

[44] The Kanienkehakas were led to believe that the Sulpiciens were holding the land which forms Kanehsatake in trust for them, In fact, the Sulpiciens had changed to deed to the land without properly informing the Mohawks during the 18th century. (see Leroux-Chartré, Aude. *Quand Survie égale Crise: La Crise d'Oka*, in: Kanata. Vol. 3 (Winter 2010), Montreal: McGill University. 23-36.

While Ciaccia's book offers the perspective of a disabused Quebec representative, Obomsawin's opus was filmed within Kanehsatake, privileging its inhabitants' voices. The film documents both the community's intramural tensions and the febrile encounters between the Kanienkehakas and the Canadian Armed Forces that took place at the community's barricaded borders. Obomsawin managed to penetrate the Sureté du Quebec's perimeter and stayed with the Kanienkehakas through the army invasion and until the very end of the crisis. Contrary to the press footage that circulated at the time and that originated predominantly from outside the barricades, Obomsawin's film offers a unique point of view that reverses the gaze and examines Quebec's settler community as well as the reserve from a unique vantage point, namely that of an Abenaki observer among the Kanienkehakas.

Obomsawin shot, at times with little help, an astonishing amount of footage, explaining later that this was not a calculated move on her part but that she had continued to film simply because she "kept on thinking that it would surely end tomorrow" (*Kanehsatake 270 Years of Resistance*, "making of" clip). Rather than the abrupt ending she anticipated, with each day, the crisis escalated and her film offers a quiet but powerful rebuttal to the mainstream narratives circulating at the time that portrayed the Mohawks as violent thugs, terrorists, and lawless people and the reserves in general as criminal hubs whose inhabitants led a privileged life above Quebecois and Canadian laws. Obomsawin labors to render visible the constant erosion of Kanienkehaka land, the governments' failed promises over the years and deliberate stalling of land settlement processes as the events that precipitated the standoff in Oka. In filming the violent and seemingly disproportionate repression that followed the Kanienkehakas' refusal to see

their ancestral land eroded once more, Obomsawin attempts to provide a more even-keeled account of the events of the summer of 1990, challenging the one-sided narratives that have come to form the settler communities' archive of the crisis.

While the movie unflinchingly documents scenes of violence and racial tension, it does not glorify First Nations violence (Obomsawin herself advocates pacifism) or attempt to downplay internal tensions among the Mohawks. Instead, the movie focuses on presenting Kanienkehaka claims as legitimate, and the Warriors who held the barricades as honorable family men who were simply, and understandably Obomsawin argues, pushed to their limits. At times, Obomsawin even uses her camera to diffuse tension and prevent further acts of violence towards Mohawk protesters (Lewis 118). Conversely, Obomsawin labors through parts of the movie to show the humanity of several soldiers from the Vandoo Regiment, presenting them as caught in a conflict with which they might not agree. For instance, after the vicious beating of a warrior named Spudwrench, Obomsawin captures an exchange between a clearly distressed Major Tremblay and Mohawk leader Mad Jap to coordinate Spudwrench's evacuation to a nearby trauma center. Major Tremblay breaks protocol and promises no interferences to Spudwrench's return behind the barricades upon his release from the hospital. Images from the following day show an army spokesperson announcing Major Tremblay's relocation and evading a journalist who asks if this was precipitated by the promise Tremblay made to Mad Jap. While operating in a resolutely conciliatory mode, Obomsawin's documentary does not spare the viewers, but rather features overwhelming scenes of repression and distress. The director herself takes position only in subtle ways,

often letting the images speak for themselves without adding an extra-diegetic commentary

Obomsawin's cinematic engagement with the Oka Crisis is substantial and includes four documentary films – *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), *My name is Kahentiiosta* (1996), *Spudwrench: Kahnawake Man* (1997), and *Rocks at Whiskey Trench* (2000) – in which she captures the stories of some of the central figures of this historical event. In many of these films and most particularly in *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, Obomsawin labors to suture the enclave of Kanehsatake to its neighboring settler communities through a discourse of shared humanity. Obomsawin's work, aptly described by scholar Randolph Lewis as operating "on the middle ground," has always aimed at bridging the gap between First Nations people and the rest of Canada (117). An optimist, Obomsawin says about the power of documentary films:

> It changes society. It brings knowledge about the others that you always call the 'others'. And all of a sudden you realize that they feel like you, and they have stories that are similar, and they need you, and you need them. And I think the documentary world does that very well. (in Lewis, 120)

Unsurprisingly, Obomsawin labors cinematically in *Kanehsatake* to heal the divide created by the Oka Crisis in Quebec and in Canada (the movie was released in French and English). In one of the explanatory clips that accompany *Kanehsatake*, Obomsawin remembers a moment of revelation during the crisis. After a night spent along the barbed wire perimeter, Obomsawin recalls watching the sun rising on the fields where the army had set camp, catching soldiers sleeping with total abandon. The director explains how she was suddenly aware of the fragile humanity and surprising beauty that existed around the perimeter at dawn. Obomsawin's empathy is impressive given the circumstances.

Perhaps this explains why her film alone, among the various documentary films exploring the Oka Crisis, was met with positive reviews on both side of the Canadian/First Nations divide.

However, in her desire to situate her argument at the level of shared humanity, Obomsawin – unwillingly no-doubt given that her entire filmography critiques settler colonialism – provides a way out for those who want to avoid the difficult ensemble of ethical questions that constitute the crux of the Oka standoff. The events in Oka brought to the fore the irreconcilable nature of Quebec's identity discourse which claims the status as an oppressed minority while actively repressing the Mohawks' assertion of sovereignty and affirmation of their distinct culture. Given its own struggle for recognition at the political and cultural levels, Quebec would appear a natural ally for the Mohawks. However, as discussed in chapter 1, such an alliance would require the Quebecois and First Nations people to be structurally positioned as equals, and this is antithetical to the settler colonial project that rests on the removal, assimilation and erasure of First Peoples. The events in Oka revealed Kanehsatake as such a space of removal, erasure, and repression and thus illuminated the artifice of Canada and Quebec's self-congratulatory discourse as liberal and tolerant communities. Indeed, Canada, the very nation that in 1982 recognized First Nations' ancestral rights as constitutional rights (although in vague terms), subsequently rejected the Kanienkehaka's assertion of sovereignty over the burial site and criminalized their dissent. This contradiction is exemplified in Obomsawin's movie when she juxtaposes excerpts of a press conference in which one Kanienkehaka negotiator, an anguished motherly figure, reflects on the barricades' raison d'être and pleads to the public: "we are taking nothing that is not

rightfully ours. Did you forget that?" Her comments are followed by those of then Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney who affirms: "The Mohawks are terrorists and Canada does not negotiate with terrorists" a position that powerfully reframed the debate away from Canada's own violation of the very recognition of First Peoples rights the nation recently enshrined in its own Constitution.

The horizontal relationship of shared humanity that Obomsawin labors to present in her movie is in fact a vertical one in which the settler-society rests on First Nations' spaces, cultures, and communities, slowly suffocating them. The reserves were created with First Nations' disappearance in mind. Contrary to settler communities whose societal projects are driven by expansion and renewal, reserves were never devised with regeneration in mind and symbolize instead a transitory space between colonization and assimilation. The reserve is part and parcel of a project whose violence has been normalized and obscured. Slavoj Zizek refers to this form of violence as "objective" and describes it as a hidden form of violence inherent and necessary to the normal state of things of a given society. "Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent" (Zizek, 2). Zizek differentiates "objective violence" from "subjective violence" which he describes as "a perturbation of the 'normal', peaceful state of things" like violent attacks or acts of terrorism (Zizek 2). Despite what has been argued by governmental representatives and settler media, the events in Oka were not a "crisis" and cannot be narrativized as solely belonging to the category of subjective violence. Instead, what the events in Oka rendered visible for a moment is the continuously operative force –the "objective violence"– that secures normalcy in Quebec. (Indeed violent assimilation policies, police

repression, and the criminalization of First Nations dissent are all part of the objective violence that allows Quebec to exist as a stable settler community.)

The opening sequence of Obomsawin's documentary renders visible the continuous objective violence that secures Quebec's borders. The film opens with a bucolic scene of leisure captured in an extreme long shot. From a distance, the viewer sees a group of golfers playing in bright polo shirts. The camera then slowly moves away from the golf players in the distance and toward the parking lot that stands between the golfers and the ground occupied by the imagined viewer whose gaze captures this scene. The camera finishes its motion in a wide shot of the adjacent pine forest, filming the ground on which the viewer is symbolically standing. The forest, the contested Kanienkehaka burial ground, is beautiful and softly lit by the sun. Tombstones stand facing the parking lot, silent witnesses to what was once the vast expanse of Kanienkehaka land. The image cuts to a close shot of a large wooden board where "Mohawk Territory No Trespassing!" is written in black paint. A small group of Kanienkehaka men and women are sitting under the sign, guarding their land.

In its first 33 seconds, Obomsawin's documentary has already visually exceeded the director's narrative of intra-human conflict. Visually, Kanienkehakas are positioned outside of settler society, separated from the capitalist dream of well-earned leisure time by a parking lot full of new cars. When the imagined viewer standing on Kanienkehaka land is asked to map her position or territory, the camera, acting as the agent of her gaze, zooms in on lonely, eroded tombstones. Kanienkehaka territory, in other words, is a zone of devastation and death, a space where even the buried are not at peace. The burial ground is silent and fragile-looking in the face of civil society's incessant encroachments

(represented here by the golf course and parking lot). As the camera surveys the burial site, Alanis Obomsawin's narration describes the waves of expropriations of Mohawk land perpetrated first by the religious authorities in Nouvelle-France, then the British colonial administration, and more recently, by the town of Oka. "Even the burial ground" she says, "became the property of Oka" and its mayor now wants to use the land for a luxury expansion of the town's golf course.

With these images supported by her factual narration, Obomsawin delineates Kanienkehaka territory as a repeatedly violated space, a zone open to invasion and gratuitous violence. No transgressions on the Kanienkehaka's part can explain these successive waves of expropriation. The Kanienkehakas were, and still are, simply standing in the way of settler society's expansion. The trajectory followed by the camera in this opening sequence creates a clear sense of divide between Kanienkehaka territory and settler society. From the smooth surfaces of the golf course, the camera slowly retreats to the Kanienkehaka's no man's land. The parking lot stands as a transitional zone between the visibility of settler society and the invisibility of life on First Nations communities and reserves. The golfers seem completely unaware of being filmed from across the divide. They stand and play with impunity on a land that was snatched from the Kanienkehakas. First Nations have conveniently been pushed to the margins of society, rendered invisible, and parked in reserves from which their voices are seldom heard. In fact, as Obomsawin's images implacably put it, the players' peaceful enjoyment of their game is dependent on First Nations' retreat to silence and invisibility.

By visually opposing tombstones to a golf course, the violent zone of the reserve to the peaceful zone of settler society's leisure and recreation, Obomsawin echoes Frank

Wilderson's reflection on the "Savage's" grammar of suffering. Wilderson argues that humanity is the well-guarded province of whiteness, a structural position whose coherence depends on violence towards the Slave and the "Savage." The Slave and the "Savage" serve as measures and borders against which white identity is defined. For whiteness to maintain its coherence and integrity then, its borders need to be carefully monitored and guarded against intrusions. In other words, Slaves and "Savages" need to be kept at bay in ghettos, prisons or, in reserves. Wilderson proposes a caveat to this triangular relationship: while Whites/humans, and Blacks/Slaves/anti-humans stand in irreconcilable relation vis-à-vis one another (the Blacks existing only to give coherence to the Whites), the "Savage" stands in a more liminal position. Wilderson explains this structural liminality by the two modalities of the "Savage's" grammar of suffering: sovereignty and genocide (150). On the one hand, the "Savage's" demands for sovereignty can be articulated in terms (however faulty) of conflict within civil society. On the other hand, as a product of genocide, the "Savage" stands alongside the Slave as an antagonism, resolutely outside of civil society, his/her suffering posing a threat to humanity's coherence.

Obomsawin's extra-diegetic commentary labors on the side of the "Savage's" modality of sovereignty. Her clear description of the Kanienkehakas' claim to the pine forest and burial site documents at length the various tactics deployed by white settlers to forcefully expel Kanienkehakas from their land. Obomsawin appeals to the viewers' sense of justice, and presents the Kanienkehakas' struggle as an effort to re-claim sovereign losses. Land claims are undoubtedly central to Kanienkehaka sovereignty and they certainly constituted the precipitating factor in the Oka events. However,

Obomsawin's visual narrative gestures, perhaps unconsciously, to a loss that cannot be redressed through land repatriation. Indeed, Obomsawin's opening sequence functions at the level of what Wilderson calls the genocidal modality. In these images, the small group of Kanienkehaka sentries is positioned on the side of death, standing alongside tombstones, resolutely outside of civil society's borders. Obomsawin shows a space where there is no respite from white hegemony, even in death.

As Obomsawin films the pine forest and burial site, she introduces us to Kahentiiotsa, one the film's central characters. Kahentiiotsa came from a nearby reserve to support the Oka protest. Speaking directly to the camera she explains her surprise when she arrived at the burial site: "This is the road youse [sic] been blocking for three months?" she exclaims. "It's a dirt road! I thought maybe it was a highway, you know? Geez!" Indeed, the Kanienkehaka's dissent and their occupation of a seemingly insignificant dirt road and parcel of land can appear benign, yet it unleashed deep-seated anxiety and a form of violent fury that spread from Oka to the highest level of governmental power. Obomsawin utilizes Kahentiiosa's surprise to render legible the disproportionate nature of the government's response for her viewers. At the height of the standoff, the Kanienkehakas (whose population was approximately 1800 in 1990) did occupy more roads and blocked a main bridge between Montreal and the suburbs. Even then, the 1000 SQ officers quickly followed by the 2500 soldiers that were deployed to contain the "Mohawk threat" seem disproportionate. This intense repressive reaction indicates how vital the containment of First Nations dissent and presence is to the existence of the settler colonial project.

The Mohawks' sovereignty and territorial claims indeed threaten Quebec's ethical coherence in such a powerful way that these demands needed to be repressed and contained at all cost. The strength of this repression is visually articulated in one particular poignant sequence in Obomsawin's documentary. Obomsawin proposes several long shots of Oka as it is invaded by the SQ: the camera captures aggressive searches performed on Kanienkehaka citizens by the SQ, and the seemingly endless rows of police cars and uniformed men. Obomsawin zooms in on a man who is prevented from crossing a SQ road blockade. He is distraught, on the verge of tears, and argues to no avail that his family is waiting for him on the other side. The Kanienkehakas, Obomsawin tells us visually, have been contained and isolated by the SQ. These images of containment and repression are quickly replaced with disquieting footage of a riot in nearby Chateauguay where a group of seven thousand white citizens have rallied at a busy intersection to voice their anger about the Mercier Bridge closure. The camera captures a group performing a mock lynching, burning the effigy of a Mohawk warrior as they chant and cheer in a febrile atmosphere. As the rioters scream "Sauvages" (Savages) and perform a type of Indian war hoot, they overturn a semi-trailer truck delivering vegetables to the barricaded communities. While the SQ officers are there, their intervention seems benign in comparison to their muscled intervention at the barricades.

From this rioting scene under the cover of night, Obomsawin transports us to a press conference led by the mayors of the seven municipalities adjacent to Oka. They have come to show their support to Mayor Jean Ouellette and explain their decision to the press in the following way: "We can't negotiate 75% of Quebec's territory! Would you want us to negotiate your home, would you want us to negotiate 75% of the province

[with First Nations people]?" Citizens gathered at the town hall cheer and applaud. Obomsawin, for her part, adds no voice-over commentary to a scene that so openly names the current impossibility of Quebec-Mohawk co-existence. Indeed, as this scene clearly demonstrates, Quebec's existence, its cohesion as a linguistic and cultural community whose territorial base insures in part its survival, depends on the continuous suppression of First Nations' land rights. Obomsawin does not explain what the 75% invoked in this press conference might refer to. As viewers, we are left to assume that this is the amount of land claimed by First Nations' populations across Quebec. The number, coming from the mayor's mouth, recasts the Kanienkehaka's demands as "unreasonable" while in fact this is about the percentage of land in Quebec for which no treaties have ever been signed and on which First Nations retain ancestral rights that have been legally recognized by Canada's Supreme Court. Obomsawin's silence over Ouellette's comments illuminates the cognitive dissonance at work in Oka and elsewhere in Quebec that allows the settlers to criminalize First Nations people's attempts to defend their ancestral land while recasting themselves – the occupiers– as victims.

Obomsawin later films an altercation between two citizens in Oka. An elderly man, interviewed by a journalist, voices his support for the golf course project while a young man named Martin furiously shouts back at him: "Sacre ton camps chez vous, maudit chien sale de rat!" (Go back home you dirty dog, you rat!). Martin's friend attempts to calm him down as the journalists rush to interview the elderly golf supporter who proceeds to invoke laws and due process. "Ils auraient pu prevenir ca" (They could have prevented this) the elderly man continues, speaking about the Mohawks. "Ils doivent respecter la loi" (They need to respect the law). In the background, the young

man is becoming increasingly furious and finally screams to the uninterested elderly man and his media entourage: “C’est leur terre! C’est aux Indiens: c’est à eux autres, ok! Tabarnak de sans coeur!” (It’s their land! It’s the Indians’ land: it’s theirs, ok! You heartless fuck!). The passersby look at Martin with discomfort as the journalists continue to court the elderly representative of settler societies’ cognitive dissonance.

Martin, in his outburst, touches on the crux of the Oka standoff: the burial site is Kanienkehaka’s land and it was taken from them, and now this theft is obfuscated by a discourse about laws and due process. It might appear simplistic but it is nevertheless painfully true. One of the townspeople recorded by Obomsawin remarks: “They [the Mohawks] know why they are fighting and it is worth more than 9 holes in the ground,” while another remarks “I really wonder who is the most civilized here.” Canada and Quebec exist as a result of theft, occupation, and genocidal policies, making it an unethical and oppressive project. It is a reality that Quebec and Canada at large conveniently ignore and that the Mohawk uprising uncomfortably brought to the surface in 1990. Obomsawin quietly allows this discomfort to rise in this particular scene, letting Martin explicate the nature of Quebec’s anxious reaction to the Mohawk’s demands.

As the tension escalates during the 78-day standoff, Obomsawin’s colleagues film the riots and racist demonstrations that took place outside the barricades in the nearby cities of Oka and Chateauguay, documenting the violence that erupted in the public sphere during the crisis, and that culminated in the stoning of a convoy of cars carrying frightened Mohawk elders and women away from Kanehsatake. The crisis brought international opprobrium to Quebec and Canada, led to a backlash against First Nations in Quebec, and spearheaded a new wave of First Nations activism. During the crisis a

number of international journalists mused, as this dissertation does, over the apparent contradiction between Quebec's discourse as an oppressed minority within Canada and its own colonial treatment of the Mohawks' plight. Quebec had plenty of reasons to feel anxious about the Mohawks' demands as Alain Gerbrier wrote in the French newspaper *Liberation*:

> The Quebecois are in a delicate situation […] how can they claim the right to independence for themselves and deny it to the First Nations of the land? In 1985, when he was in power, Rene Levesque (an independantiste (sic)) had not hesitated to recognize the distinct character of the Aboriginal nations and the right for them to decide on the development of their own identity. But the present Quebecois premier, Robert Bourassa (a federalist), allowed the July 11 attack at Oka, had to force himself to buy off the James Bay Cree to fulfill his dreams of harnessing hydro-electric power, and called in the army. For Bourassa the only good Indian… is an Indian who plays dead (fait le mort). (in Ciaccia, 115)

While Gerbrier's comments bluntly name the cognitive dissonance at work in Quebec, he fails to acknowledge that even for Levesque, this recognition of the First Nations' distinct characters would be subsumed under Quebec's own sovereignty. Gerbrier attributes the "delicate" nature of Quebec's situation to its sovereignty discourse and seemingly asks if Quebec can separate, why can't the Mohawks? While this is ultimately true, this question fails to address something more fundamental. Quebec is in a delicate situation because a visible, audible, and legible Mohawk is an undisputable reminder of Quebec's participation in and reliance on ongoing violence towards First Nations for its own ethical and cartographical integrity. Quebec's mythscape as an oppressed and colonized minority at the hands of English Canada cannot coexist with the narrative of Quebec as an oppressor who is consistently endangering First Nations culture. The uncomfortable questions that Gerbrier and others asked during the crisis and which revealed the

dissonance at work in Quebec's identity discourse, were quickly shut down in Quebec's public sphere where resentment toward the Kanienkehakas is still palpable today.

Hamlet, Prince of Kinogamish: Something is Rotten in the State of Quebec.

Obomsawin's unflinching film finds a powerful cinematic companion in *Mesnak* by Huron Wendat director and theatre artist Yves Sioui Durand. The film begins with this tormented exchange between Hamlet and Horatio:

> Ne te semble t'il pas qu'un devoir m'incombe?
> Celui qui a tué mon roi et prostitué ma mère
> Ne dois-je pas en toute conscience le châtier avec ce bras?[45]
> (Hamlet, Act V, Scene II, from *Hamlet le Malécite*)

In the film, this encounter takes place in a dark rehearsal room where young Innu actor Dave Brodeur (Victor Andrés Trelles Turgeon) struggles to find the right emotional range for this famous scene. The camera closes on Dave's concentrated face as he performs Shakespeare's text in French. His rendition is a cry for justice driven by rage. Dave/Hamlet urgently asks: isn't it a son's duty to avenge his parents and a prince's obligation to seek redress for his slain king? Dave's acting coach (Peter Batakliev) interrupts the young actor's speech and warns him against "l'écueil de la motivation unique" or the trap of a single motivation. *Hamlet*, he argues, is a story that cannot be reduced to a violent outburst or a blind quest for retribution. To play Hamlet, the acting coach suggests, is to dive into deep, turbulent waters and struggle with the violent undercurrents that hide under the surface.

Mesnak, a First Nations' cinematic adaptation of *Hamlet,* delves lucidly into these deep, turbulent waters. The film meditates specifically on the reserve and First Nations

---

[45] [Does it not, think'st thee, stand me now upon / He that hath kill'd my king and whored my mother […] / Isn't not perfect conscience /To quit him with this arm?

ontology, and explores the repercussions of existing against settler state domination. *Mesnak* deploys Hamlet (both the character and the play's well-known plot) as a performative device through which settler states' subterranean violence can be performed in the open. The film illuminates these forces through a cinematic *mise-en-abyme* of Shakespeare's play in which Dave Brodeur is caught in a network of mirroring realities. Indeed, as he prepares to perform *Hamlet* onstage, Dave's personal life starts to echo Shakespeare's play in revealing ways. *Mesnak*'s opening scene sets up these two spheres' echoing central dilemma: What should Hamlet/Dave do when faced with the violence and injustice that shape his family and his kingdom/reserve? The question is multivalent and animates Dave's work as an actor searching for his character's driving force. It also becomes Dave's central dilemma as his personal life begins to echo Hamlet's encounter with a broken world and his subsequent quest for truth and redress.

Dave Brodeur's life is indeed the stuff of Shakespearian drama and thus begins with tragic events. In what seems to be the late 1970s, Dave's father Jean Ashini –a Red Power radical leader– dies in a suspicious hunting accident on reserve land and Dave is subsequently taken from his grieving mother Gertrude (Kathia Rock) whose grief has led her to alcoholism and who is now deemed unfit to care for her son. Taken from the reserve of Kinogamish by the province's social services, Dave is raised by an adoptive family in Montreal, far from his community and culture. *Mesnak* does not show these tragic events but alludes to them throughout the film, which focuses on Dave's return to the reserve twenty years or so after the hunting tragedy. An anonymous letter sent to his Montreal apartment precipitates Dave's return to Kinogamish. The letter contains a photo

of Gertrude accompanied by the message “your mother needs you” which urges Dave to return to the reserve to reconnect with his mother.

When Dave returns to Kinogamish, the reserve is no longer fueled by the revolutionary energy of his father’s Red Power days. The reserve instead appears as a space away from time and resigned to its fate. Kinogamish’s new Grand Chief Claude St-Onge (Marco Collin) is about to grant a commercial license to a forestry corporation from Quebec, opening reserve land to further settler colonial encroachment despite his own community’s opposition to the project. As the audience quickly understands, Claude St-Onge (the film’s Claudius) played a central part in the suspicious hunting accident that killed Dave’s father two decades ago. Claude St-Onge has since risen to power and replaced Dave’s father as Kinogamish’s leader and as Gertrude’s lover. Now sober, Gertrude seems unaware of St-Onge’s role in her previous husband’s death but Dave’s reappearance on the reserve soon threatens her newfound balance. Instead of being a celebratory event, Dave’s return is marked by violence and failed attempts to reconnect with his community. Gertrude rejects Dave and when he falls in love with Osalic (Eve Ringuette), a young struggling Ophelia figure, their relationship ends tragically. Dave’s voyage through the dark waters and potentially deadly undercurrents of his past parallels Hamlet’s return to Elsinore and the fury it unleashes.

Mesnak transposes *Hamlet*’s violent family feud and tortured interrogations from Elsinore to Kinogamish, a fictive Innu reserve in northern Quebec. There, *Mesnak* brutally expands to the reserve Shakespeare’s vision of the family sphere as plagued by betrayal, incestuous desires, and violence. The film reveals the reserve –understood here as the space and its inhabitants– not as a protected realm of kinship but as one of First

Nations containment in which internalized colonialism threatens kinship and community and produces tortured filiation. The film dissects the repercussions of negotiating one's individual and communal identity under and against constant settler colonial domination. *Mesnak*'s characters all struggle against the tentacles of a profoundly divisive body of laws –Canada's *Indian Act*—that defines and controls First Nations identity through an arithmetic of exclusion and extinction that actively projects the end of First Nations as distinct peoples from the settler community (see chapter 3).

In analyzing *Mesnak* and its portrait of the reserve, this chapter meditates on the explanatory power of violence when it comes to identity discourses in Quebec where friction, and areas of tension have fallen out of favor and are too often ignored or under-theorized. Instead, many academics have turned to celebratory discourses of multiplicity and hybrid identities focusing on what Simon Harel calls the "consensual nature of intercultural relations" (*Les Loyautés*, 41 my translation). The relationship between the reserve and the settler majority is neither consensual nor is it intercultural in the cross-pollinating ways invoked by the discourses of "altérité" (otherness) and "écritures migrantes" (migrant literatures) that Harel describes here. These important discourses which have widened the frames of investigation available to understand cultural identity in Quebec generally focus on intramural tensions if they address conflicts, and do not account for the violent undercurrents that sustain Quebec's civil society and render these relations of "conflictual harmony" possible in the first place (Wilderson 48). They do not, in other words, explicate how First Nations continue to serve, as Jodi A Byrd argues, as "figures of transit" in Liberal states, providing "the ontological and literal ground" on

which these states can imagine themselves and debate of métissage or multiculturalism (Byrd 221).

Byrd's reflection echoes here Zizek's aforementioned reflection on the vertical structure of violence. Theatrical or cinematic performances often focus on what Zizek calls subjective violence and on its tantalizing pyrotechnics without paying attention to the hidden objective violence that sustains such outbursts. Objective violence is normalized and hidden and thus difficult to apprehend while subjective violence is spectacular and dramatic and offers the gratifying illusion of resolution. It is easy indeed to dismiss such explosive events as pure spectacle or as aberrations in an otherwise predictable environment and thus prevent any real engagement of the audience with the subterranean violence that supports the edifice of civil society. In some rare cases, however, theatre and cinema can render legible both subjective and objective violence. Diana Taylor and Ken Gonzales-Day among others convincingly demonstrate in their theoretical and artistic work how performances can reveal the objective violence that sustains political regimes and racial domination.[46] This chapter thus examines *Mesnak*'s Kinogamish not as a space in crisis but as a space of settler colonial violence and as the ontological and literal ground on and against which Quebec can articulate its sense of self as a community.

Director Sioui Durand labors to render this layered violence visible throughout *Mesnak*. A scene early in the movie provides a rich example of this revelatory work. In it, the camera accompanies Dave Brodeur as he drives north towards Kinogamish and his

---

[46] See Diana Taylor's *Disappearing Acts* or Ken Gonzales-Day's The *Erased Lynching Series* among other excellent work on the topic of objective violence performed.

car swallows kilometer after kilometer of road. We see the changing northern landscape through the vehicle's windshield as if seated in the passenger seat. The view would be beautiful were it not for the cracked windshield that gives the landscape a scarred surface. The windshield, and by extension our gaze as we look through the fissured glass, is effectively stratified in what appears to be a vertical hierarchy. Everything above the glass' two horizontal wounds is sky, nature, and open vista: an open and undamaged space. Everything below the cracks bears the marks of containment and harnessing. Paved roads cut through the territory like scars and become increasingly smaller as they lead away from the cities. As the car moves north, these roads turn from asphalt to dirt and eventually funnel down to the small parcel of land that constitutes Kinogamish. The land that exists below the windshield's two visual scars is an eroded space marked by displacements and forced settlements. The camera follows Dave's journey from Quebec's civil society to the reservation, a space that appears as the ultimate space of "otherness": Quebec's brutal margins. The reservation itself is rundown, its prefabricated houses worn out. The only luxurious homes belong to tribal council members like Claude St-Onge and they stand like obscene signs of the federal government's control over Kinogamish's self-governance.

Zizek's vertical structure of violence finds an apt visual representation in the car's split windshield. The lower part of the windshield forms the terrain of objective violence, a landscape now so normative that its scars appear banal. The upper part of our gaze is the terrain of subjective violence. This open vista, the terrain of subjective violence, is not totally free of conflicts in Québec. It has indeed been the stage of a tense and at times seemingly impossible relationship between Quebec's francophone majority and the

province's Anglophone minority on the one hand and between Quebec and the rest of Canada on the other hand. Quebec and Canada have often been describes as "two solitudes" caught in a forced marriage.[47]

While this metaphor may give the impression of a irreconcilable divide between Quebec and Canada, the two are as previously stated in a relation of conflictual harmony, that is their union is vexed but it is articulated within the realm of a common subjectivity and from a common structural position within civil society (Wilderson 48). The Quebecois and Canadians articulate their national mythscape and political aspirations within the same libidinal economy. Both are settler communities even if Quebec has the particularity of being both a colonizing force and a minority population later colonized by the British Empire. Even so, when Quebec speaks of sovereignty, it deploys the same rubrics of "nation", "governance", and "territory" as the federal government and thus, their conflict is articulated over a shared ontological terrain. This was rendered evident in the Oka events when Quebec and Canada quickly joined forces to repress Mohawk dissent and criminalize their attempt to destabilize the shared terrain (obtained by and through the erasure of First Nations' sovereignty) on which Quebec and Canada have historically quarreled.

If the upper part of the windshield is the terrain of subjective violence, the scarred landscape framed by the lower part of the cracked glass is the terrain of objective violence. Erased from this landscape is an entire population, namely the First Nations who occupied the territory long before Quebec and Canada came to be. It is these First Nations' invisibility that provides the necessary condition for Canada and Quebec to

---

[47] See MacLennan, Hugh. *Two Solitudes*. McClelland & Stewart : Toronto, 2008. Print.

articulate their conflict. Their absence is the terrain, the "ossuary America" on which Quebec and Canada can now perform their competing narratives (Harel 59). In other words, while Quebec and Canada live in conflictual harmony, their relationship with First Nations People is one of antagonism. [48] In what Wilderson calls the "genocidal modality of their grammar of suffering" (Wilderson 49), First Nations people constitute what filmmaker Richard Desjardins calls "le peuple invisible," the invisible people. Their invisibility, actualized through genocide and maintained through pervasive and institutionalized forms of violence that target filiation in particular, is, as I argue in this dissertation, a necessary condition for Quebec and Canada's sense of normalcy. In exploring Kinogamish's broken and tortured filiation, *Mesnak* labors to render visible genocidal violence rather than sovereign loss. Something is rotten in Kinogamish, Sioui Durand tells us in his film, but this is the very subterranean violence –Zizek's "objective violence"– that gave birth to Canada and Quebec as settler states and that continues to sustain their national projects.

Kinogamish as a space of abject filiation

Mesnak was filmed mostly in and around the Innu reserve of Uashat mak Mani-Utenam in the Côte-Nord region of Quebec and a large part of the film's dialog is in French, Quebec's official language. While Kinogamish is a fictive space, the movie

---

[48] See Wilderson's *Red, White, & Black, Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*. Wilderson draws an important distinction between conflict and antagonism when it comes to the structural relationship of Native Americans with settler states. Wilderson argues that there are two modalities to the Native American grammar of suffering –sovereignty and genocide. In their capacity to name and reclaim sovereignty and a land (a possibility that Wilderson sees as possible though improbable), Native Americans stand closer to settler communities than to what Wilderson calls the Black "Slave", the socially dead for whom repatriation and sovereignty is unimaginable. In other words, land and sovereignty claims are articulated as conflicts on a shared terrain. It is in the genocidal modality of their grammar of suffering that Native Americans align with the "Slave" and occupy an antagonistic position vis-à-vis white settler society.

makes no attempt at creating an equally fictive settler state to surround it. Instead, *Mesnak* identifies Quebec as the outside force that shapes and threatens the reserve of which Dave Brodeur becomes the uneasy ambassador. Indeed, throughout the movie, Dave comes to represent a threatening force from the outside for the people of Kinogamish. Dave's return as the acculturated son brings the outside world in the reserve and threatens the community's fragile balance. While he is from Kinogamish, Dave belongs to both Quebec and the reserve, defining himself now as being "from the city" and speaking French instead of Innu. Furthermore his various interactions with the people of Kinogamish demonstrate his profound estrangement from Innu culture. Dave's return to the reserve performs what Simon Harel calls an act of "braconnage identitaire" (identity poaching) —that is Dave intrudes on a territory from which he has been dispossessed and in doing so, he exposes the trauma inherent to and the violent nature of this space. Dave Brodeur's return to Kinogamish, like Hamlet's to Elsinore, releases both the violence of his environment and the people around him in the open. In the process of this "braconnage", Dave's body becomes the site on which competing ontological questions are violently articulated: his presence exposes how the very laws that have created the reserve have also violently targeted kinship and the possibility of community within that space, making the reserve a space of threatened filiation. *Mesnak* asks through Dave's journey if one can truly love, forgive or hope within a space written as part of the settler state's genocidal project.

More than a single character, Dave comes to represent and stand in for central ontological questions pertaining to First Nations identity. In French, a "brodeur" is the term used to describe someone who embroiders and renders a fabric distinctive with

thread. Dave Brodeur –the embroiderer– is desperately trying to claim the connective tissue of his past, the missing thread that would allow him to draw a picture of his ancestry. For instance, Dave's apartment shown at the beginning of *Mesnak,* features walls covered with disparate Indigenous symbols – a painting of Gauguin's Tahitian women, a poster of Sitting Bull surrounded by a psychedelic halo, and an advertisement for a Mayan play. Stitched together, these symbols attest to Dave's cultural and genealogical alienation and betray Dave's desire to reconnect with his First Nations' identity. These symbols form a surrogate narrative for Dave's unrecoverable past. Speaking with his adoptive father before making the decision to return to the reserve, Dave compares his three years in Kinogamish as "a hole in his head,, echoing his biological father's fatal wound during the hunting accident and his own amnesia.

If "brodeur' activates the image of someone looking for a missing thread, it can also evoke a mispronunciation of the English word "brother," a marker of filiation, community, and family line. This borrowing from English is not uncommon in Quebec's parlance wherein French is often peppered with Anglo-Saxon transplants. The surname "Brodeur" stems from the play *Hamlet le Malécite* (*Hamlet the Maliseet*) that served as a starting point for *Mesnak*. In the play written by Yves Sioui Durand and Jean-Frédéric Messier, Dave is unaware of his family history and finds himself involved in an incestuous relationship with his half-sister Osalic. In *Mesnak*, Dave and Osalic are no longer related and it is Osalic and her brother Léo (Charles Buckell) who are devoured by an incestuous love that Dave interrupts when he sets foot on the reserve. Despite this change between the play and the film, Dave continues to carry this patronymic sign of

abject filiation (brodeur-brother) which he performs metonymically in *Mesnak* for the community's tortured kinship.

This tortured kinship results in large part from Canada's Indian Act, the body of laws though which the government enacts its power on First Peoples. The Indian Act regulates nearly every aspect of First Nations' lives and determines, as I will examine at length in chapter 3, who is "Status Indian," according to an ensemble of rules that have fluctuated over time to better serve the Act's extinction project. Throughout these changes, however, the Indian Act has remained constant in one matter: its systematic attack on First Nations women and children. The Indian Act contains provisions, for example, that deprived, until recently, First Nations women from the right to pass on Indian Status (that is, federal recognition) to their children. The forced sterilization of First Nations women in parts of Canada, the Residential School Systems and the social services' placement en masse of First Nations children in settler families are all part of these targeted attacks on the matriarchal structures and the very fabric of First Nations' families.

The characters in *Mesnak* all bear the scars of the *Indian Act*'s relentless targeting of First Nations' kinship and communities and the film's first images of the reserve clearly show traces of this violence. The camera captures an Alcoholic Anonymous meeting in the Kinogamish community center, lingering on the faces of the recovering alcoholics who share tales of ultimate isolation and otherness. One participant (Réal Jr. Leblanc) speaks, his voice heavy with guilt, of a drunken episode during which he left his friend outside during in the middle of a harsh winter night only to find him frozen to death the following day. The other participants' reaction to this account of an involuntary

fratricide is telling: they recognize the man's dispossession and his incapacity to form bonds and protect loved ones amid the violence of the reserve. Following the man's horrific testimonial of loss and shame, Claude St-Onge rises and proceeds to make a marriage proposal to David's mother Gertrude. The timing is incongruous but, as he makes his demand, St-Onge summons this A.A. community as witnesses and asks them to help and support Gertrude and himself in their new life together. That Claude and Gertrude seal their engagement before a group of people so visibly hurting and scarred is telling of the entire community's tortured familial and communal ties. The Kinogamish community's capacity to form filial bonds has been violently interrupted and children are left to fend for themselves while parents are either absent or broken: Osalic and Leo are siblings and possessive lovers; Claude St-Onge killed his bride-to-be's first husband; Dave's memories of his family are like "a hole in the head" while Gertrude is poisoned by self-hatred.

Mesnak's characters struggle to love and form bonds in the context of genocidal policies that have targeted the relational fabric of First Nations' communities. Devastating policies such as the residential schools were devised to break the transmission of memory, language, and culture. For more than 130 years, First Nations, Inuit and Metis children were violently taken from their communities and forced to attend these institutions. The stated goal of Canada's eighty residential schools was removal, isolation and assimilation.[49] Violence and abuse were rampant in these schools as demonstrated by the testimonials presented at the ongoing Truth and Reconciliation

---

[49] See Anishnabe documentary filmmaker Kevin Papatie traces the dramatic effect of residential schools in his movie *Abinodjic Madjinakini* (The Amendment). In the span of four generations, Papatie demonstrates the loss of Anishnabe language and culture. Web: http://wapikoni.tv/medias/fiche/movie/96

Commission on Indian Residential Schools in Canada. There, former pupils have been and continue to speak of the schools' multigenerational ravages which left many with a fundamental incapacity to form trusting bonds that *Mesnak* labours to illuminate. In her movie *Les Enfants Perdus* (2007) Atikamekw filmmaker Dalhya Newashish, a participant in the Wapikoni Mobile[50] project, describes the survivors' pain, their cultural dispossession and emotional alienation, as the "syndrome du pensionnat" or the residential school syndrome. In her short film, two survivors of the residential school system describe how upon being parachuted back into their communities after years in the residential school system, they found themselves incapable of forming familial relationships or love without violence. An elder recalls that he did not know how to be a father or how to "hold a child in his arms," while another speaks of the anger that prevented him from holding and reassuring his dying mother. He says: "When I pushed her arms away, I knew I was suffering from Residential school syndrome."

Mesnak channels this deep trauma and the multigenerational devastation that the Indian Act and its ramifications imposed on First Nations communities. Dave's encounter with Osalic dramatizes the tremendous difficulty of forming loving bonds in a space devised as part of a genocidal project. Their first encounter takes place on the ceremonial territory near the riverbanks outside of Kinogamish where Dave has set up camp next to an abandoned Shaputuan (a large traditional tent). Osalic has come to the river to perform a cleansing ritual involving the burning of sacred herbs. As Dave and Osalic spend an idyllic day exploring the forest and rivers that surround Kinogamish, Sioui Durand's film

[50] The Wapikoni Mobile, a project started by NFB film-maker Manon Barbeau, is a mobile studio that stops around First Nations' reserves and provides the tools and know-how to young First Nations' filmmakers.

captures the landscape's rugged beauty and its serenity stands in stark contrast with the dark, cramped feeling of the reserve shots that follow. These contrasting images suggest that the unspoiled quality of the ceremonial and ancestral lands that surround the reservation indicate a space where promises of love and filiation may still exist. Indeed, Osalic and Dave's developing love story seem to locate a possibility for renewal and futurity in a reconnection with nature and ancestral practices. Osalic, showing the river's flowing waters to Dave, describes how she longs to go to "the territories of the elders" where one "is still free to be an Innu." Later in the movie, Dave and Osalic devise a plan to leave together to find these ancestral territories and start anew.

Sioui Durand quickly dispels this promise of futurity with a particularly brutal scene between Osalic, Leo and Dave. Osalic, hopeful and decided, has returned to the dilapidated house she shares with Leo to pack up for her journey to the ancestral territories. As she rummages for clothes, a hunting rifle, and ammunitions to survive in the woods, Leo wakes up from his drunken stupor and realizes that he is about to lose the only person with whom he has a meaningful, yet toxic relationship. Leo, following Osalic from one room to the next, tries to convince her to stay and, while she initially refuses to hear him, Osalic finally relents, demonstrating the extent of her incapacity to break free of this destructive filial bond. When Dave later comes by to pick Osalic up for their journey, he finds her in bed with Leo. Dave and Leo fight and as they both reach for the rifle, Dave shoots it accidentally. No one is hurt but the scene marks the end of Osalic and Dave's budding relationship and the promise of renewal it carried. This scene echoes the supposed hunting accident that claimed Dave's father's life and similarly ended the

promise of community renewal that Dave's father embodied through his affiliation with the Red Power movement.

As *Mesnak* suggests, renewal was foreclosed in many ways when Dave's father was killed. Dave's adoption outside of Kinogamish after his father's murder marked the loss of two generations. Dave's adoption is representative of what is now known as the "sixties scoop," a governmental assimilation policy that left where the residential school system took off in the 1960s and for the next three decades. The federal government modified the Indian Act in 1951 to enable "provincial child welfare authorities to extend their operations to Indian reserves" (Lawrence 112). According to the statistics collected by the Department of Indian Affairs, an alarmingly high number of children –close to 5% of all Status Indians at the time– were placed in foster care between 1960 and 1990 (Lawrence 113). According to Patrick Johnston and Margaret Lawrence who studied the sixties scoop, the system:

> [D]evalued Aboriginal culture by not recognizing and using traditional Aboriginal systems of child protection, made judgments about child care based on dominant Canadian norms that ignored Native practices in child rearing, overemphasizing the importance of material wealth as part of the "best interests of the child," and persistently used non-Aboriginal foster and adoptive placements. (RCAP 26)

This massive intervention is a reflection of the same colonial attitudes that fueled the residential school system and envisioned the end of First Nations as nations and cultures through the implementation of policies that systematically targeted clan and family structures.

Settler colonialism and the *Indian Act*'s status system have transformed the First Nations' body into an instrument of violence, a weapon turned against oneself. *The*

Indian Act forces impossible decisions on Native American bodies: to be, or exist, as First Nations among (and despite) ongoing settler state violence; or, as a result of the dismantlement of the status system, not to be, and thus disappear into Canada's body politic? This fundamental question echoes Hamlet's famous meditation and is articulated by *Mesnak*'s characters throughout the movie. For Dave, Gertrude, Osalic and the others, the response to this meditation lies between these two non-choices. They live in a state of obstinate and violent survival. To borrow from First Nations hip hop group War Party: "Genocide makes [them] live [their] lives deadly."[51] It is this state of "deadly life" that makes *Mesnak's* characters truly contemporary Shakespearian figures according to Yves Sioui Durand (Mesnak Press kit).

Yves Sioui Durand channels this state of deadly life through the figure of Mesnak the gigantic prehistoric-looking snapping turtle that dwells in Kinogamish's ponds and forests and that acts in this filmic adaptation as the ghost of Dave's father. Sioui Durand first introduces Mesnak in a flashback scene that recalls in impressionist images the hunting trip in which Dave's father was shot. The camera captures in blurry shades of grey a hunting scene gone wrong and shows us the young child who witnessed it all. The hunting scene marks the end of the father, the fall of a leader, and the eventual banishment of the son from Kinogamish. This flashback sequence is quickly followed by a close-up of Mesnak hissing at the viewers, her guttural warning, incongruous with her passive and slow demeanor creating a chilling effect. Turtles are understood in many Indigenous communities as messengers between the world of the spirits and the material

---

[51] See War Party, « Feelin' Reserved », *Greatest Natives from the North*, prod. Rex Smallboy, 2003. http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3gvma_war-party-feelin-reserved_news

world, acting as constant reminders of the connection that exists between humans and nature. By putting the shot of Mesnak's menacing stance right after the image of the hunting scene, Sioui Durand echoes the angry ghost of Hamlet's father.

The snapping turtle is indigenous to Quebec where it is known as the "tortue hargneuse" or the belligerent turtle because of its tendency to inflict deep biting wounds when threatened. The snapping turtle's apparent aggressiveness is partly explained by its vulnerability. Its long snake-like neck prevents the turtle from fully retracting into its inadequately small shell, leaving the turtle exposed to predators. Mesnak is not only the ghost of the slain father: it is also the symbol of Kinogamish, a community exposed to settler state's eroding forces. Like the reservation's borders that provide little protection against violence, Mesnak is exposed, in a permanent state of self-defense.

Hamlet le Braconneur

DAVE BRODEUR*:* Je sais pas comment tu fais pour vivre ici.
OSALIC: Moi non plus. [52]

In *Mesnak*, Dave's body contains and activates the violent forces that shape the reserve. It is indeed on his body, understood here as Allen Feldman does, as the "terminal locus of power" that the film articulates its central questions about kinship, community and futurity (Feldman 178). Feldman, who examines in his work how Irish prisoners deployed their own bodies as political tools, writes:

> [The body is] fetishized by the exchanges between antagonistic forces that require a fixed body in order to become present to each other through a shared terrain. The body conjeals [sic] the respective practices and codes of oppositional forces… (Feldman 178)

[52] DAVE BRODEUR: I don't know how you can live here / OSALIC: Me neither. (my translation)

Dave brings with him the threat of assimilation and cultural alienation of the outside world. He also activates all the internalized oppression, sexism and racism that centuries of gendered and racializing colonial policies have fostered in First Nations communities. The forces that threaten Mesnak and that articulate the deadly life of the reserve are particularly apparent in/on Dave Brodeur's body. Harel's literary figure of the "braconnier identitaire," which translates somewhat unsatisfactorily as "identity poacher" helps explicate Dave Brodeur's elucidatory power. As in Michel de Certeau's formulations, poaching loses its pejorative connotation in Harel's work and is reinvested instead with nobler performative qualities. Harel describes this figure as one who ventures on land from which he or she has been dispossessed and uses this intrusion as a tactic to reclaim, destabilize and illuminate "habitats at the border of antagonistic worlds" (64). Harel continues at length here:

> Braconner, c'est se situer en un lieu où l'on s'expose à être piégé, à devenir, par un subit retournement de situation, celui qui est chassé et qui, pour cette raison, ruse avec la loi à ses risques et périls… Le Braconnage est à la fois rusé et frontal … le braconnier joue sur le territoire de l'autre, de même qu'il se situe sur le terrain stratégique de l'affrontement.[53] (63)

Harel proposes an interesting recasting of the "braconnier" not as a criminal figure but as a revelatory one. Feldman argues that the body as the terminal locus of power can also redirect and reverse power. To illustrate his point, Feldman analyzes the tactics deployed by Irish political prisoners to reposition their tortured bodies as a space where violence was converted in resistance. The prisoners recoded and reconfigured their bodies as

---

[53] « To poach is to situate oneself in a place where one is exposed to being caught; where a sudden reversal of the situation can transform the hunter into the hunted. For this reason, the poacher plays with the law at his/her own risk… Poaching is both cunning and frontal… the poacher plays on the other's territory and situates him or herself on the terrain of confrontation » (my translation)

weapons of resistance, forcing performances of violence in the open. The “braconnier” performs a similar recoding of his/her body when he/she intrudes on a contested territory. The “braconnier” has been violently dispossessed and has seen this dispossession normalized and hidden by setter-state discourses of progress and development. In retaliation, the “braconnier” forces open performances of power when he/she is caught encroaching on contested territory. His or her arrest or punishment becomes a performance that reaffirms new occupants’ narratives of conquest and rightful belonging. In other words, by challenging new occupants to police this contested territory, the “braconnier” illuminates the violent power structure that sustains their land usurpation.

“Braconnage” is multidirectional in Harel’s work. According to Harel, First Nations as well as non-First Nations can perform “braconnage” by intruding on lands from which they feel they have been dispossessed, but this potentially overlooks how intruding on First Nations’s land in the case of settler “braconnier” is a continuation of the settler-state project rather than an interruption of its logic. I argue that by complicating it with historical circumstances and discourses of power, the figure of the “braconnier” reveals important aspects of Dave Brodeur’s role in *Mesnak.* Dave performs as a “braconnier” in complex and contradictory ways throughout the film. In Montreal, Dave accidentally collides with a homeless Native American man (Florent Vollant) who instantly recognizes Dave as one of his people. The man addresses Dave in Innu as he would a long-lost son, telling Dave that they share the the same First Nations positionality and advising him to be careful. Dave, who doesn’t remember who he is, who doesn’t feel legible as a First Nations individual, is instantly interpellated as a First Nations man living in the Other’s territory.

Dave's role as a "braconnier" is more potently expressed when he sets foot in Kinogamish. There, he is instantly recognized and positioned within the settler state structure. When Dave stops at Kinogamish's gas station, for example, the cashier first addresses him in Innu and when Dave responds in French, the cashier and customers laugh and apologize for having taken him for one of theirs. The cashier then asks if he has "his Indian card," a proof of status within the reservation system that Dave doesn't possess. From the initial moment of recognition, Dave's failure to master the reserve's codes quickly positions him as an intruder from the outside who encroaches on the community.

Dave is further positioned as a "braconnier" in the scene that immediately follows his first encounter with his birth mother Gertrude. The encounter itself is brutal: Dave finds Gertrude lying in her basement, surrounded by photos, passed out from drinking heavily after years of sobriety. The photos around Gertrude attest to her life before the hunting accident and reveal a loving mother, a young woman in love and full of promises. As Dave tries to wake his mother, she emerges from her stupor and embraces sensually her son like she would his murdered father. When Dave stops her, Gertrude rejects him violently, telling him that he has no right to judge her and that she never wanted him in the first place. Gertrude effectively positions Dave as an intruder, someone who cannot know her pain and awakens old wounds. The very same dim lighting that gave the scene's first moments a sensuous atmosphere suddenly reveals a dark basement where Gertrude has hidden her traumatic past. The intimacy of the scene's womb-like semi-darkness is violently transformed into a haunted feeling. The basement is full of ghosts, haunted by dark shadows. Gertrude's rejection further disaffiliates her son from

the community. When Dave leaves Gertrude’s house, he stumbles through the dark streets of Kinogamish, lost and visibly shaken. Kinogamish has violently expelled him through Gertrude’s rejection. A swerving pick-up truck full of drunken armed young men then passes Dave and gratuitously shoots in his direction. As he ducks to avoid being shot, Dave’s expression and movement betray the sense of panic of hunted game.

As these two examples suggest, Dave is an encroaching figure in both Quebec’s civil society and its margins. He is what F.W. Boal and Russell Murray call an “interface,” a body that physically and symbolically demarcates ethnic communities. Dave is thus a multivalent “braconnier”: he performs an act of “braconnage” when he returns to a motherland from which he was traumatically taken as a child. As the scene with Gertrude clearly demonstrates, Dave’s presence re-awakens violent wounds: the loss of Dave’s father, Gertrude’s grief and alcoholism, the violence of the provincial social services’ intervention. The twenty years or so that separate Dave’s forced departure and return to Kinogamish have changed him, exposing him to Quebec’s assimilative forces. It is thus as a bearer of Quebec culture and language that Dave returns to the reservation. In this sense, it is not so much a return as a performance of colonial domination. Dave’s body performs the pervasive effects of settler-state force: he embodies broken filiation, the interruption of cultural transmission. In this sense, Dave’s body is a violent performance for the people of Kinogamish, a symbol of abjection.

Dave performs aural “braconnage” when he speaks French in Kinogamish. He forces his interlocutor on the linguistic terrain of the settler-state. Many of the film’s characters address each other in Innu unless forced to speak French by outsiders. We hear this form of intrusion in various other modes throughout the movie. For example, the

Innu community radio forms an aural background as Chief Claude St-Onge drives through the reservation. He is returning home after a heated community meeting on his proposed forestry venture on reservation land. As he drives, the radio announcer is reading the news in Innu and, as is the case in the rest of the movie, no French subtitles are provided for the audience. Occasionally, the flux of Innu words is interrupted by one or two French words that all pertain to the eroding action of the outside world: they describe phenomena such as industrial exploitation of the forest and the negotiations between St-Onge and authorities from Quebec. Like the eroding First Nation's land base, language is an ever-receding space, a zone of collision where French words intrude into sentences in Innu.

Sioui Durand's decision to leave the Innu passages un-translated clearly locates in language another terrain of colonial violence. Despite revitalization efforts, First Nations' languages are in steady decline around Canada, a trajectory that Quebec has tried to prevent for its own language by legislating the use of French in Quebec. Indeed, Quebec's nationalism is articulated in great part around the concept of a francophone nation with a distinct cultural heritage from the rest of Canada. Language in Quebec is a policed sphere: there are laws and governmental bodies –the Charter of French Language (Bill 101), and the Office québécoise de la langue française, for example- that regulate the use of French in the province. While the Province has demonstrated a certain amount of sensitivity to First Nations' languages in the accord it signed with the Cree, Naskapi and Inuit nations, the question of language is a highly sensitive one in Quebec. Linguistic tensions certainly tainted the events in Oka in 1990 where the Mohawks have historically

adopted English as a second language rather than French despite their geographical proximity to the province's francophone majority.

Conclusion

As the first full-length commercial film made entirely in Quebec by a First Nations cast and crew, *Mesnak* performs an important intervention in defining how First Nations are represented onscreen in Quebec. While documentary films by Alanis Obomsawin and other National Film Board filmmakers like Richard Desjardins and Robert Monderie's *Le peuple invisible* (2007) or the short films produced by the Wapikoni Mobile for example,[54] have portrayed First Nations' lives onscreen, mainstream media and fiction films have either depicted reserves as damaged space isolated from a larger structure of domination, or focused on narratives of exception, that is, on stories of individual redemptions. By examining the reserve as a terrain of continuous and insidious structural domination – a space isolated from the settler-state yet largely controlled by it – *Mesnak* challenges these depictions and refuses to put the onus of bootstrapping, redemption, and healing on First Nations' individuals. Instead, *Mesnak* situates the reserve as a product of and the condition for settler state projects. This chapter's exploration of Alanis Obomsawin's *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* and Yves Sioui Durand's *Mesnak* draws from these two cinematic explorations' examination of the reserve as a space of ongoing violence to analyze the structure that subtends Quebec as a settler community. Both Obomsawin and Sioui Durand's films meditate on the ongoing obscured and naturalized violence against First Peoples that

[54] Desjardins and Monderie's film and the thousands of short movies produced by young First Nations filmmakers through the Wapikoni Mobile project are, no doubt, extremely important. However, their limited distribution and visibility in mainstream media reduces the scope of their intervention.

allow Quebec to exist as a settler community. They hold a mirror up to nature and unflinchingly show the violence that sustains settler state projects.

Chapter 3: Endurance/ Enduring Performance: First Nations Women, Diplomacy, and Sovereign Re-mappings.

> "Native women are going to raise the roof and decry the dirty house which patriarchy and racism have built on our backs." (Lee Maracle 22)

Mi'kmaq scholar Bonita Lawrence describes Canada's Indian Act as more than a body of laws. She writes: "it is a regulatory regime –a grammar– that has controlled every aspect of Indian life for more than a century […] functioning discursively to naturalize colonial worldviews" (Lawrence 3). The logic that subtends this colonial regulatory regime is at its core racist, patriarchal, and deeply violent. Despite recent attempts by some Canadian politicians to downplay the original genocidal[55] intent of the law[56], the Indian Act was created with the specific goal of bringing the so-called "Indian problem" to an end by forcibly assimilating First Nations people[57]. Duncan Campbell

---

[55] I use the word genocide as defined by Raphael Lemkin during the 1944 discussions leading to the creation of the United Nations Genocide Convention. "Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killing of all the members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aimed at the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objective of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion,, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and the lives of individuals belonging to such groups." (Lemkin in Churchill, 1994:12-13)

[56] See controversy surrounding whether or not the word "genocide" should be used at the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, Manitoba to describe the "past injustices" perpetrated by the Canadian Government on First Nations communities http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/human-rights-museum-sparks-debate-over-term-genocide-1.1400154 and http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/pamela-palmater/2013/07/human-rights-museum-or-harper-propaganda-genocide-canada-deni. Similarly, former Prime Minister Paul Martin created a commotion at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Aboriginal Residential Schools in Montreal in April 2013 when he referred to the Residential School policy as one of "cultural genocide". http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/paul-martin-accuses-residential-schools-of-cultural-genocide-1.1335199

[57] In his 2008 formal apology to First Nations peoples for the Residential School System, Prime Minister Stephen Harper used, for example, a semantic register that clearly denied the extreme violence of these schools (a "sad chapter", a "sad legacy", a "regrettable" event) that clearly undermined the violence of a state-endorsed, century-long policy of kidnapping children from their families and communities. A year

Scott, superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932 argued in support of the Indian Act:

> I want to get rid of the Indian problem. Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department: that is the whole object of this Bill. (in Leslie 114) [58]

With the Indian Act, Canada put in place a system through which it could disavow First Nations rights and sovereignty, impose reserves and the residential schools system, appropriate land, co-opt bodies, control Indigenous economies, and forcibly remove entire generations of children from their families and communities, all with the goal of eventually erasing Native spaces, languages, and cultures. To do so, the Act radically remapped richly diverse First Nations into a single category legible and controllable by the State, the "Status Indian", which is "the only category of Native person to whom a historic nation-to-nation relationship between Canada and the Indigenous people is recognized" (Lawrence 6). Crucially, under the Act, only Status Indians are allowed to live on and participate in the political life of Indian reserves in Canada today.[59] Between its creation in 1876 and the adoption of Canada's Constitution Act of 1985, various governments in place have amended the Indian Act, rendering the category of Status

---

later, Harper contended that "Canada has no history of colonialism" (Ljunggren 2009) at a press conference during a G20 summit, blatantly disavowing the apology he had delivered a year before.

[58] National Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, vol. 6810, file 470-2-3, vol. 7, pp. 55 (L3) amd 63 (n-3). For a more accessible source, see: John Leslie, The Historical Development of the Indian Act (second edition). Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Development, Treaties and Historical Research Branch, 1978) p.114

[59] That is the case unless the land is leased to them as outsiders (see Lawrence 6).

Indian increasingly restrictive in an effort to accelerate assimilation and eventually extinguish this legal category[60].

This process of assimilation was enacted in large part through laws that specifically targeted First Nations women through the imposition of patriarchal structures of governance and transmission of status. Along with the other tentacles of the Indian Act[61], these gendered laws stripped First Nations women and their children of Indian status and prevented them from residing (or even being buried) in their communities' reserves if the woman married a non-status man. A staggering number of women lost their status for marrying white men, Native-American men from the United States, Métis, Inuit, or non-recognized First Nations men[62]. Bonita Lawrence argues that this targeted attack on First Nation women "disrupted the viability of Native communities for over a century" (Lawrence 5-6). Lawrence speaks here in particular of the many matrilineal nations that were profoundly altered by the imposition of these exclusionary clauses as well as by the imposition of tribal councils that replaced clan mothers and traditional forms of governance and understandings of sovereignty with western ones. Furthermore, this profound disruption of First Nations culture which, to paraphrase Lee Maracle, was

---

[60] In "Harper Launches Major First Nations Termination Plan", Russell Diablo argues that Harper's new bills C-45, C-27, S-2 among others are a renewed attack on First Nations pre-existing rights, sovereignty and lands, an attempt to once again extinguish Aboriginal treaty rights.

[61] The Indian Act is a wide-reaching body of laws. To understand its gendered ramifications, see Bonita Lawrence and Smith; to understand its violence through the welfare system, see Shewell. To read on Residential Schools, see Regan *Unsettling the Settler Within*. For an introduction to the legal aspects of the Indian Act see Renée Dupuis' work as well as the guide *Mythes et réalités sur les peuples autochtones* by Pierre Lepage.

[62] Lawrence writes: "Taking into account that for every woman who lost status and had to leave her community, all of her descendants also lost status and for the most part were permanently alienated from Native culture, the scale of cultural genocide caused by gender discrimination becomes massive. Indeed when Bill C-31 was passed in 1985, there were only 350,000 status Indians left in Canada (Holmes 1987, 8)." Approximately 100 000 individuals regained status with Bill C-31 by 1995. (Lawrence 9)

enacted on Native women's backs, created destructive forms of internalized sexism within First Nations communities, further marginalizing First Nations women.

First Nations women have waged long and arduous battles against the Indian Act in court, through artistic productions, and through forms of grassroots activism currently exemplified by the Idle No More movement. In the legal sphere, Bill C-31 and the recent Bill C-3 have allowed more than a hundred thousand excluded women and children to regain their Indian status. Despite these important victories, the Indian Act remains a colonial law and the settler governments that enact it continue to erode First Nations cultures and communities. As Taiaiake Alfred and others argue, the Indian Act cannot be part of a discourse of liberation because it cannot be amended enough to undo its racist, colonialist, and patriarchal roots (Alfred 2009). Fundamentally, the Indian Act serves the goal of extinction through assimilation and thus cannot coherently accommodate such concepts as Indigenous futurity, sovereignty or self-governance. Even if the official discourse concerning Canada's relationship with First Nations communities has evolved from one of overt assimilation to one of recognition and accommodation – a discourse no less problematic according to a number of scholars among whom Glenn Coulthard and Elizabeth Povinelli[63]– the settler colonial project rests on, demands even, the perpetual erosion of First Nations communities.[64] Thus, Canada's settler colonial project as delineated in the Indian Act can imagine only two possible structural positions for First

---

[63] See Glen S. Coulthard's essay « Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Recognition in Canada. » (2007), and Elizabeth Povinelli's *The Cunning of Recognition* (2002).

[64] Recent policies voted by Stephen Harper's conservative government (the Omnibus Bill C-45, for example) demonstrate that under the pretense of modernizing the Indian Act to allow for greater individual rights among First Nations, the settler colonial state continues to erode and threaten First Nations' sovereign rights.

Nations peoples: within settler society's body politic through assimilation, or outside of it, living –enduring– under a body of law that constantly erodes their rights and cultures.

This chapter puts in conversation two performances by First Nations women that deploy the performative language of endurance to critique and destabilize both Canada's Indian Act and, more generally, the country's settler-colonial project as enacted by both federal and provincial powers. These performances embody and meditate on what it means to endure as First Nations peoples, and particularly as First Nations women, against a settler-colonial project whose intended trajectory culminates with the end of First Nations' endurance. I employ the word endurance here to describe performances that stage or foreground the testing of a performer's physical, emotional, and/or spiritual resources; performances that insist on and render visible the performer's presence under trying circumstances. One of the performances I examine is a monumental visual art piece entitled *Indian Act* (2000-03) and the extensive community-based participatory process undertaken by Anishinaabe artist Nadia Myre to create this piece, which rewrites the entire text of the Indian Act with minuscule red and white beads. The other performance is *La Marche Amun* a long-distance march between Quebec City and Ottawa performed in the spring of 2010 by Michele Taina Audette, Viviane Michel, and a group of First Nations women to protest against and educate on the Indian Act's gendered discrimination.

While these two performances operate in different spheres, I focus in this chapter on the ensemble of questions that emerge from their common exploration of endurance in the form –endurance walking and extensive beading– and content of their political and artistic interventions. I argue that *La Marche Amun* and Nadia Myre's *Indian Act* wield

endurance as a decolonizing performative tool, as a way to illuminate and denaturalize the Indian Act's logic of assimilation and its stated goal of bringing First Nations culture, sovereignty, and communities to the end of their endurance. Both projects stage and perform enduring presence as a way to un-settle the settler state's national narrative that depends, as we have seen, on the continual erasure of First Nations presence and, more particularly, of First Nations women's presence.

In deploying and staging First Nations women's endurance, I contend that *La Marche Amun* and Nadia Myre's *Indian Act* seize the grammar of extinction and erasure of the settler colonial state in order to perform its effects and mirror its mechanisms for a settler audience whose sense of self is articulated, as Taiaiake Alfred notes, on "a self-congratulatory version of Canadian history" that understands Canada itself as a "benevolent peacemaker" (in Regan ix). In seizing and performing this grammar, Myre and the women of *La Marche Amun* illuminate how the settler-colonial project aims to erase First Nations presence while conjugating its own narrative as "indigenous" to the Americas. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's aggressive rebranding of Canada during his two mandates has reinforced this narrative on the international stage. At a G20 summit in 2009, one year only after his public apology to First Nations people for the Residential School System, Harper obfuscated the country's genesis –the massive dispossession of First Nations people– and positioned settler-Canadians as Indigenous to the land when he stated at a press conference that contrary to other G20 countries, "Canada has no history of colonialism" (Ljunggren, 2009). In the following years, Harper's government injected 28 million dollars to mark and celebrate the bicentennial of the War of 1812, glorifying

this all-but-forgotten conflict with the Americans rather than Canada's colonial project as the founding condition of Canada's genesis (Goodman, 2013).

Likewise, led by Premier Pauline Marois, Quebec is currently performing a similar rebranding gesture in its efforts to establish a Charter of Quebec Values.[65] The Charter, which aims to secularize the state and establish a set of core-values that would define Quebec as a host society to newcomers, problematically naturalizes a narrow definition of a "we", marking the Euro-French speaking majority as indigenous to the territory and erasing once again First Nations presence. The Charter bans any visible display of religious affiliation for employees of the State and operates in a highly gendered manner that targets in particular Muslim women who wear the hijab. Without deploying the same register of structural violence as the Indian Act, the Charter emulates its gendered discrimination in alarming ways, demonstrating that the settler state's mechanism of erasure and gendered discrimination is continuously operational, re-conjugated in forms that support the settler-state's trajectory. In mirroring the structural violence that has historically eroded First Nations people's rights, Myre and the women from *La Marche Amun* challenge the viewers to consider structural violence against First Nations people not as a distant tragedy or a past event, but as the product of settler colonialism and as a condition for its continuation.

The notion of First Nations' enduring presence that I examine in this chapter is not, nor has it ever been, static: it is continuously inventive, resistant, performing a political intervention against the violence of the settler-colonial assimilatory policies and processes. As Glen Coulthard argues in his work on Reconciliation politics in Canada:

---

[65] See http://www.nosvaleurs.gouv.qc.ca/medias/pdf/Charter.pdf.

"First Nations people have always resisted colonialism and fought back" (talk, 2011). Canada exists in constant tension with the indomitable endurance of First Nations communities, a resistant presence that is too often and conveniently re-branded as "teetering on the edge of extinction" in settler-colonial discourse (Vowel, Dec 4).

> To hear non-Indigenous people tell it, we've been teetering on the edge of extinction since not too long after Contact…[I]n every age the contemporary opinion is focused on the inherent inability of Indigenous peoples to survive in the supposedly modern world. Whether this belief is held by those who mourn our slow disappearance, or by those who wish we'd hurry up and vanish already, our continued presence must indeed be puzzling. Ours is the slowest apocalypse in human history it seems, because over 500 years later, millions of Indigenous peoples continue to exist all throughout the Americas. (Vowel, apihtawikosisan.com, 4 Dec. 2013)

Chelsea Vowel, a Metis woman who writes on Law, language revitalization, and First Nation education, does not dispute here the tremendous difficulties faced by First Nations peoples but invites us instead to reflect on how the notion of endurance can be deployed to serve settler narrative rather than to illuminate First Nations resistance.

Enduring presence in Nadia Myre's *Indian Act* and in *La Marche Amun* is a gesture of self-representation that defines and enacts Indigenous sovereignty as a site of resistance against western land-based, nation-bound definitions of sovereignty that have historically served to dispossess First Nations peoples. Vine Deloria Jr., Michelle Raheja, Jolene Rickard, Joanne Barker, Robert Warrior, and Taiaiake Alfred among others argue that Indigenous sovereignty is as an open ended process, operative in a constellation of spheres –the visual, the intellectual, the aural- that include and exceed the political and legal spheres. Jolene Rickard and Michele Raheja, for example, speak of visual and cinematic Indigenous sovereignty, while Robert Allen Warrior locates in his close

analysis of Native literary and non-fiction works a form of intellectual sovereignty. These authors understand sovereignty as self-representation, as a form of political and cultural power that operates within and simultaneously exceeds western definitions. These spaces are not only territorial, though they are also that, but also symbolic, political, visual, artistic, intellectual, and spiritual. Michelle Raheja writes of Indigenous visual sovereignty: "this strategy offers up the possibility not only of engaging and deconstructing white-generated representations of Indigenous peoples and […] intervenes in larger discussion of Native American sovereignty by locating and advocating for Indigenous cultural and political power both within and outside of Western legal jurisprudence" (Raheja 193-194). In this chapter, I contend that Nadia Myre and the women from *La Marche Amun* perform sovereign acts through their foregrounding of presence, their articulation of regenerative practices based on Indigenous intellectual and cultural traditions such as beading and Indigenous modes of diplomacy, and their creation of visual landscapes that challenge current settler cartographies be they symbolic or material.

I begin with a thick description of Myre's *Indian Act* and *La Marche Amun*. Then, drawing from scholars Patrick Anderson and Kathy O'Dell' works on endurance art, I locate how these two performative works' deployment of endurance resists and challenges the current theorization of endurance art. Putting in conversation the works of Gilles Havard on First Nations diplomacy and Taiaiake Alfred, Jolene Rickard and other First Nations scholars' reflections on sovereignty, I then trace the diplomatic work performed by *La Marche Amun* and Myre's *Indian Act* and interrogate its decolonizing possibilities in the particular context of Quebec's nationalist discourse.

Endurance / Enduring Performances

The imposing scale of *Indian Act* by Anishinaabe artist Nadia Myre strikes the viewer first: the piece is made of fifty-six white letter-size canvases striated with white and red[66]. With these colors, Myre instantly activates a semantic field heavy with racial implications. While the color white evokes the settler-community, red stands as a multivalent symbol for Indigenous bodies. Often deployed in racist epithets, the color red is present in many First Nations' cosmology and it has served as a rallying symbol for the Red Power movement. Each of Myre's canvas is mounted on a black mat and while some canvases are clearly finished, others, roughly attached onto the mats with masking tape, appear to have been voluntarily left in various stages of completion. The entire piece –its black frames arranged in two neat rows– demands space, enough room to embrace the piece entirely from a distance. At Canada's National Art Gallery where it was presented as part of the 2013 exhibit *Sakahàn*, *Indian Act* occupied an entire room, spreading over three walls.

An intimate encounter with each of the fifty-six canvases reveals the piece's complex intervention. Zooming in, the viewer discovers that each of Myre's canvases is an actual page of the legal text of Canada's Indian Act. In a veritable feat of patience, Myre transcribed the text on cloth canvas and, over the course of three years with the help of more than 230 volunteers across Canada she covered the words of the law with minuscule white beads using a traditional beading technique called *manidoominensikaan* by Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) people *(*Tougas 18). Myre used equally small red beads to

[66] To see images of Indian Act: www.http://www.nadiamyre.com/Nadia_Myre/portfolio/ or http://artmur.com/en/artists/nadia-myre/

cover the text's background, calling the viewer's attention to the document's topography, to its negative space. In total, more than 800,000 beads were used to (un)write and undo this Indian Act.

Myre's piece re-orients the viewer's gaze away from the words of the law –the white beads cover the text and render it illegible– and focuses our attention instead on the background, the very material surfaces on which the law enacts its power, that is, on the canvas that acts here as a metaphor for the bodies, territories, and communities of First Nations people. The red emerges here marking first and continual occupation of the landscape, rendering this presence visible and challenging to Canada's national narrative of two founding nations: the British and the French. The color evokes the red stripes that flank Canada's maple leaf on the country's national flag lending Myre's re-mapping intervention instant evocative power. In rendering the text opaque and foregrounding First Nations' presence, Myre symbolically unravels the Indian Act's logic of erasure and assimilation. Her piece surveys a landscape of enduring presence, a presence that she does not delineate as existing on the margins of (white) settler society but as forming its very basis, its necessary condition.

Myre's singular piece is at once an object of symmetric beauty, a mnemonic document, and a disorienting map that denaturalizes the Indian Act. As if surveying the unsettling map created by Nadia Myre's *Indian Act*, a group of First Nations women completed in 2010 the *Marche Amun* a long-distance protest march to demand an end to the gendered discrimination contained in the Indian Act. The group of women led by Michele Taina Audette and Viviane Michele, two Innu women from Quebec's Côte-Nord region, walked more than 500 kilometers, departing from Wendake, the Huron Wendat

community near Quebec City, to arrive in Ottawa a month or so later. En route from the province's to the nation's capital, the women of *La Marche Amun* crossed an ensemble of gendered exclusionary lines, or what Mishuana Goeman of the Seneca nation calls the "tumultuous geographies constructed around differing and constantly shifting power structures" (Goeman 1). These tumultuous lines separate reservations and settler communities, rural and urban landscapes, and First Nations communities themselves. The women also traversed lines that organize competing sovereignty discourses: indeed, Quebec's nationalist narrative is both territorial and tied to a minority narrative that seeks to indigenize the French-speaking Quebecois (placing it alongside First Nations people) and minimize its colonial history. Quebec's idea of nation is organized in part around a concept of territory yet the province stands on un-ceded First Nations' territories. These lines, some invisible and some clearly delineated, have all historically marginalized First Nations people and most particularly, as I will now discuss, First Nations women.

The women of *La Marche Amun* used their moving bodies to patiently mark, cross, and illuminate the lines of gendered exclusion created and naturalized by the Indian Act. *La Marche Amun* march pointed to the ways in which the Indian Act's spatial politics target First Nation women and place them among the most vulnerable to violence and dispossession in Canada. Currently, First Nations, Inuit, and Metis women are five to eight times more likely to die as a result of violence than other women in Canada[67]. Their death is also more likely to be dismissed by the justice system as the 600 cases of missing

---

[67] See the Native Women of Canada's report:
http://www.nwac.ca/files/download/NWAC_3E_Toolkit_e.pdf
As of 2010, NWC had documented 582 cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women in Canada and demanded a public inquiry on the matter. Despite these staggering statistics and studies pointing to systemic racism in the police and judicial systems and despite mounting pressure on Canada by the United Nations, the situation remains largely unchanged.

and murdered Aboriginal women that remain unresolved or under-investigated in the country clearly demonstrate. James Anaya, the Unites Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recently presented a damning report on the state of violence and the lack of justice faced by Aboriginal women in Canada, demanding a public inquest on the question. At the moment of writing this chapter, Canada continues to refuse such an inquest.

La Marche Amun protested against the exclusion of more than 150 000 First Nations women and their descendants from their communities as a result of the gender discrimination contained in the Indian Act's regulations surrounding Indian status. Amun, Michele Taina Audette's oldest son counted as one of the excluded until 2010 when Audette, Michel and other First Nations women successfully lobbied the government for change. This victory follows hard-won court battles by Sandra Lovelace (Maliseet), Jeannette Corbiere-Lavell (Wikwemikong), and Yvonne Bédard (Six Nations), among others, whose decades-long lawsuits to reclaim their status led to the landmark 1985 Bill C-31, which amended the Indian Act to correct some of its most discriminatory clauses[68].

La Marche Amun, then, is part of tradition of political work by First Nations women that can be described as one of endurance and persistence against a government that deployed inertia as yet another attack on First Nations women. In *Quel Canada pour les Autochtones*, human rights lawyer Renée Dupuis describes Canada's strategy with regards to its obligation towards First Nations communities as one of deliberate stalling

[68] Bill C-31 (1985) "An Act to Amend the Indian Act" allowed women who married Status Indians from other band to retain their own band membership. It allowed for the limited reinstatement of Indians who lost or were denied status because of the gender discrimination contained in the Indian Act. In 2011, Bill C-3 corrected the gendered discrimination contained in Bill C-31 "limited reinstatement" clause, allowing the grandchildren of women who had lost their Indian status through marriage to regain it.

(37). This apathy, she suggests, forces First Nations communities to use the judicial system as a way to protect their rights, transforming what should be a political relationship between Canada and various First Nations into a judicial one. This lack of political will on the part of Canada, this deliberate strategy of letting things fester (as they did for First Nations women or in the land dispute that led to the Oka Crisis, for example), constitutes yet another test of First Nations communities' endurance. Ghislain Picard, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador argues that the federal and provincial governments' strategies is a real deterrent to the development of First Nations communities who cannot invest in their future if all their energy and resources are spent struggling (Bouchard, Cardinal, & Picard 21, 87). Picard alludes here to the ways in which the settler-state benefits from maintaining First Nations' communities in a relationship of endurance against the eroding effects of its political inertia. In preventing, or at the very least slowing down First Nations self-governance and development, the settler state solidifies its narrative in which First Nations communities are inherently incapable of governing themselves in sustainable ways and thus need settler state's paternal oversight.

The notion of endurance is central to Nadia Myre' *Indian Act* and *La Marche Amun;* that is, both projects stage and foreground endurance as a structural positioning and as a performance strategy. As a long-distance walk *La Marche Amun* demands stamina: the women walked more than 500 kilometers between Quebec's and the nation's capitals, braving the elements, and facing thirst, fatigue, blisters, stiff joints, the waves of flies that appear around June in Quebec, not to mention the probable indifference or hostility of the populations they tried to inform and educate. The march demanded a

sustained engagement on the part of the women –a slow and reflective rhythm anchored in the land, its contours and landscapes; a rhythm that refused the catchphrases, quick fixes, or superficial readings often deployed by governments who may, in some cases, be willing to recognize past colonial wrongs, but who are recalcitrant to admit to their present complicity in settler colonialism.

The Indian Act radically remapped First Nations territories, communities, and families over many generations, breaking ties and separating children from their parents. The law restrained mobility requiring Status Indians to carry permits to move outside the reserve from the late 1880s until the 1940s, preventing children enrolled at Residential Schools from returning home during school recess, and refusing to let members of communities divided by provincial or national borders travel freely on their land. To walk the land, therefore, is in itself a political gesture, the exercise of a sovereign right of occupation. As Ghislain Picard argues "land is at the center of First Nations cultural and political sovereignty" (Bouchard, Cardinal, Picard, 93). While the Federal government and First Nations have signed numbered treaties over the central part of the country, no treaties have been signed over a significant part of the provinces of Quebec and British Columbia, of the Northern Territories, and the Maritime provinces. As Canada's highest courts have recently recognized, the First Nations who occupied these lands, having never ceded their territories, thus continue to hold ancestral rights over them (see Delgamuukw case in 1997[69], for example). Walking, occupying the land, thus contests

---

[69] See BC Treaty Commission's summary of the Delgamuukw case at: http://www.bctreaty.net/files/pdf_documents/delgamuukw.pdf

lines of exclusion and affirms ancestral rights that have never been extinguished and that the courts have finally recognized in the last 40 years.

The notion of territory is central to both Nadia Myre's *Indian Act* and to the *Marche Amun*. *Indian Act* performs as a land survey and has, at first glance, the appearance of a strange topographical map. Canada's landscape is denaturalized in Myre's map where red suddenly dominates white, and where the territory overshadows the laws that regulate it. Myre calls attention to the ways in which settler-colonialism and the Indian Act have organized Canada's landscape along exclusionary (white) lines. These are the very lines that the women of *La Marche Amun* survey on foot, illuminating and challenging the discourse that organizes Canada and Quebec as settler communities.

A month-long walk only begins to physically and politically reclaim a land marked by these exclusionary clauses and to survey the ramifications of the Indian Act's wide-reaching repercussions and modes of thinking. Indeed, First Nations women have had to struggle not only against the settler-state but also against their own communities in their quest to regain Indian status. First Nations leaders and communities have generally reacted negatively to Bill C-31 and other First Nations women's judicial victories against the Indian Act, which allowed excluded families to regain their status. This can be explained in part by the cultural and economic pressure that these new band members may put on communities already struggling financially and culturally. More importantly though, First Nations women's victories illuminate what Frantz Fanon has described in his work as internalized colonialism; that is the ways in which the gendered discrimination and patriarchal structures of exclusion imposed by colonial forces have become naturalized and read as "traditional" by First Nations communities themselves.

Lawrence writes: “a central issue shaping the response to Bill C-31, however, is the manner in which it has become an accepted aspect of Native Identity that if Native women marry white men they should forfeit their right, and their children’s right, to be band members and to live in the community” (Lawrence 15). As Michele Taina Audette explained in a radio interview, such reactions could be found in First Nations communities as well as in settler communities: “even if things are slowly changing, there is a systemic and lateral discrimination against First Nations women in our communities and many women told me that they were still singled out for having married outside of the community” (16 April 2012). Audette reports encountering discourses in which the colonial practice of regulating status was either misguidedly read as a traditional custom, or the women who lost their status were judged as having somehow betrayed their communities. *La Marche Amun* aimed to illuminate and destabilize these forms of internalized colonialism in the communities that they traversed, challenging the received notion that the exclusion of women and children was ever a traditional organizing force of First Nations societies.

There are no easy and quick solutions for a body of law that has become an internalized grammar. Given its internalization, there are very few risk-free spaces in which to explore and dismantle this wide-reaching regulatory grammar. The Indian Act regulates the organization of the intimate and the communal, the access to health and education programs, to land, clean water, resources, and, very importantly, to justice. Until very recently, First Nations individuals were exempted from the Canadian Human Rights Acts (CHRA) and thus had almost no recourse against the effects of this all encompassing grammar, no possibility to file an official complaint against the Indian Act

as a violation of their human rights. It is only in 2008 that the CHRA was amended to repeal section 67 which affected First Nations people governed by the Indian Act, "shielding the federal government and First Nations communities governments from complaints of discrimination relating to actions arising from or pursuant to the Indian Act" (Hurley, 2008). The undoing of this regulatory regime is one that requires time and vigilance, the blurring of lines that have been naturalized by an oppressive body of law; all strategies deployed by Myre and the women of *La Marche Amun*. In an interview with Dana Lee Claxton, Myre meditates on this sustained practice, describing the difficulty to engage with its spiritual component without "being defined as flaky or non-scholarly". She argued that her " own experience was very physical, moving into the realm of the spiritual. The physical rhythm of beading, the space and the sound of beading became a shared act of doing" (Claxton 44). For Myre, this shared space and common doing contributed in reducing the distance, real and symbolic, between the beaders.

Quechan playwright Preston Arrow-weed refers to the phenomenon described by Myre as a form "of praying located in doing". Drawing from his own experience of walking from Fort Yuma California to Los Angeles, Arrow-Weed posits that there is a real transformative power in the reflection that arises from a sustained motion through or contact with a landscape, particularly a contested ancestral landscape (Personal interview 22 November 2013). This reflection fuels the *Marche Amun* and a number of long-distance walks by First Nations peoples that have recently or are currently taking place. Dr. Stanley Vollant (Innu) describes his five-year 6000 kilometers walking project called *Innu Meshkenu* as a journey of healing and reconnection with the culture and the land. (Vollant, http://www.innu-meshkenu.com/) The 2013 *Journey of the Nishiyuu*, in which a

group of young Cree men marched 1500 kilometers in temperatures reaching -50 Celsius to go meet Prime Minister Harper and ask him to honor his obligations has been described as a performance “that votes with its feet”. (Galloway 2013)[70]

The women of *La March Amun* slowly crossed lines that have outwardly delineated the internalized gendered grammar of settler-colonialism. This crossing performs here as a form of census, a critical mapping of the structures of exclusion that need to be dismantled. As Innu poet Josephine Bacon describes in a collection of poems entitled *Tshissinuatshitakana-Bâtons à Message* (Message Sticks), the Innu people left wooden sticks in various positions on their territory to communicate visually with other nomads who may traverse it. These sticks served as warning of dangers or illness ahead and were also invitation to share and help one another. Bacon writes that words traveled through these sticks and that through them, “speech was always in motion” (Bacon 7). Bacon employs the image of the Message Stick to describe her work as a poet but the symbol applies equally to the work performed by *La Marche Amun* whose crossing of the territory creates and invites discussion between communities who normally don’t cross path. Every discussion in which the women engaged in the communities through which they passed acts as a message stick, marking the Indian Act’s ravages and inviting help in healing them. The women of *La Marche Amun* chose to perform this critical mapping collectively, joining forces in ways that echo Nadia Myre’s visual intervention. In a document presenting her work, Nadia Myre writes:

[70] On the day of their arrival in Ottawa, Harper chose to go greet a Panda on loan from China to the Toronto Zoo instead, sparking criticism from First Nations leaders who questioned his sense of priority. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/nishiyuu-a-movement-of-cree-youth-who-voted-with-their-feet/article10327993/.

> At first, I thought I would bead all the pages myself, piece by piece. Each of the 56 pages took approximately 70 hours to bead and so after a few months Rhonda Meier, a curator I was working with a the time, suggested I invite other people to bead over the act with me (About "Indian Act").

The beading project required the collective and sustained manual labor of 230 people over the course of three years. While none of the individual beading volunteer may have reached his or her limit point in terms of endurance in the course of a beading session, the repetitive gestures they performed were, to be sure, taxing physically.

Nadia Myre has posted photos of some of these beading sessions on her personal website[71] and while they document a sense of communal effort, they also capture the participants' reflective concentration. The Indian Act is a strangely clinical text: it utilizes deceptively simple words, the effects of which have proven devastating. Given the size of the beads employed by Myre and her acolytes and the amount of text to cover, the task of beading over a word could allow a volunteer ample time to meditate on the word's meaning, on its material repercussion, and on the structure of power that it legitimates. A clause like "No will executed by an Indian is of any legal force or effect as a disposition of property until the Minister has approved the will or a court has granted probate thereof pursuant to this Act" may take many hours to cover, allowing a participant to reflect on the repercussions of these words (Indian Act, R.S., c. I-6, s. 45.). With this clause, the state reserves the right to dispossess First Nations subjects retroactively, even after their passing, asserting yet again its control on communities and their capacity to move from endurance to regeneration through inheritance and through structures of kinship. To un-write and undo this clause is to begin to imagine communities in which endurance is

[71] See http://www.nadiamyre.com/Nadia_Myre/portfolio/Pages/Indian_Act,_2000-2003.html

replaced by stable sense of multigenerational belonging. To erase this clause is a potent political rethinking of the state's grammar of extinction.

Myre's project demanded endurance from its participants not only physically psychologically and spiritually as well. When interviewed, Myre explains that she did not attempt to know whether or not the participants stemmed from First Nations and some volunteers only disclosed their ancestry after the project ended. Myre led the sessions in Montreal where some of the participants were fellow artists and students from Concordia University where Myre was completing her Masters degree. Other sessions took place at the Aboriginal Art gallery *Urban Shaman* in Winnipeg and in various First Nations communities where the participants were mostly of First Nations origins. Myre, who became a mother around the time of the creation of *Indian Act*, attributes her desire to create this monumental piece to her mother, a child of the sixties scoop who, removed from her community in Maniwaki, Quebec, lost her Indian status because of Canada's forced adoption policy (Myre, Personal Interview, 7 Jan 2014). Other participants adhered to the project for various reasons: visual artist Barry Ace (Odawa –M'Chigeeng) was interested in beading a particular page of the Act, one that had to do with taxation for First Nations communities (Myre, Personal Interview). The question of taxation is contentious among members of the settler majority who mistakenly perceive these tax exemptions as a system of privilege benefitting First Nations communities rather than as terms of the same treaties that have overwhelmingly profited the settler majority.

Participants, then, came to the project with their own often-undisclosed motivations and personal histories and Myre's piece allows these forces to co-exist. In leaving some of the pages of her *Indian Act* unfinished, Myre does not attempt to provide

a sense of closure. The piece is hopeful, healing even, but I contend that it does not attempt to evacuate the notion of "ressentiment" as it is currently shunned as counterproductive in Canada's political strategy. Indeed, Canada's push for reconciliation with First Nations people –through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Aboriginal Residential Schools (TRC) among other structures– is almost aggressively built on the idea of forgiving. The government has championed this idea that First Nations communities and individuals should pardon the forces involved in Residential Schools while continuing to deny in more or less overt forms a colonial past that it constantly rearticulates in new eroding policies. Following Nietzsche, "ressentiment" or resentment has been pathologized as the reaction of the weak, as the incapacity to let go of the past and come to grip with the present. First Nations resentment, their perceived unwillingness to let go of the government's so-called "errors of the past", is thus portrayed in the media, in the blogosphere, and by various politicians as yet another way in which Indigenous cultures cannot survive in or adapt to present times. In a talk about the TRC and Canada's politics of reconciliation, Dene scholar Glenn Coulthard argues:

> …[r]esentment is not only entirely defendable position, but actually a sign of our critical consciousness, of our sense of justice and injustice, and of our awareness of, and unwillingness to reconcile ourselves with the structural and symbolic violence that is still very much part of our lives. Of course we should resent colonialism as well as those people and institutions who are willfully complicit in its ongoing reproduction (Coulthard talk, 2011)

Coulthard and Stö:lò scholar Dylan Robinson both argue in favor of resentment as a productive and ethical stance, a form of resistance that refuses to reconcile itself with colonial powers whose trajectory demands First Nations' existence in a state of endurance.

The scope (both in time and in effort) of Myre's project, I argue, allows for the expression and sharing of this resentment. Myre's beading sessions provide the time frame necessary for settler participants (who as a group tend to deflect First Nations resentment) to "sit with" other participants' resentment and let its power affect them. The structure of Myre's beading sessions suggests that for once, this burden of endurance – the endurance required to resist against and under the Indian Act, and the endurance required to let oneself be affected by resentment and contemplate one's complicity as a member of the settler-colonial community– may have been more evenly distributed, not resting solely on the shoulders of First Nations subjects. In the same way that the rhythm of walking for a month allows for a sustained reflection, a volunteer who sits for hours beading over a text that imagines the end of First Nations as peoples can, if he or she chooses, be disoriented, unsettled. Both Myre's and *La Marche Amun*'s lengthy participatory processes invest time with affective power, investigating how endurance shapes one's perception of the organizing forces at play in the formation and understanding of one's own identity, be it personal or communal.

In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed writes about the ways in which objects orient subjects, shaping their perception and orientation in the world. She writes: "Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as "who" or "what" we direct our energy and attention toward" (Ahmed 4). The Indian Act is an orienting object, one that shapes how one can and cannot occupy the land or imagine communities. As such, a close and sustained encounter with this object can perhaps queer the ways that settlers view their occupation of the land as legitimate, or unsettle narratives that deny the ongoing nature of

colonialism. Myre profoundly alters the power structure of the Indian Act and Canada's national narrative: language, the power to categorize First Nations subjects, is called into question and indigenous presence in the form of red beads fills the landscape, defying categories and borders. Viewers react differently according to their own background and Myre recalls that while many viewers are profoundly moved by the piece, struggling to come to terms with the Act's ongoing legacy, others refuse to engage with the piece's unsettling political message, taking refuge instead in tropes of primitive exoticism. Two viewers from France, for example, marveled at the beauty of the indigenous language preserved in the piece, reading the beads as a form of primitive written code. If the piece itself invites the viewer to be unsettled in all possible sense of the term, its creation process also created a space where an unsettling, a queering of the Indian Act could take place. That Myre voluntarily left some of the canvases in an unfinished state invites an ongoing reflection on the Indian Act as a living document, a contract that should be revisited through a sustained (and disorienting) encounter of First Nations people and members of the settler community.

Endurance Art Theory: Current limitations.

While endurance is central to both Nadia Myre's *Indian Act* and *La Marche Amun* the two works resist being categorized as endurance art performances according to the critical vocabulary currently deployed to engage with the work of Chris Burden or the other mainstream endurance artists. *La Marche Amun*, in its deployment of sustained efforts under extraordinary circumstances, bears more resemblance with the endurance practices that took the European and white American art scenes by storm in the 1960s

and 1970s[72]. A substantial body of critical work has been produced in response to this wave of endurance performances. While these critical lenses help illuminate some of the interventions performed by *La Marche Amun*, and to a certain extent by *Indian Act*, they also fall short in important ways, failing to account for the unique structural positions of First Nations women created by settler-colonialism, a position from which Nadia Myre and the women of *La Marche Amun* interrogate the notion of enduring.

In his work on performances of self-starvation, performance scholar Patrick Anderson discusses the "masculinity deeply rooted in […] masochism" of the endurance performances of the 1960s and 70s, noting their reliance on individual acts of prowess and the spectacularization of the body under duress (Anderson 25). The artists of this era voluntarily staged their bodies struggling to endure under self-imposed conditions. Their performances often reified notions of individualism and of exceptionalism. The position from which Myre and the women from *La Marche Amun* interrogate the state of enduring is vastly different: their exploration stems from being in a structural state of endurance vis a vis an ensemble of assimilatory policies deployed by a settler state. Endurance, for Myre and the women of *La Marche Amun* is not performed as an individual self-imposed gesture of bravura, but as a communal seizing of the settler-colonial grammar, a gesture that forces this grammar's logic of extinction and violence in the open. In the cases of Myre's *Indian Act* and of *La Marche Amun* the deployment of endurance serves to reveal a structural positioning, to illuminate the space in which settler-colonial states position

[72] Endurance performances have been recorded in rituals and religious practices around the world for a very long time. In *So Much Wasted*, Patrick Anderson also discusses the self-starving spectacles of Dr. Henry Tanner and Molly Fancher in the 1880s as echoing pre-cursors to the works of Chris Burden and the artists of the 1960s and 70s.

Indigenous women, Indigenous communities. It is not a self-imposed challenge or a metaphor for something else.

As First Nation women Nadia Myre and the women from *La Marche Amun* occupy a unique position in Canada that resists analogy with any other minority group, be they new immigrants or Canada's francophone community. Renée Dupuis adds: "We have attributed a particular place –a status as second-rate citizens– to First Nations people in Canadian society[73]" (Dupuis 11) While Dupuis is right, her description does not capture how the genocidal policies and land-theft perpetrated on First Nations people stand as the continual condition of settler-society's existence and its capacity to act as host for new waves of immigration.

Furthermore, both Myre's work and *La Marche Amun* challenge endurance art's normative notions of exceptionalism and masculinity in their use of collective labor and un-spectacular strategies. In both Myre's and *La Marche Amun'*s projects, the burden of endurance is shared by an ensemble of participants rather than by an individual who can be deemed exceptional. Most of the endurance work in these two projects took place away from an audience and hidden from the spotlight. Unlike staging a hunger strike, putting oneself in danger or vowing to remain immobile for days, there is nothing particularly spectacular about such quotidian gestures as walking or beading. When read in the current context of Canada's post-colonial colonialism, these gestures acquire a specific political resonance affirming sovereignty and what Anishinabe scholar Gerald Vizenor calls survivance. "Native survivance" Vizenor writes, "is more than survival,

---

[73] "On a attribute une place particulière aux Autochtones dans la société canadienne, qui était en fait une place au second rang" (Dupuis 11, my translation)

more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence […] an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (Vizenor 15). To walk or to bead, that is to continue to invest territories and traditional practices as markers of Indigenous presence and as organizational structures is indeed politically charged.

In *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*, Mishuana Goeman (Seneca) traces the (re)mapping gestures performed by First Nations female writers in response to colonialism's gendered spatial violence. Through close readings, Goeman identifies how these First Nations women labor "in the simultaneously metaphoric and material capacities of map making, to generate new possibilities" (3). Goeman contends that these women, whose work is deeply informed by specific communities, anchor their creative work in traditional and techniques "as a means of continuation of what Gerald Vizenor aptly calls stories of survivance" (ibid). These stories, Goeman argues, attempt to redefine the concepts of Native nations outside of settler colonial models informed by legal categorizations based on so-called racial authenticity and gender. Myre's work, I argue, performs a similar (re)mapping gesture with her visual work. While the beading technique that Myre employs in *Indian Act* has pre-Contact roots, the glass beads Myre utilizes are "a singularly post-contact product a European import" (Dyck 43). The beads were "brought across the Atlantic, by explorers, traders, and missionaries […] First Nations women used the beads in appliqué work that offered an efficient alternative to more labour-intensive adornment techniques, especially quill-work" (Dyck 43). Myre, in employing a beading technique that has changed through contact with the Europeans, positions her political and visual intervention as part of a trajectory of renewal in which ways of being/of life survived through ingenious adaptation.

Myre's red beads tell such stories of survivance and adaptation and they mark resilient presence. In a symbolically potent gesture, Myre used a traditionally feminine Anishinabe beading technique to undo what Robert Houle calls "a Eurocentric patriarchal and colonialist document created with the goal to assimilate" (Houle, in Tougas 18). In employing this technique, Myre's piece simultaneously performs a reclaiming gesture and a diplomatic overture. As an Anishinaable woman rewriting the single most important and impactful body of laws for First Nations people in Canada, Myre asserts the central political role played by women in numerous matrilineal nations and critiques the Indian Act's specific targeting of these structures of governance as a way to destabilize First Nations communities.

Scholar Kathy O'Dell contends that, as a whole, endurance performances of the 1960s and 1970s explored and challenged the notion of contract as an organizing force in the public and artistic spheres. A performance like *Shoot* (1971) by Chris Burden in which the performer willingly let himself be shot in the arm by a friend in front of an audience, challenged those who witnessed the shooting to reflect on the contract that they tacitly agreed to upon entering a performance space. O'Dell writes "Masochistic performance artists of the 1970s, such as Burden, sought to call attention to the structure of the contract to emphasize that the real power of the agreement lies there. […] By pushing their actions to an extreme [the artists] could dramatize the importance of a transaction that is often overlooked or taken for granted". (O'Dell 2) Central to endurance artists' explorations was indeed the desire to illuminate the power at play in the tacit agreement – or contract- between artists and audience, between those who watch and those who are watched, between spectator and witness. Anderson argues that Chris

Burden's performances of self-starvation, "summoned his audience to bear witness to their own spectatorial responsibilities in producing a scene of artistic encounter that would potentially endanger the life of the artist" (Anderson 25). Burden and others called the spectators' attention to the often-overlooked transaction between audience and artists. They dared spectators to acknowledge the agreement they tacitly accepted upon entering a performance space. Burden, for example, presented spectators with a dilemma asking how far they would let him go in endangering himself through thirst or hunger. In the case of *Shoot*, despite the performance being dangerous, neither the shooter nor the audience chose to walk away from the agreement.

In Canada generally and in Quebec in particular, most settler communities conveniently ignore the fundamental transaction that allowed (and continues to allow) settler-colonial communities to exist. Mohawk activist Ellen Gabriel describes it as founded on a "land grab" that was then naturalized by the Indian Act and the creation of reserves. To be clear, the Indian Act was never an agreement: it was an imposition by settler colonial forces that subsequently amended the law to better serve their expansionist agenda. The law and its categorization of Status Indians ironically became the only protection that First Nations people had against total assimilation. In 1969, when Prime Minister Trudeau put forward his White Paper, an initiative to end the separate legal status for First Nations, abolish the Indian Act and end the Department of Indian Affairs in the interest of greater equality for First Nations peoples, First Nations leaders across Canada protested and insisted on keeping the Indian Act as the lesser of many evils. Dr. Harold Cardinal, a Cree lawyer, writer and political activist wrote about the First Nations leaders' response to Trudeau's proposed changes:

> We do not want the Indian Act retained because it is a good piece of legislation. It isn't. It is discriminatory from start to finish. But it is a lever in our hands and an embarrassment to the government, as it should be. No just society and no society with even pretensions to being just can long tolerate such a piece of legislation, but we would rather continue to live in bondage under the inequitable Indian Act than surrender our sacred rights. Any time the government wants to honour its obligations to us we are more than happy to help devise new Indian legislation. (Cardinal, 140)

The Indian Act, then, is not an agreement. It does however regulate the relationship between First Nations and the settler state. Members of the settler community tacitly agree to this profoundly asymmetrical ongoing societal contract often while failing to grasp that colonialism is not over. Glen Coulthard, in his critique of the politics of reconciliation in Canada, argues that reconciliation is based on the premise that colonialism was an event, a historical moment delineated in time. Coulthard contends that colonialism is an ongoing and continuously operative structure (Coulthard talk).

Both *La Marche Amun* and Myre's *Indian Act* call the viewers' attention to this continuously operative societal contract. The women of *La Marche Amun* physically traversed the lines of exclusion imposed by the Indian Act. In doing so, they invited those who witness their pilgrimage to position themselves vis a vis the Indian Act. Thus, their walk does not signal that the premise of this contract is in itself acceptable or that enough amendments will one day make the Indian Act a just piece of legislation. It does complex and contradictory work of both resisting colonial rules and functioning within its coercive framework. In a radio interview two years after the march, Michele Taina Audette reflected on the success of the Marche Amun: "I see change as incremental […] it happens through the stubborn steps of First Nations women" (Audette interview, 2012). The march, then, prepared the terrain, destabilized the current landscape and performed a

first step in laying the foundations for a new form of social contract between First Nations and settler communities and among First Nations communities themselves.

Diplomacy and Sovereignty: Emissaries and Wampum belts.

Both *La Marche Amun* and Myre's *Indian Act* were imagined and performed in large part on the territory of what is now known as the province of Quebec. Contrary to some other provinces in Canada in which land treaties were signed (though often in highly questionable conditions) Quebec's territorial base is largely comprised of un-ceded land; that is of land that was never surrendered by First Nations, for which no treaties were ever signed and on which ancestral rights are not extinguished. Quebec, like the federal government, functioned for a long time under the assumption that all First Nations territorial and ancestral rights recognized in Nouvelle-France had been extinguished in 1763 with the Paris Treaty[74]. Starting in the late 1980's, a number of important court cases recognizing First Nations ancestral rights forced Quebec to rethink its relationship with First Nations people. While Chief Ghislain Picard recalls Quebec's sovereignist Premier René Lévesque (1976-80 and 1981-85) as someone who was sympathetic to First Nations, many of his successors engaged in negotiation for more practical reasons among which the creation of Quebec's large-scale hydroelectric projects on Cree, Inuit, and Naskapi territories (Trudel 30-31).[75] Most of the province of Quebec, however, exists quite literally on contested land where First Nations' sovereignty and self-determination are under constant threat. Recent development projects – Le Plan

[74] See Bouchard, Cardinal, Trudel, 66-67. See Dupuis, 93-94.
[75] Quebec's hydroelectric projects led to the negotiation of Quebec's first modern treaties signed with the James Bay Cree and Inuit (*Convention de la Baie James et du Nord Québécois* in 1975 and *La Paix des Braves* in 2002) and with the Naskapi of the Schefferville region (*Convention du Nord-Est Québécois* in 1978). La Paix des Braves was signed to correct the failures of the 1975 agreement after years of lawsuits regarding Quebec's failure to honour the terms of the agreements.

Nord, proposed Mining laws, and unauthorized forestry projects on Anishinaabe territory near Lac Barrière – all show that the provincial government's understanding of First Nations sovereignty is, more often than not, merely symbolic.

The relationship between Québec's national aspirations and First Nations' demands for self-determination and sovereignty is contentious yet deeply intertwined. In his book *De Kebec a Québec; Cinq siècles d'échanges entre nous*, Eric Cardinal traces a contemporary parallel between the 1701 *Grande Paix de Montreal,* which affirmed French and First Nations sovereignty as co-existing, and the quest for sovereignty led by First Nations and Quebecois in recent constitutional history. Since the late 1970s First Nations have engaged in tense campaigns to have their ancestral rights recognized within Canada's constitution and in federal and provincial policies. Cardinal argues that, for better or for worst, these campaigns –the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982, the failed Meech Lake (1987) and Charlottetown Accords (1992) that would have amended the Constitution to meet some of the First Nations demands– were intimately linked to Quebec's own quest for the recognition of its distinct status within Canada. As Cardinal writes about the aftermath of the failed Charlottetown Accord:

> After seeing a new constitution for Canada rejected once again, First Nations leaders realized that their political leverage depended in large part on the climate surrounding the constitutional debate, and consequently, on the state of Quebec's struggle. At the political level, First Nations have succeeded in accruing negotiating power in "fluid" political contexts created by Quebec's demands and grievances. [76](Cardinal 92).

[76] "Après ce rejet d'une nouvelle constitution pour le Canada, les Premières Nations réalisent que leur poids politique dépend largement de la conjecture du débat constitutionnel et, conséquemment, de la bataille du Québec. Il s'avère que sur le plan politique, les Premières Nations ont réussi à accroitre leur pouvoir de négociation dans des contextes politiques "fluides" créés par les demandes et griefs du Québec" (my translation).

If Québec did pose some significant gestures to change its relationship to First Nations peoples, particularly under René Lévesque's leadership, Cardinal argues that the province's "unilateral action during the 1980s can more readily be attributed to the province's autonomist politics and to its rejection of the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982 than to a real political will to create a "nation to nation" relationship with Quebec's First Nations" [77] (81) Furthermore, even when Québec passed a motion in 1983 to recognize First Nations as "distinct nations with rights to their cultures, languages, customs and traditions", the province specified "these rights must be exercised within Quebec society and consequently, should not imply sovereignty rights that might disrupt Quebec's territorial integrity"[78] (Cardinal 79). This understanding is far from the spirit of the Two-Row Wampum's or the *Grande Paix de Montréal*, which imagined First Nations' sovereignty as equal not subsumed by that of Quebec. It is in fact, a continuation of a colonial understanding of the First Peoples of Quebec and a missed opportunity to lay down the base of a truly post-colonial political arrangement.

Nadia Myre and the women from *La Marche Amun* embody these intertwined quests for cultural and political recognition in evocative ways. Myre is of Anishinaabe and Quebecois parentage – her mother regained her status in 1997 after being excluded for her union with Myre's father. Michele Taina Audette's father is Quebecois and thus, when her parents divorced, Audette's mother, the Innu elder and activist Evelyne St-Onge, faced tremendous hardships when she attempted to return to her community of

[77] "son action unilatérale, pendant les années 1980, peut être attribuée davantage à sa politique autonomiste et au rejet du rapatriement de la Constitution canadienne qu'à une réelle volonté de créer une relation "nation à nation" avec les peuples autochtones du Québec" (my translation).
[78] "ces droits doivent s'exercer au sein de la société québécoise, et ne sauraient par conséquent impliquer des droits de souveraineté qui puissent porter atteinte à l'intégrité territorial du Québec" (my translation).

Mani-Utenam where she was denied residing rights. The women from *La Marche Amun* stem from various backgrounds among which the Innu communities of Quebec's Cote-Nord region. The performance of enduring presence and the challenge these two projects pose to settler colonialism are complicated by Quebec's self-narrative of competing indigeneity as a colonized minority enduring under English Canada's rule. The province's profound discomfort with and disavowal of its own history as a colonizer both in the time of the Nouvelle-France and in present time adds to this complex network of competing discourses. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, Quebec's own sovereignist discourse places the province in a competing position with First Nations' assertions of sovereignty. Quebec's national narrative is based in part on the evocation of so-called benevolent alliances of the past between First Nations communities and the French colonizer that while true in some respect, tends to elide the colonial project enacted by the French and then by French Canadians as part of Canada.

There is indeed a history of diplomacy and alliances between the French and the First Nations in the northeastern regions of what is now Canada, which culminated with *La Grande Paix de Montreal* in 1701. Historian Gilles Havard's in-depth analysis of this historic peace treaty does the important work of challenging a colonial history that presented First Nations communities as passive recipients of European knowledge. Supported by a wealth of historical documents, Havard argues instead that the French were in fact greatly influenced by the sophisticated and complex diplomatic protocols that facilitated relationships between First Nations at the time. The author discusses the economy of gift, the wampum belts, the envoys sent between nations to prepare diplomatic conferences ahead of time, as well as the sophisticated oratory tradition that

greatly impressed French colonial leaders. Havard notes of the structure of *La Grande Paix de Montreal*'s negotiations: "the various elements that structured and adorned the protocol of the (peace) conferences were thus essentially of Amerindian origin" (Havard 25). Havard's work does not minimize France's self-interest in participating in diplomatic exchanges, or the ways in which it orchestrated conflicts among First Nations to solidify its control of the territory. He provides an important counter-narrative to the one of primitive and warring cultures conveniently presented in colonial history as a way to justify colonization as a civilizing tool of advancement.

La Marche Amun and Nadia Myre's *Indian Act* participate in and help reshape this long tradition of First Nations diplomacy described by Havard and others like George Sioui (Huron Wendat) whose research revisits his nation's diplomacy in Nouvelle-France[79]. Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred employs the ritual of condolence of the Rotinohshonni people (a ceremony described by Havard as central to the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701) "as a metaphorical framework for [his] own thoughts on the state of Native America and the crucial role of indigenous traditions in alleviating the grief and discontent that permeate our existence" in his 1999 book *Peace, Power, Righteousness; An Indigenous Manifesto* (Alfred 8). Alfred employs the ritual to articulate a contemporary call to First Nations' revitalization, demonstrating that his nations' diplomatic traditions are capable of describing and responding to contemporary political challenges. The deployment by Myre and the women of *La Marche Amun* of performative strategies –beading, diplomatic envoys walking and marking an ancestral

---

[79] See Georges Sioui (Huron Wendat) who proposes a similar reading of the first civilizations of the northeastern regions of the Americas in his book *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle* in which he retraces the rich tradition of diplomacy of the Huron-Wendat people.

territory– which are rooted in traditional practices and knowledge should thus be read as diplomatic gestures meant to reopen dialogue and foster encounters however uncomfortable they may be.

Myre's and *La Marche Amun*'s diplomatic overtures challenge Quebec's myths and narrative by enacting a form of sovereignty that is fundamentally at odds with Quebec's nationalist project. *La Marche Amun* problematizes Quebec's sense of territorial integrity, calling the viewers' attention to the lines of exclusion that solidly delineate Quebec's definition of itself, leaving First Nations at the margins. Walking from Wendake, a reserve in the heart of Quebec's capital of Quebec City, to Ottawa, the nations' capital, the women draw a physical and political connection between the provincial and federal centers of power, aligning them as settler-colonial forces united in their common dependence on First Nation's erasure. In drawing this connection, the women relocate the long-standing conflict between Canada and Quebec's francophone majority as intra-colonial that is, taking place within a shared structural position of power as colonial forces against First Nation communities. The women thus foreclose the province nationalist leaders' and thinkers' tendency to align Quebecois and First Nations sovereignist aspirations as a common anti-colonial struggle. As it stands, the liberal frame within which Quebec defines itself cannot accommodate the rules of diplomatic engagement proposed by Myre and *La Marche Amun*. The province's investment in a minority discourse forecloses its full acknowledgment of its past and current role as a settler-colonial force. The gestures of recognition that various Quebecois governments have performed in the last 40 years can only imagine First Nations sovereignty as subsumed under Quebec's. Ghislain Picard, speaking for the Assembly of First Nations

of Quebec and Labrador in 1994 argued that Quebec's sovereignty aspirations were "in direct conflict with that of First Nations" (Bouchard, Cardinal, Picard, 93). *La Marche Amun* illuminates a lineage of power that intimately and uncomfortably connects Canada and Quebec. In doing so, the march illuminates a central contradiction in Quebec's rhetoric, that is the difficulty in reconciling the province's very real history of resisting Canada's assimilatory policies towards the Francophone majority, and the province's equally real complicity in perpetuating settler-colonial policies –whether of the province's own design or emanating from the federal government– that erode First Nations rights and sovereignty.

Nadia Myre's *Indian Act*, which resembles a wampum belt, borrows from the visual and performative language of traditional First Nations diplomacy of the northeast coast of North America. As Sandra Dyck explains, the Anishinaabe and Iroquois people used wampum belts:

> [A]s an essential medium of communication and contact for First Nations, who exchanged them with each other and with Europeans. They variously served as invitations to enter into discussion, as documents of proposals tabled at or agreements made during meetings, and, particularly for the Iroquois, as records of laws, constitutions, and histories. Messages were "spoken into" strings or belts of wampum, which were referred to as "words" and thought to contain them, literally. Such messages took the form of schematic images – the path, chain, human figure were the most prevalent in the 18th century – woven into belts. The famous Kaswentha or Two-Row Wampum, whose parallel paths or purple beads on a white background famously envisage peaceful relations between the Iroquois and Europeans (Dyck 49)

As Gilles Havard notes in his study of French–Amerindian diplomacy in the Seventeenth-century "In reality, it was not the wampum belt as such that was important to the Native peoples; rather it was the use and process of exchanging gifts that resulted from it"

(Havard 23). Havard points here to the performances of reciprocity that were enabled by wampum belts. These belts recorded and facilitated the process of exchange and diplomacy as each party had to offer something in return for the other party's proposal.

Myre created her piece through a process that facilitated exchanges and encouraged reciprocity between the participants. Beading itself records a link with the past: the technique is traditional and it is deployed to interrupt the continuation of a painful history shaped by the Indian Act. Myre's work is thus a recording of the past and an opening for the future that depends on the other parties – settlers, be they newcomers or newly arrived, Francophone or English speaking– coming to the table with a real desire to negotiate. Havard writes of the French adopting Native American diplomatic ways, "[their] capacity to play the other's game, to conform to a different political culture, may in the long term be interpreted as a kind of superiority on the part of the Europeans, who in imperialistic self-interest adapted to the Native culture" (Havard 26). The British whose colonial project was one of settlement rather than commerce, did not need alliances with First Nations peoples in the same urgent ways and the balance in negotiation tipped dramatically in favor of the settlers. Since then, the rules of diplomatic engagement with First Nations people have been ones of coercion and extortion until the l960', followed by negotiation as a last resort, or under international scrutiny. Self-interest continues to rule the game and perhaps nothing else can be expected from a settler population whose sense of self and space depends at its core on the continual dispossession of First Nations people.

Myre's piece also offers an example of a diplomatic encounter that requires reciprocity and both parties' commitment to a task whose revelatory powers only come in

the repetitive "doing" that is the stringing of beads. The act of beading acts in turn as a mnemonic record of the diplomatic encounter. The beading session are perhaps the most striking example of this diplomatic encounter since beaders from First Nations and settler communities came together to rewrite the set of rules that shape their relationship to each other. But this diplomatic encounter continues to take place when the piece is presented in galleries and museums. A list of the names of the volunteers who beaded the piece always accompanies *Indian Act*, acting as a list of signatories in this re-imagined contract. A diplomatic encounter also takes place between the piece and the viewer who pauses and perhaps allows him or herself to be disoriented by this visual contract and, by extension, by the Indian Act as an ongoing body of laws. The unfinished nature of Myre's piece gestures to this living nature of the Indian Act, and invites the viewer to participate in rethinking, in decolonizing the relationship between First Nations and settler communities. By transforming the Indian Act into a document that resembles a Wampum belt, Myre asks the viewers to reflect on their own participation in this societal contract. Myre's intervention aligns with other endurance art in the positioning demands it makes on its audience. However, while an audience member could choose to stop Burden's acolyte from shooting and thus have agency in shaping the contract between artist and viewers, the viewer who negotiates with the demands of Myre's piece is left with questions that exceed the individual and reach a more societal scope. The viewer has to grapple with questions that cannot be answered on the spot and that defy easy answers.

Myre has previoulsy borrowed from the visual vocabulary of wampum belts for *Monument to Two Row, Revised* and *River, Divided*, two pieces from 2002 that openly revisit the *Kaswentha* or Two-Row Wampum. In *Indian Act*, Myre transforms a body of

laws imposed on First Nations through a visual vocabulary that suggests a diplomatic encounter, the chance to re-open discussions. In her remapped Indian Act, the white lines cut across the red landscape like so many wounds, scars, and imposed borders. The lines, red and white, also evoke the trails and waterways employed by Canada's First peoples that were the terrain on which first encounters between First Nations and Europeans so often took place. The lines in Myre's *Indian Act* lend themselves to a multivalent reading: they mark a contested space while simultaneously tracing a roadmap to decolonization, re-marking these imagined paths as reconciliatory or as sites of diplomatic encounters between the white majority and First Nations communities.

Beading as performed by First Nations communities in Canada has long been excluded from the world of high art and relegated instead to categories of craft or folk-art alongside other traditionally feminine practices. These classifications are of course never benign as Inuk curator and art historian Heather Igloliorte argues in her work on Cape Dorset painters and carvers of the early 20th century (talk June 2010)[80]. To cast beading as a feminine craft rather than a potent artistic and political means of expression contributes in downplaying the real political role that this practice has served in recording agreements between nations. As Mohawk activist Ellen Gabriel noted at the TRC "it was the women in matrilineal cultures that were weaving the belts" and thus acted as the archivists of their nation's diplomatic relationships (TRC, 2013)

[80] Igloliorte contends that the categorization of these artists as folk artists served to shape an image of Cape Dorset artists as melancholic of a lost way of life and struggling with modernity. In reality, the works of these artists that did not circulate on the government-run folk art market because they were deemed not traditional enough to meet southern buyers' taste for primitive exoticism have since been praised as innovative and original interventions.

Myre employs beading as a gesture of resistance, a political intervention that remaps spaces of First Nations sovereignty; spaces in which self-determination is enacted. As Jolene Rickard argues, sovereignty can be articulated in the "doing" of traditions: "Tradition is also a strategic sovereignist resistance in the twenty-first century to ongoing coloniality and the flattening process of globalization. I've come to view sovereignty as an Indigenous tradition whose work is strategically never done" (Jolene Rickard, 478). To undo the Indian Act is a decolonizing gesture that anchors and re-articulates the present and future drawing from the ancestral knowledge and traditions that settler-colonialism have long targeted.

If Nadia Myre anchors her work in the tradition of the wampum belts, the women of *La Marche Amun's* participate in a long lineage of diplomatic envoys. Describing the preliminary exchanges that led to the Peace Conference of 1701 in Montreal, Havard writes: "talks were carried out by ambassadors who usually traveled by canoe on lakes and rivers to bring the "word" of their nation" (Havard 18, quotation in original). Emissaries who were mostly individuals who could converse in French and First Nations languages, traveled often accompanied by war captives who could be exchanged to establish favorable conditions for future negotiations. These mediators, called *trûchements* in French, acted as bridging agents between negotiating parties. Michele Taina Audette performed a similar role as a *trûchement* in her statement at the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Committee on April 20, 2010, a few weeks before starting *La Marche Amun*. She addresses the members of the Committee, preparing them with an oration whose cadence and structure –the repetition of the word "reinforce", the

sense of a message spreading from "all Quebekers" to Canadians– build a sense of urgency:

> On May 4, a symbolic event will begin. A group of women will be walking 500 kilometers from Wendake to Ottawa, to Parliament Hill, to deliver a message to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Mr. Strahl. Each day we will be repeating the same message to everyone in Quebec, to all Quebeckers, and also to Canadians. We want to say that Canada is bringing in legislation to reinforce – and I mean reinforce- gender inequality, and we are demanding that Canada eliminate this kind of discrimination. (Audette)

As Havard notes in his account of the preparatory diplomatic work that preceded the 1701 Peace Conference in Montreal, "Large scale diplomatic meetings were preceded by invitations sent out several weeks, or even several months, in advance by interested party or parties" (Havard 20). Dispatched emissaries were sent to allied and opposing nations, the best orators, chosen for their eloquence, theatricality and abilities to convince were often chosen to speak instead of hereditary chiefs. Centuries later, Audette's oration harkens back to these emissaries' public speaking skills. Audette addresses the committee members directly, telling them that they have the power to change history and achieve something meaningful. Her presentation is convincing and direct as she prepares these politicians to the event to come.

Audette's role as an emissary and a translator for First Nations women harkens back, of course, to some of the most contested characters of colonization, that is Native American women such as La Malinche, Pocahontas, Sacajawea who served as guides, partners, and translators for Europeans. These women's role as *trûchements* –imagined and real– have served to solidify colonial narratives and internalized sexism within First Nations communities. In *The Pocahontas Perplex*, written in 1975, Rayna Green

(Cherokee) describes the complicated figure of Pocahontas in the colonial imagination, as one whose virginal body stands in for America's rich lands, a woman whose sacrifice for her white lover rewrites conquest as willful submission. Colonial authorities have wielded the figures of Pocahontas, La Malinche and Sacajewea (whose husband was French-Canadian) as a way to justify their presence arguing that these women's supposedly promiscuous nature illustrated Native Americans' willingness to be colonized. After all, such colonial narratives argue, these women participated in colonial ventures that were, at their core, detrimental to the good of their nations.

In her work on the literary works of Native women, Mishuana Goeman contends "colonialism is not just about conquering Native lands through mapping new ownerships, but it is also about the conquest of bodies, particularly women's bodies through sexual violence, and about recreating gendered relationships" (33). Both Goeman and Lawrence (in her aforementioned work) point to the colonial anxiety surrounding First Nations women. Indeed, the very first white settlements in what is now Canada survived and thrived in large part through negotiated alliances, often in the form of marriages with First Nations women. These intermarriages, which created, among other communities, the Metis nation, provoked a profound anxiety among settler societies who, in their later iterations, organized around racial apartheid. As Lawrence argues "creating the legal category of status Indian enabled the settler society to create the fiction of a Native person who was by law no longer Native, whose offspring could be considered white" and thus absorbed in settler society. For Goeman, the dispossession of First Nations women is the very foundation of Canada. Goeman writes:

> In many ways, it is the limiting of possibilitites for Native women through the intersections of structural, political, and representational social fields that founded and continue to support the settler state of Canada. In the state's early geographical imaginings of the Canadian settler-state, the politics and governance of love, marriage, and Native women's bodies set up normative spaces for the Nation and sought to naturalize the dispossession of Native people (43).

While Michele Taina Audette's address to a government that has consistently failed Native American women may seem like an attempt to amend a system that can not be sufficiently amended, following Paula Gunn Allen, I would like to suggest another reading of Audette's role as an emissary. In her book *Pocahontas; Medicine Woman, Spy, Entrepreneur, Diplomat,* Gunn Allen presents Pocahontas not as a victim but as a powerfully astute woman, a "living embodiment" of the "dual cultural transformation" that took place during early colonial moments. For Allen, Pocahontas, in her multiple incarnations as Matoaka (her real name), Pocahontas (as John Smith knew her), and Lady Rebecca (her name when she lived in England), is a complex character who lived and acted as negotiator between two worlds in ways that defy simplistic readings. Belonging to a matrilineal, matrifocal culture, or what Gunn Allen calls "an implicate-order system", Pocahontas performed some of the political duties that belonged to women in her culture: "Engaged in the intricate plot of world-changing affairs, she (Pocahontas) was far more than an agent for the Powhatans", she was an ambassador, an infiltrator, someone who did much more than passively agree to the invasion of her ancestral territories and actually shaped the political sphere of her time (Gunn Allen 175).

Audette, Michel, and the women of *La Marche Amun* carve spaces of sovereignty and diplomacy within an oppressive system. Their work challenges western nation-centric definitions and re-centers the matrilineal structures of power and governance that

the Indian Act specifically targeted. These interventions both challenge settler-colonial states but also the ways in which the fight for First Nations women's rights, and the very notion of First Nations feminism, have at times been described as participating in a colonial agenda or as incompatible with a struggle for sovereignty (Jaimes 1990). As Andrea Smith argues, too many First Nations activists have claimed that "if we successfully decolonize, then we will necessarily eliminate problems of sexism as well" because as Ward Churchill and others have argued "traditionally, sexism did not exist in Indian country" (Smith 121). Smith argues that such a claim fails to address the ways in which it is "precisely through gender violence that we have lost our lands in the first place" (Ibid). The fight for sovereignty, she argues, must be articulated hand in hand with the improvement of First Nations women's rights because "attacks on Native women's status are themselves attacks on Native sovereignty" (Smith 123).

Myre and the women of La Marche Amun imagine and enact spaces where First Nations sovereignty and women's rights co-exist. By employing traditional forms and vocabularies to address contemporary challenges in their First Nations communities, Myre and the women from *La Marche Amun* articulate such spaces of Indigenous sovereignty. They resituate, as Jolene Rickard suggests, "traditional subjects from a frozen past" (and, I argue, from a frozen frame within the law) "to a dynamic present" (Rickard 472). They create breaks, gaps in the unrelenting grammar of the Indian Act, moments where its logic of erasure comes undone, where specific Indigenous stories, stories of women and children, can be retold. Walking the territory across imposed borders, re-imagining women's presence within communities, reclaiming lineages that

have been interrupted by the Indian Act, these are all performances of Indigenous sovereignty anchored in non-western understandings of the term.

Conclusion

La Marche Amun and Nadia Myre's *Indian Act* perform complex interventions in unsettling settler colonial laws and narratives. In wielding endurance as a performative tool, they render visible how the settler colonial laws that form the Indian Act have positioned First Nations peoples, and most particularly women, in a state of endurance vis a vis the settler community. Their work draws from traditional practices and knowledge to enact and re-imagine spaces of First Nations sovereignty. They invite the participants, be they volunteers in beading sessions, walkers, or gallery viewers to reflect on, and be accountable for the Indian Act as a societal contract tying settler communities and First Nations peoples in a profoundly asymmetrical structure of power in which the majority's privileges rest on First Nations existing in a state of endurance. Myre and the women of *La Marche Amun* revisit and illuminate the betrayal of past diplomatic alliances and dare us to begin to collectively imagine a framework in which a real nation-to-nation contract between First Nations and settler communities could exist.

Chapter 4: Theatre in Contested Lands: Repatriating Indigenous Remains.

> "One cannot live carrying the dead on one's back."[81]
> Yves Sioui Durand, director and co-founder of *Ondinnok*.

> "For these old souls, I say, 'Dear God, forgive us. We're in a different society.'"[82]
> Carmen Lucas, Kwaayii elder and monitor for archaeological excavations in San Diego County, USA.

A young First Nations[83] woman walks slowly onstage and heads towards a bench adorned with a series of masks that form a detachable bas-relief. She stops in front of the mask of a weathered Mayan face as if the elder had silently hailed her. The performer slowly lifts the mask, places it on her abdomen, and turns to face the audience. Her pose evokes for a moment the ubiquitous displays of Indigenous life found in museums of natural history worldwide. Here however, the young woman interrogatively returns the audience's gaze and disrupts the usual one-sidedness of museum encounters with Indigenous bodies. The image is striking: the past, its ancient mask nestled in the young woman's womb, seems alive, rooted in the present. Moving slowly, the young performer places the mask over her face and her body progressively becomes a surrogate of ancient gestures. A temporally blurred image breaks through: the old Mayan figure seems to materialize and speak through the body of a living. The image is fleeting but at that

[81] Yves Sioui Durand, Personal interview, 25 June 2010.
[82] Larson, Thomas. "UCSD and the Land of the Dead". *San Diego Reader*, 30 April 2008. Print.
[83] This paper engages with performances and performers from the Indigenous peoples of the Americas; accordingly I use the terms First Nations, Indigenous, and Native Americans to describe them.

moment in Ondinnok's production of *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi (2010)*, the masked woman exists suspended across time and geographical boundaries. She is past and present, herself and other, and her body bridges the divisive borders imposed on Indigenous communities by settler colonial powers.

Staged in 2010 at Montreal's *Présence Autochtone/First Peoples' Festival*, Ondinnok's adaptation of the Mayan dance drama *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* was an unsettling experience: a moment of cartographical and temporal collisions that revealed oft buried narratives of ongoing violence against Indigenous peoples. The encounter between a pre-Conquest text and contemporary Indigenous performers stands as one of these collisions. Indeed, the play dramatizes a moment when Mayan nations were sovereign and yet untouched by the Europeans. The same cannot be said for the unique cast of Indigenous performers from across the Americas assembled by Ondinnok for its adaptation of the Mayan play. These performers and the communities from which they stem belong to a moment of "post-colonial colonialism"(Thiong'o 50). Coming from countries now called Canada, Guatemala, or Chile, these artists articulate their identities against settler-state borders, policies, and institutions that remain colonialist at their core.

The text of *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* and the complicated ways in which it was transmitted permeated Ondinnok's production, creating a second collision, occurring this time between the text and its context. While the script of *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* is unmarked by the horrors of Conquest, its transmission history, however, bears the traces of colonial censorship and of the devaluation of Mayan culture. The play has gone

through a complex performance cycle since Conquest, lying dormant and re-emerging according to Guatemala's political and cultural climate.[84]

Ondinnok's adaptation echoed the play's cyclical history in the overarching corrective gesture it sought to perform: throughout the performance, and at times independently from the play's storyline, the performers symbolically unearthed ancestral figures, celebrated and mourned them, and finally laid them to rest. Together, the actors enacted a form of repatriation, an embodied undoing of the material and cultural pillages and the scarring borderlines that have marked Indigenous landscapes since Conquest. *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* became a ritualized performance of "surrogation": the actors stood in for ancestors and became vehicles though which the victims of the genocide against native populations of the Americas could be repatriated and mourned (Roach 36). Attesting to the production's potent affective power, Alexandre Cadieux, a theatre critic for Montreal's *Le Devoir,* wrote: "[it] establishes a living contact between the present and the vestiges of a civilization massacred by mankind" (Cadieux 2010). To encounter this loss, even momentarily, left the critic with "an indescribable sensation of vertigo" (Cadieux 2010).

Ondinnok's dramaturgical repatriation project, and the moments of what I call vertiginous consciousness it created find a striking parallel at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) where I currently do research. Here, bones, the very real material remains of two Indigenous bodies exhumed at UCSD in 1976, are at the center

---

[84] Ondinnok's adaptation marked a new transnational cycle in the play's long history: it constituted the first adaptation of the play and the second time the play traveled outside of Guatemala. Excerpts of Tedlock's translation received a public reading in 1996 at the Miami Museum of Science. A version of the entire play was later co-directed by Leandro Sotto and Sally Goers Fox at the University of Buffalo.

of a bitter ongoing repatriation dispute opposing the Kumeyaay to a group of scientists from UCSD and other University of California (UC) campuses. The Kumeyaay, a nation comprised of 13 federally recognized culturally and linguistically related bands, have historically occupied parts of Baja California and the San Diego area. Today the Kumeyaay are part of California's large Native American community. San Diego County itself has more reservations than any other county in the United States. Despite this and the fact that UCSD stands on Kumeyaay ancestral land, Native Americans remain largely absent from the public sphere in San Diego and at UCSD (the university attracts and retains a dismally low number of Native American students). The mediatized dispute between UCSD and the Kumeyaay stands as an exception to this state of affair.

The Kumeyaay have pressed UCSD for the repatriation of the remains of those they regard as ancestors since 2006. In a movement that echoes Ondinnok's project, the Kumeyaay want to put the remains to rest, give them a proper burial, and thus perform a healing gesture that interrupts a long history of violence toward Native Americans. Unlike Ondinnok's work which garnered generally favorable reviews, the Kumeyaay's repatriation project has been consistently met by a small but very vocal group of scientists from the UC system whose mediatized performance of opposition betray deep-seated colonial behaviors and a profound resistance to Indigenous epistemologies. After rounds of failed negotiations, the Kumeyaay Cultural Repatriation Committee (KCRC) intensified its efforts in 2012, taking UCSD to Federal Court (Reynolds 2012). The KCRC argues that by keeping the contested remains, UCSD violates the most recent amendments to the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA),

a federal law designed to correct a long history of insensitive and unethical handling of Indigenous bones and funerary objects.

The disinterment of the chancellor's house remains brings to the surface polarizing questions over whose explanatory power is privileged to name and understand the past. As Kwaayii elder Carmen Lucas laments in the epigraph of this paper, the two bodies unearthed at UCSD have surfaced in a vastly "different society" from the one in which they first existed and now occupy a contested position. Anthropologist Ann Kakaliouras proposes the notion of "repatriatable" to define remains that have the possibility to be returned to a Native American tribe under NAGPRA (Kakaliouras s214). These "repatriatables" Kakaliouras argues, form an ontological and epistemological category of their own: they are in flux, forming "an uneasy bridge" – temporally, spatially, and affectively – and illuminating seemingly irreconcilable understandings of the world (s214). As repatriatables, the chancellor's house remains reveal such differences: on the one hand, the group of UC scientists cast the remains as commodities, but also as sources of knowledge for humanity (a category from which Indigenous bodies have so often been excluded historically). On the other hand, the Kumeyaay position these remains as subjects and ancestors who deserve to be put to rest.

Leveraging Kakaliouras's anthropological concept to discuss theatre and performance, I argue in this chapter that, as a nexus of competing narratives and worldviews, the repatriatable remains found at UCSD gain a wider performative quality. I expand the category of repatriatable to include remains and living bodies such as those of the performers in Ondinnok's *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* that do not fall under NAGPRA jurisdiction and can be repatriated in a more symbolic realm. These bodies or remains are

what I call "performative repatriatables" and they embody what Joseph Roach calls "memory and counter-memory"; that is they render visible Native American presence and epistemologies where they have been and continue to be violently erased (Roach 20).

Circum-Atlantic societies like the United States and Canada have invented themselves through the performance of "incomplete forgetting" (Roach 6). Until 1990 when NAGPRA was implemented, anthropologists and archaeologists concerned with the Americas labored unquestioned within this economy of incomplete forgetting. In a form of return of the repressed, these researchers unearthed Indigenous remains only to erase them once again by denying them the dignity of a burial and by imposing on them a western reading that constitutes a further act of silencing (Bray 2008). The remains found at UCSD act as uncomfortable reminders of these practices and of the genocidal project that sustained what Roach calls the "invention of a New World" (36). These remains simultaneously act as incriminating witnesses, as evidence of the "destruction, dispossession, and scientific objectification of [Indigenous] cultures and heritages", and perform as surrogates for departed Kumeyaay and other Native American ancestors, holding open a place in memory, a mourning space, however imperfect it may be (Kakaliouras s214). In other words, the chancellor's house remains may pre-date Conquest but, in the dispute with UCSD, they have come to stand–in for the victims of subsequent genocidal campaigns against Native Americans leading to the creation of the United States.

Similarly, *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* dramatizes a pre-colonial Mayan society but the play, as the living remain of an ancient practice many times buried and carefully unearthed, now exemplifies the violent cultural erasure that sustained colonial projects. In

both Ondinnok and the Kumeyaay's repatriation projects, performative repatriatable remains act as stand-ins for a past that they can never fully replace. The two bodies found at UCSD and Ondinnok's adaptation of *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* act as reminders of what existed, and illuminate by comparison the devastating losses suffered by Indigenous communities since then. Read together through a performance studies lens, these seemingly disparate repatriation projects reveal the continuous and pervasive violence against Indigenous peoples that underwrites civil society and its institutions in the Americas, and infiltrates even its reparative laws.

The notion of performative repatriatable that I develop in this chapter helps illuminate the anxiety that Native American repatriation projects inevitably trigger in settler populations. Repatriation (or the attempt to repatriate) constitutes a disruption of dominant cultures' explanatory power: it names and reclaims Indigenous bodies as meaning makers and pushes them from a position of absence into the public sphere. In both Ondinnok's production and the Kumeyaay repatriation case, material remains of Indigenous presence bring to the surface, and at times provoke a symbolic reenactment of the originary violence that created the so-called New World. While theatre affords Ondinnok's founding questions a more permissive explorative arena, one in which radical re-imaginings are perhaps still possible, similar investigations and repatriation performances are often met, outside of the artistic realm, with the powerful hydraulics of a civil society concerned with preserving *status quo*. In other words, Indigenous/Native American/First Nations performative repatriatables can be productively wielded in the theatre space to illuminate loss and actively imagine redress in ways that seem currently impossible in the "real" world.

More diagnostic than prescriptive, in this article I examine how repatriation interventions that take place in the symbolic realm of the theatre can inform our reading of and illuminate the colonial scripts at play in the reception of repatriation gestures taking place in the "real world". In order to articulate a critical vocabulary to account for and discuss how Indigenous presence and repatriation demands are received and interpreted, I examine how Ondinnok's re-imaginative intervention and the Kumeyaay's re-interment campaign were received by theatre critics and UC scientists respectively, analyzing these instances of reception as performances of memory and forgetting, as mediatized enactments of a genealogy of performance that constitutes the so-called New World's genesis.

The multiple un-burials of the chancellor's house remains

In 1976, an archaeological team unearthed the remains of a man and a woman on UCSD's cliff-top property in La Jolla, near San Diego, California. The team found the well-preserved and heretofore undisturbed remains lying together in what appeared to be a double burial. Through radiocarbon dating, scientists estimated the remains to be around 8977 to 9603 years old making them among the oldest found in the Americas (Tuzin 1). The site from which the remains were removed houses the chancellor's official residence, a 1950s adobe home called University House. It is well known that the residence and parts of neighboring La Jolla sit atop a Native American burial site known to the Kumeyaay as Skeleton Hill (Larson 1).[85]

[85] "Archaeologist Malcolm Rogers found 11 burials in 1929 and 1936; 6 burials were discovered in 1947 and 1948; 2 in 1949 by a Scripps ichtyologist; another in 1950 from under the patio area; and 6 more in 1956" (Larson 2008:6).

After their excavation, the remains were stored in various institutions until 2006 when the Kumeyaay demanded their repatriation. Apparently, these successive custodianships took place without UCSD's full approval or knowledge and the remains left "no paper trail" after 1976 (Tuzin 2). Furthermore, "[t]he remains ha[d] never been studied by UC San Diego faculty other than in connection with this repatriation process" (Matthews 3). It is only when the KCRC petitioned for the repatriation and re-interment of the remains on reservation land that UCSD was forced to recognize its responsibility towards the remains in a process that unleashed passionate debates.

Why is it that bones that UCSD had apparently forgotten suddenly triggered such heated opposition? The dispute is a complex affair that pits three parties against each other: the Kumeyaay (KCRC), UCSD who has oscillated since 2006 between favoring and denying repatriation, and a group of UC scientists who simultaneously opposes the Kumeyaay and the University (when it has favored repatriation), demanding that the remains be kept at UCSD for scientific purposes. The claims made by all three parties are ideological: they actively rewrite the past of Native Americans and impact their future. The Kumeyaay, by claiming cultural filiation and asserting their spiritual custodial duties towards the remains, effectively challenge UCSD and the UC scientists' authority over this land and its buried residents. On the other hand, the UC scientists, in refusing to recognize the Kumeyaay's cultural filiation with the remains, rupture the history of Indigenous presence in La Jolla, imposing a divide between pre-Conquest inhabitants and contemporary Native Americans. All three parties have been engaged in legal actions to

resolve this standoff: the Kumeyaay filed the aforementioned complaint against UCSD in April 2012 and the scientists soon followed in an attempt to block repatriation.[86]

Of all three parties, the university's performance is perhaps the most ambivalent. In 2006, UCSD argued in favor of repatriation only to change its position. Then in 2008, the administration supported repatriation as "the wisest, most appropriate, and most respectful action to take at this point" (Matthews 3). Some facts complicate the university's apparent goodwill and help explain its oscillating behavior vis-à-vis repatriation. University House is in dire need of renovation and any retrofitting work could unearth more remains and trigger further NAGPRA disputes. Tribal leaders have suggested that the university, weary of the ethical and public relation challenges attached to the cliff-top property and its buried residents, had tried to "bargain repatriation of the skeletons for the Indian's blessing on the University House project" (Larson 6). In other words, the university may have recast the chancellor's house remains as bridging commodities that could be exchanged in order to guarantee the viability of an expansion project.

Meanwhile, the university faced internal pressure from a small group of its own scientists who oppose repatriation. These scientists – UCSD's Margaret Schoeninger, UC Berkeley's Timothy White, and UC Davis' Robert Bettinger– have continuously rejected the Kumeyaay's claim of affiliation to the remains and voiced their opposition on various stages such as high-profile scientific journals and academic committees. Despite scholarly claims to scientific objectivity, these stages are far from neutral and have been and remain largely inaccessible to Native Americans.

---

[86] In May 2012, UCSD replied by asking the Southern District of California Court to dismiss both cases.

Although Schoeninger, White and Bettinger have claimed to speak for the entire UC community in their various interventions since 2006, there exists a dissenting group within the university led by Professor Ross Frank of the Ethnic Studies Department. This group questions the three scientists' interpretation of the available data. In 2012, Schoeninger, White and Bettinger summarized the position they have maintained for the last six years: "there is insufficient evidence to support the conclusion that the Kumeyaay are descended from the people who were buried at the site" (White, Bettinger & Shoeninger v. UCSD, UC Regents, Yudof, Fox, & Matthews 11). Disregarding a documented Kumeyaay tradition of land custodianship, the three scientists went further and affirmed that the remains failed to even "meet the legal definition of 'Native American' under NAGPRA" (Ibid).

In their legal filing, Schoeninger, White and Bettinger are involved in more than a rhetorical argument; by refusing to call the remains "Native American," the scientists are positioning the remains outside of Kumeyaay lineage. Thus, they argue, the remains should not be returned to the Kumeyaay. Professor Frank had criticized this biased interpretation of the data in 2008, arguing that the same data deemed insufficient to support the Kumeyaay claim could not suddenly prove robust enough to prove the three scientists' case (Frank 2008). Frank questioned the logic behind privileging UCSD, a relatively young institution with no possible claim of cultural affiliation to the remains, over the Kumeyaay, whose presence in the San Diego area far predates the creation of the United States and whose affiliation claim is possible and in line with their tradition of custodianship over their traditional land and all its inhabitants.

Unearthing the dead, burying the past?

The UC scientists opposing repatriation are performing a well-rehearsed colonial scenario that served to (re)write and (re)name an entire continent. Having "discovered" the remains, the UC scientists position themselves as experts on Indigenous matters and arbiters of authenticity.[87] They argue that they alone, as objective representatives of Western science, can legitimately claim knowledge of and assign meaning to these remains. Michel de Certeau writes: "The Conqueror will write the body of the other and trace their own history […] *This is writing that conquers*. It will use the New World as if it were a blank "savage" space on which Western desire will be written" (xxv). De Certeau is describing the pervasive nature of colonial rewriting, a process that renames land and imposes borders –the reservations stand as violent examples of the ongoing nature of this remapping– and flattens richly diverse sovereign nations into one people, the "Indians." The "body of the other" on which history is forcefully written, includes not only the living but, as the Kumeyaay repatriation dispute demonstrates, the dead, the long buried, the distant ancestors whose presence and history constitute a perpetual, and often more ancient counter-narrative to the conqueror's rewriting.

Joseph Roach discusses the evocative and often threatening nature of bodies – bodies that come to stand for an entire community and its history, and bodies that contradict hegemonic narratives. In *Cities of the Dead*, Roach describes surrogation as the process through which a community regenerates and re-imagines itself by investing symbolic and associative power to performed effigies. These effigies, he writes, are "fabricated by human bodies and the associations they invoke" and while living bodies

[87] See works by Vine Deloria Jr., Kevin Bruyneel and Taiaiake Alfred, among others.

can stand in as performed effigies, “so can corpses” (36). For colonial projects who depend for their coherence on portraying land as a blank savage space ready for the taking, the dead others act as haunting effigies, as uncomfortable reminders of the fragility of the colonial discursive enterprise. These effigies interrupt the conqueror’s performance of continuity and legitimacy and thus must be reburied (symbolically or literally) or their evocative power otherwise deflected.

The chancellor’s house remains illuminate implicit and disturbing links between genocide and current settler states’ discourse of legitimacy. Again, the remains predate the Conquest and thus, the man and woman at the heart of this dispute did not die in the violent campaigns led first by European colonial powers and then by the United States against Native Americans. However, their excavation and the possibility of their return to an extant Native American community provoke a reenactment of the same form of violence that subtended these earlier campaigns, denied Native American presence and rewrote an entire continent. Furthermore, the remains bring to the surface questions surrounding ownership, filiation and restoration; that is the very web of relationality and belonging that was targeted by the various genocidal strategies deployed against Native Americans through violence, land grabs, or through such uprooting policies as the residential school system or forced relocalization. To the descendants of the conquered, the effigies, in their capacity to evoke past violence and provoke the reenactment of genocidal violence in present forms, are stand-ins for the generations of Native Americans who lived and died under the various regimes that led to the formation of the nations of the Americas. The remains thus become a bridge, performative repatriatables through which the dead can be brought home.

In other words, the power of these performative repatriatables comes not from their literal origin but from their ability to invoke temporal vertigo by evoking a subsequent history of genocide. In *Red, White & Black*, Frank Wilderson argues that Native Americans' loss of sovereignty over territory and material objects constitutes one of the two modalities of Native Americans' "grammar of suffering" (Wilderson 49). The tremendous sovereignty losses suffered by Native Americans can be delineated on a map, and restitution, although improbable, is within the realm of the imaginable. For Wilderson however US or Canadian settler civil societies cannot imagine, even less accommodate, redress for genocide, the second modality of Native Americans' grammar of suffering. More importantly, he argues, settler civil society cannot tolerate the effigies of genocidal victims. These effigies' evocative power, their capacity to trigger what I call vertiginous consciousness, poses a threat to settler civil society's stable sense of self which is predicated on the erasure of Native Americans through physical and cultural genocide.

Rather than a discrete foundational moment, the erasure of Native Americans is what Giorgio Agamben calls "continually operative" (Agamben 109). Kevin Bruyneel argues that such erasures are "perpetually and necessarily re-inscribed in the present through the discourse, practices, and mnemonics of state sovereignty, and white settler nationalism" (Bruyneel 7), for which the academic world has historically served as a legitimizing tool. Thus, the debate surrounding the repatriation of the UCSD remains performs this continuously operative erasure: it conjugates past violence in the present tense, extending settler ownership and control of Native American to even the dead that predate western presence on the continent. The UC scientists' response to the Kumeyaay

exemplifies Wilderson's point that American civil society cannot tolerate reminders of Native American genocide. This incapacity is widespread: Ward Churchill points out that discourses denying Native American genocide are found "in more-or-less equal parts at all points on the ideological compass of the dominant society" (Churchill 4). Dominant society cannot recognize the obliteration of Native Americans and retain ethical coherence. To admit the foundational role of genocide in the formation of modern America is to admit that one shares the benefits of an unethical societal and national project. Therefore genocide uncomfortably haunts American narratives; any affirmation of the sovereignty of the settler states is necessarily, as Lisa Lowe argues, "inhabited by the forgetting of [its] condition of possibility" and haunted by the "burial, by the violence of forgetting" (Lowe 206).

Critics such as Bruyneel, Wilderson, and Churchill help us understand the UC scientists' seemingly visceral reaction towards the Kumeyaay. If settler states maintain their coherence through performances of forgetting and continuously operative erasure, then burial sites and archaeological digs offer a rich symbolic ground for these performances to be reenacted. Settlers unearth the past and cast remains as bridges with a past that they alone possess authority to name. The Kumeyaay's repatriation demand interrupts this economy of forgetting and challenges this performance of legitimacy. It complicates the assumption that excavation necessarily leads to visibility or to a better understanding of a past people. In other words, the Kumeyaay interrupt the narrative of benevolent understanding that often surrounds the excavation of human remains. Even if the chancellor's house remains predate Conquest, the Kumeyaay cast them as ancestors and read their disinterment as a gesture that perpetuates the logic of erasure of genocide.

Saturated with this evocative power, the remains act as stand-ins for the subsequent genocidal violence performed on Indigenous bodies and cultures. The repatriation demand makes "us" look at archaeological digs as performances of a continually operative violent past.

Symbolically, the KCRC repatriation project performed a second unearthing of the chancellor's house skeletons, one that allowed objectified remains to reintegrate a human lineage and to stand in for subsequent generations of Native Americans. When they brought the remains from hidden museum spaces to the surface, the Kumeyaay asked that the remains' signifying power be discussed. The KCRC's intervention recast the remains as performative repatriatables, and forced discussions that uncomfortably illuminated past and present violence towards Indigenous bodies. The Kumeyaay's insistence on presenting the remains as ancestors, as carriers of meaning, and as links between the tribes and their ancestral land revealed a gap between the Western academic world and Kumeyaay ways of understanding the world.

The Kumeyaay's claim of affiliation constitutes an interruption of the settler-colonial genocidal re-mappings at more than one level. Indeed, if Indigenous space and bodies were remapped in the various regimes that led to the creation of the current settler states, then so was time through the de-temporalization of Indigenous populations. Discursively placed in what Kevin Bruyneel calls "colonial time", Indigenous people were remapped by settler-colonial powers as out of time, their presence closely linked with untenable demands of authenticity that deny Native Americans a contemporary presence and the possibility to cross temporal boundaries and articulate an identity in the "now" (Bruyneel 2). This remapping of Native American temporality performs a radical

gesture of closure: it positions Native Americans as a barren people, incapable of renewal, and imagines them without credible successors and, as is the case for the chancellor's house remains, without links to a distant past. When the Kumeyaay speak of the remains as their ancestors and position the tribe as the remains' steward, they are actively performing a counter-mapping of time and space. They perform continuity and argue that they are a community with links to the past, a community that can renew itself through performing cyclical rites for human remains understood as ancestral surrogates.

With the remains suddenly charged with such evocative power, the battle over repatriation became loaded, especially for the small group of UC scientists who firmly opposed the KCRC's claim. The stakes, it seems, were suddenly higher than mere repatriation: they had to do with ownership of the truth when it comes to the Americas and their early inhabitants. The UC scientists retaliated with a multi-faceted performance that merits attention, claiming their legitimate ownership of the chancellor's house remains through open letters in high-impact scientific journals and voicing their opposition in carefully worded performances in key committees and interviews. Ironically, they were aided in their opposition campaign by NAGPRA, the very law that was supposed to facilitate repatriation.

When the KCRC first contacted UCSD in 2006, NAGPRA stipulated that tribes, in order to repatriate, had to demonstrate a form of cultural affiliation with the remains or objects.[88] However, many Native American tribes, having been displaced or otherwise

---

[88] Under NAGPRA, cultural affiliation is "established when the preponderance of the evidence – based on geographical, kinship, biological, archeological, linguistic, folklore, oral tradition, historical evidence, or other information or expert opinion – reasonably leads to such a conclusion". (http://www.nps.gov/nagpra/mandates/)

uprooted by settler state policies found it difficult to provide the robust evidence demanded by NAGPRA. Oral history, the main historical archive for many native communities, did not persuade NAGPRA committees. The law was amended in 2010 and can now recognize as culturally affiliated the tribes closest to the territories in which remains were found. More importantly, the repatriation process often illuminated seemingly irreconcilable views of the world and of the nature of being. The very understanding of bones, for example, of what they mean as a category of "things" – the mere "biological husks of a once living but now dead being" for the West, versus the embodiment of ancestors for the Kumeyaay– revealed profoundly divergent *epistemes* (Kakaliouras s213). Unsurprisingly, tribes found that anthropologists who had authoritatively told the story of Native Americans until then, did not position these *epistemes* as equal to western ways of understanding the world. Many Native Americans and non-Native American anthropologists have no doubt challenged this devaluation and proposed works that re-center Indigenous epistemes. However their work is still outnumbered by a long tradition of anthropological work couched in western bias.

This kind of devaluation is clearly at work in the UC scientists' various performances of opposition since the beginning of the KCRC case. The scientists have systematically cast the Kumeyaay as anti-science, ignoring the tribes' collaboration with San Diego State University's Dr. Arion Mayes of the department of Anthropology, who performed a non-invasive investigative analysis on the remains in ways that did not desecrate the bones (Larson 5). The UC scientists conveniently ignored the KCRC's attempts to render scientific testing more respectful of the Kumeyaay's role as custodians

of the dead and simply portrayed the tribe as "ideology driven" (Schoeninger, Bada, Masters, Bettinger and White 916).

Ironically, in their performance of indignation, the group of UC scientists never questioned the very bias that drives their own campaign against repatriation, namely their conviction that science itself is non-ideological and that academic work somehow exists outside of structures of power that maintain hegemonic narratives in place. To admit the validity of the Kumeyaay claim to a more respectful form of science would be to question academia's claims to exclusive control over the interpretation of the past and many disciplines' colonialist practices.

In a letter published in *Science* in May 2011, Bettinger, White and Schoeninger write along with two other colleagues:

> [T]he University of California favors the ideology of a local American Indian group over the legitimacy of science. […] The potential loss of the La Jolla skeletons would have a profoundly negative impact on our knowledge of the peopling of the Americas. (916)

The UC scientists perform here an interesting pas-de-deux that simultaneously recognizes and denies the power of the chancellor's house remains as effigy: they cast the remains as universal patrimony, and present their DNA as a source of knowledge that could benefit all. To prevent research, they argue, would deny humanity a source of precious knowledge. The scientists interestingly fold the Kumeyaay in the "we" of a universal humanity while simultaneously denying the tribe any explanatory power over it.

The UC scientists also conveniently ignore the fact that the accumulation of this humanity's patrimony, implicitly understood in the letter to *Science* as Western scientific knowledge, cannot be separated from violence on Native American and other racialized

bodies. The very creation of the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act is a testimony to this abuse. The collected bodies –silenced and dehumanized– of Native Americans still crowd museums and research institutes and constitute the very condition of possibility of North American archaeology and anthropology. Museological "collections" of human remains, as Rebecca Tillett argues, cannot be uncoupled from "notions of ownership inherent within the concept of slavery" (86). Similarly, there are "implicit and disturbing links between the collection of human remains and the "souvenirs" taken during actual acts of genocide against Native peoples in the United States" (Tillett 86).

At the moment of writing this article, the chancellor's house remains are still in UCSD's custody and the three lawsuits have brought negotiations to a halt. The Kumeyaay's repatriation project challenges the Western stronghold on Native American history and thus triggers muscled and uncompromising responses from parts of the academic world. Repatriation projects are met quite differently in the artistic realm, an area of exploration where destabilizing narratives and forms of repatriation that are symbolic in nature have the potential, as I will now discuss, to provoke productive encounters between spectators and Indigenous performers.

Ondinnok's repatriation project in the theatre space

Ondinnok could not have chosen a more evocative play than *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* to explore repatriation in the theatre space. Indeed, the play's performance history is a fascinating account of what Gerald Vizenor calls "survivance". Survivance, he writes, is "more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; [it is] an active presence […] an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (Vizenor 15). This

active, obstinate presence is woven into the very fabric of *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* both in the epistemological framework of the play-text and in the history that surrounds its transmission. *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* is relatively unknown outside of Guatemala where it is still performed. The dance drama ritual, its 3000 verses and choreography, is carefully preserved in San Pablo Rabinal by *El Grupo Danza Drama Rabinal Achi*, led by Jose Leon Coloch Garniga, the official holder of the ritual. Coloch Garniga and his son assisted Sioui Durand in his adaptation and took part in Ondinnok's production. The pre-Conquest play has defied centuries of colonial censorship and appropriation as well as Guatemala's recent bloody armed conflict. It was at times buried, performed and transmitted clandestinely.

While the play's transmission history is rich, the play-text itself merits careful attention as it uniquely dramatizes a time when Mayan civilization existed untouched by Europeans. *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* is a Mayan court drama; its text and performance are highly stylized —so much so that performances have proven difficult, impenetrable even, for contemporary audiences regardless of their cultural backgrounds. The libretto's imagery is infused with references to Mayan cosmology. Spoken and danced to the sound of trumpets (*tun*), the piece dramatizes the trial of Cawek, a warrior from a neighboring nation accused of treason by the people of Rabinal. Cawek's trial presents a Mayan world yet unmarked by Christianity's notions of absolute Good and Evil (Tedlock 250). Cawek and his judge, the Man of Rabinal, are not positioned as ontologically opposed but as two continuous forces that are both necessary to the world's equilibrium.

Rich with layers of historical references, *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* distills many generations of Mayan stories and anecdotes, practices and beliefs into one play. As such,

the play constitutes a living repository of a pre-colonial past and offers a rare glimpse at a moment of Mayan sovereignty – as the right to judge and impose sentences is after all, at the root of any sovereign nation. As Dennis Tedlock argues: "[t]he representation of Cawek's death at the hands of his captors requires a major revision of received notions about the role of human sacrifice in ancient Mesoamerica" (4). Indeed, conveniently forgetting their own use of capital punishment, colonizers labored to reframe Mayan sacrifices as barbaric customs in campaigns to denigrate Mayan religion, culture, and sovereignty. *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* contradicts these reductive images as it presents the sacrifice of Cawek as the legitimate execution of a prisoner tried and found guilty of deadly offenses by his peers.

It comes as no surprise that a play that portrays a sovereign nation applying justice within its own coherent cosmological and epistemological frameworks provoked the ire of colonial and religious authorities. After Conquest, these forces regularly banned the play, arguing that it would incite human sacrifices and lead civil society to chaos (Tedlock 5). Brandishing Christianity and Western epistemologies as the only valid and legitimate ways of being in the world, colonial and religious authorities devalued the knowledge (and the possible seeds of rebellion) contained in *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi*. After all, the play contained a counter-narrative to colonial claims of civilization and advancement. The parallel between this colonial tactic and the campaign of epistemological devaluation currently led by UC scientists is disturbing. In a rhetorical move that echoes colonial and religious authorities, the UC scientists present science as the only valid explanatory lens through which to read the La Jolla remains. This

discourse of legitimacy and threat, whether it is performed in Guatemala or in La Jolla, is a performance of colonial power.

Like the Kumeyaay today, the Mayans found ingenious ways to respond to the devaluating discourse employed by colonial powers to delegitimize their cultural practices. For one thing, the Mayans removed from the play and its performance "all but the outlines of the original religious content from public view", assigning it instead to the Road Guide (*K'amol B'e)* "a native priest-shaman who does most of his work behind the walls of houses and on mountaintops" (Tedlock 5). In other words, dramatists buried the memory under the surface and made it opaque to the non-initiated. The structure and performance tradition of the play thus contain layers of resistance and ingenious survivance tactics.

Ondinnok adopted a similar practice of opacity in its adaptation of the play. Given the overwhelmingly reductive portrayals of First Nations communities as "damaged and depleted communities" (Tuck 412) that circulate in Canadian mainstream media, representing Indigenous trauma for settler communities presents the risk of reinforcing damaging stereotypes. Perhaps because Ondinnok was keenly aware of these possible pitfalls, the company moved away from explicitness and towards a strategic use of opacity. Ondinnok's production powerfully acknowledged trauma without making it the only lens through which the audience could apprehend the Indigenous bodies onstage. In refusing to perform or locate loss in an explicit way, Ondinnok strategically displaced the burden of representing trauma away from the Indigenous performers —avoiding the re-inscription of their bodies as sites of devastation— and onto the event itself. They echoed the resistance tactics adopted by post-Conquest Mayan dramatists who rendered the

meaning of *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* opaque and relocated some of its sacred aspects in the meta-theatrical practices of the Road Guide.

Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi, the text and its performance tradition, constitutes a form of performative repatriatable. The playtext of *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* like the chancellor's house remains who carry the ancestors' spirits, is not inert; it transmits a form of cultural, historical and cosmological knowledge that is fundamentally at odds with Western cosmologies. The play, like the bones found in La Jolla, is understood by the Mayans not as a remnant of the past, or as the shell of a world that once was, but as a living repertoire that connects the past to the present. The play is a repository of a form of knowledge that is "embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, coexperienced, covert – and all the more meaningful because of its refusal to be spelled out" (Conquergood 146).

Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi is at its core a play-ritual that protects the region of Rabinal from an ancient curse laid by Cawek upon its capture. The play's performance is preceded by preparatory rituals during which the Road Guide invites Cawek's and his captors' spirits to become visible for a day. On the day of the performance, as they enact Cawek's trial, the actors are visited by the spirits of these ancestors. In his account of a 1998 performance of the play in San Pablo Rabinal, Tedlock describes how the performers, aided by the sound of the trumpets, bring "*Rabinal Achi* into the present world from another one – a prior world, yes, but also a parallel one, in the sense that it is always there" (Tedlock 14). The performers make the memories of this parallel world visible for the time of the performance, acting as performative repatriatables bridging past and present in regenerative communal way.

This coupling of theatrical ritual and regeneration is central to Ondinnok's work. Ondinnok, a First Nations theatre company based in Montreal and founded in 1985, defines its theatre as an attempt to "re-conquer [First Nations] imaginary" and "to repatriate a memory in order to unleash a future" (Ondinnok 2012). Like the Kumeyaay, Ondinnok understands itself as a steward of Indigenous cultural capital, and as such, is invested in repatriating, honoring, and reimagining First Nations heritage. The company, whose Huron-Wendat name means "a healing ritual that reveals the secret longing of the soul" performs what Roach calls a "dramaturgy of cultural renewal" (Ondinnok 2012; Roach 136).

Unlike some of Ondinnok's past productions in which Indigenous loss was explored explicitly, trauma resulting from colonial and genocidal violence remained unnamed on stage in *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi*. Nevertheless, Ondinnok's production was, at its core, a repatriation project. The story of Cawek and the Man of Rabinal does not directly dramatize post-colonial loss but it relentlessly points to this trauma by showing what *was,* what *existed* before the advent of the colonial forces. Moments of "vertiginous consciousness" occurred in the gap between the various production elements—that is in the space between actors and audience, the play and its historical context, and the story and the loss it elucidated. Trauma and the potential for repatriation and mourning acted as a haunting yet unnamed presence throughout the production, precisely because the Indigenous performers never spoke directly of loss, violence or dispossession.

A prologue performed by a devilish trickster figure (Yves Sioui Durand) that does not exist in the original text opened this productive gap at the outset of Ondinnok's performance. Working akin to the road guide who traditionally performs the rituals that

precede the performance of *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* in Guatemala, the trickster figure in Ondinnok's production prepared the stage for a healing ritual. The trickster, a subversive figure present across the Indigenous cultures of the Americas, announced Cawek's trial and gave it an intergenerational and transnational resonance. Clad in a costume that jarringly juxtaposed the richly adorned velvet gown of Catholic priests and an intricate devil headpiece framed by long blond hair, the trickster, dressed in symbols of Conquest and colonization, played at being God, setting the stage, calling for light and sound to begin. During the prologue, the trickster slowly dragged a pile of majestic antlers on stage, these sacred bones "demonized by the colonizers" acting as repositories of a past that has not yet found a resting place (Sioui Durand, Personal Interview 2010). As he moved around the antlers, the trickster revealed the cross that was burned on the back of his gown thus rendering visible the scars of the colonial encounters that need healing. His costume acted as a visual representation of the common experience of cultural devaluation, colonization, and genocide experienced by Indigenous communities across the Americas. As his prologue comes to an end, all the performers slowly come onstage carrying rocks, which are often understood as grandparent figures in various First Nations rituals (Sioui Durand, personal interview 2010), and further established the multigenerational resonance of Ondinnok's healing project.

Ondinnok did not limit its exploration of the gap to the evocative juxtaposition of text and context. As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, the performers' bodies explored and revealed gaps and served as performative repatriatables throughout the production. This embodied repatriation took place in two specific ways that allowed the performers to become surrogates or bridging vessels between past and present: through

moments of what Sioui Durand calls "divinatory theatre" which were interspersed throughout the play, and through the careful decoupling of actors from specific roles (Personal Interview 2010). Sioui Durand interrupted the retelling of Cawek's trial with interludes of "divinatory theatre," which he defines as "moments of connection with the past" (Personal interview 2010). In these moments, the performers halted the play, dispersed on stage, and performed gestures of communion with distant ancestors by becoming vessels of remembrance that could physically retell their story.

The structure of these divinatory interludes was unfixed –the performers reacted differently each night responding to the ancestor(s) who summoned them. For some performers, this communion seemed to begin through a physical connection with the stone (symbolizing the ancestor) they had placed around the stage at the beginning of the play. For others, communing with an ancestor took place through one of the masks that adorned the two benches sitting upstage. In all case, these objects then guided the performer as they memorialized the ancestor through movements choreographed by Patricia Iraola and ranging from the intimate to the more outwardly expressive. All this took place while one performer read passages of the *Popol Vuh* (1000-1697 CE), and the *Chilam Balam* from Chumayel (17th-18th Century), two foundational texts of the Mayan cosmology that contain creation myths, genealogies and predictions based on the Mayan calendar. These highly unfixed interludes allowed for a more overt form of repatriation to take place onstage as the performers brought ancestors to life onstage for a moment.

The choice to commune with the ancestors through the use of masks is meaningful because, as Dennis Tedlock puts it, "[h]eads, and especially faces, have played a central role in Mayan notions of identity and personhood throughout history"

(Tedlock 146). The head and the face were closely linked to notions of kinship; the word for face belonged in fact to a semantic field related to species, filiation, and relationality. In other words, to show one's face was to reveal one's lineage, to divulge one's affiliation to a community, a place. In the playtext, Cawek himself meditates at length on the link between his identity and his impending beheading. He relates his head and face to a deeper sense of belonging to a community that will be lost after his execution. Moments before his execution, the condemned Cawek contemplates a round drinking vessel and asks: "Could this be the skull of my grandfather? Could this be the skull of my father?" Traditionally, Tedlock states that Cawek "imagines that his own head will become a work of some kind, an artifact" (Tedlock 151). Despite cutting significant amounts of text in their production, Ondinnok kept Cawek's meditation in the production and this relationship between face and filiation is powerfully revisited by the actors who, like the young woman described in this article's opening sequence, became one with a mask onstage during the interludes of divinatory theatre. By putting on the ancestor's mask, his face, the young woman claimed a lineage across time and space and demanded a complex reading by audience members. At the end of the interlude, her slow removal of the mask constituted a form of becoming, the articulation of what an Indigenous presence both informed by the past and alive in the "now" might be.

When *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* is performed in Guatemala, it is understood that the ghosts of the play's characters visit the performers, allowing them to retell their stories. Actors thus perform one role for the entirety of the play. Yves Sioui Durand adopted elements of this performance mode in his production. He worked to destabilize the symbiotic relationship between performers and their roles that rules realist theatre. As he

explains in the play's program: "every night, one performer is summoned by the ancestors to embody Cawek. In turn, when the story has been told, one of the performers is chosen to play the sacrifice victim" (Sioui Durand 2010). The night I saw the production, a young Huron-Wendat actor was chosen to be Cawek; a woman, the only non-Indigenous performer, played Cawek at the sacrificial moment. By breaking Cawek's part in two, Sioui Durand denied the audience a certain form of identification, the emotional reward of following a character's journey from beginning to end.

Throughout the performance, the cast of Ondinnok oscillated between acting as translators for their audience – providing a point of entry into the text and leaving spectators in the uncomfortable position of outsiders. The actors, for example, performed in Mayan, French, English, and Spanish and the interludes of divinatory theatre, while often symbolically rich, seemed at times impenetrable. While some of these difficulties might simply come from the highly unfixed structure of Ondinnok's adaptation, this opacity was often deployed as a gesture of resistance, re-appropriation, and healing.

As Saidiya Hartman points out about the hidden subtexts of slaves' songs and dances, opacity can be deployed as a form of resistance, a way to reclaim and preserve a sense of self (Hartman 1997). Hartman ultimately argues that given the slave's lack of agency, opacity had no performative or transformative power under chattel slavery's system of total domination. In other words, the black body as a socially dead object could not resist its way to subjectivity. In the case of Indigenous bodies however, opacity can allow Indigenous performers to redefine themselves outside of colonial demands of legibility and authenticity and challenge the audience's potentially victimizing gaze. Indeed, the production's opacity denied the audience the possibility to fold Indigenous

trauma into their own sense of guilt or discomfort, further erasing Indigenous experience through empathic identification. It contested the reductive marking of Indigenous bodies as sites of devastation, and reclaimed a sense of being unmarked, whole, and complex.

The Kumeyaay's repatriation project deploys opacity in similarly productive ways. The KCRC opposes any form of scientific testing that breaks the surface of the bone, claiming that it desecrates the remains' soul. Their claim, and it is a powerful one, is that these bones should remain whole and illegible to us, that there is something sacred in being opaque. Returning the remains to the ground is the only way to restore illegibility and opacity to these humans from the past.

In the case of Ondinnok's production, keeping the performers' bodies and certain aspects of the productions opaque, illegible, unattainable, was perhaps a way to deny the audience a form of catharsis, the momentary purging of their sensation of guilt and/or outrage only to better return to *status quo* in their daily lives. Guatemalan audiences familiar with the play may have the cultural keys to understand the play's opacity. They may know of the ways in which a strategic use of opacity protected the play under colonization and they may thus partake in a communal catharsis of seeing *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi* continue to outplay settler-colonial pressure. The same cannot be said for the largely non-First Nations audience members in Montreal who were certainly reminded at various times that this ritual was not intended for them, to assuage their possible sense of guilt towards the First Nations population that constitutes for many the "unknown other".

In adopting opacity and frustrating the largely non-native audience members' desire for catharsis, Ondinnok attempted to illuminate what Hartman calls "the

slipperiness of empathy" as well as what others identify as the pitfalls of identification when it comes to the representation of marginalized communities (Hartman 1997; Anderson 2012; Wilderson 2010). Hartman argues that empathy is inextricably bound with erasure and that there are dangers in the exercise of projecting oneself into another in order to better understand the other's suffering. Identification –the need to put oneself in the place of the other- can lead to a further erasure of the other's pain. Again, Hartman discusses empathy in the specific context of black fungibility. However, her critique of empathy as a "facile intimacy" proves useful in discussing the relationship between non-First Nations audiences and the ongoing genocidal suffering of First Nations bodies (Hartman 19-20). To empathize with genocide (which is itself an act of total erasure) would require an act of identification that would further erase the genocidal object by replacing his or her suffering with that of the audience members. This identification, this illusion of intimacy is cathartic for the audience. By denying the audience the satisfaction of identification and catharsis, Ondinnok held the audience accountable for their complacency and complicity in the ongoing violence against Indigenous bodies.

Whether or not the production succeeded is up for debate. While a critic like Cadieux welcomed the production's opacity, others lamented it as unwelcoming to audiences. The production frustrated critic Mélanie Grondin's expectations; she called the production "fascinating but hermetic." She wondered why Ondinnok did not labor to render the meaning of the play-ritual more accessible (Grondin 2010). Grondin's critique illuminates the assumption that visibility and legibility go hand-in-hand and that Indigenous bodies should be transparently understandable for the settler majority. Such assumptions are not surprising given settler-states' history of presenting themselves as

"experts on Indians." Laws like Canada's Indian Act regulating who is and is not "Indian" are articulated around demands of complete transparency for First Nations subjects. These standards of authenticity set from the outside have given the non-Indigenous majority the ultimate say over whose bodies count as "Indian" and the vocabulary to name and read First Nations bodies. When Ondinnok deploys opacity and illegibility onstage, it challenges this vocabulary and points to its constructed nature. Ondinnok re-casts audience members of the dominant majority as non-experts and exposes them to Indigenous bodies that refuse reductive markings. This is, I argue, Ondinnok's approach but what if the audience refuses to be re-cast that way?

Repatriation and colonial agnosia

Ondinnok's repatriation project raises challenging questions about the limits of empathy when seemingly irreconcilable narratives shape the audience members' and performers' sense of self. The Kumeyaay's repatriation project stages a similarly threatening encounter. How does one (or *can* one) witness a presence, a remapping or demand for repatriation that, in the reality it illuminates, threatens to disarticulate one's own self-definition? The current impasse at UCSD demonstrates the difficulty of this encounter in the context of settler states that have yet to end structural discrimination against Native populations or make redress an integral part of their political and societal project. These states –and the populations who keep them in place– depend in large part on the continuous trauma of Indigenous communities for their economic development, cartographic integrity, and stable sense of identity. Canada, Montreal, and the very performance center in which the audience was seated for Ondinnok's production, for example, stand on land that was appropriated at great human cost and never returned.

UCSD as an institution and more broadly research on the Americas as a field of inquiry has benefited and continues to benefit from the dispossession of Native Americans. To expose that loss through performative repatriatables and think of redress and healing in this context are profoundly challenging acts for both the performers and for those who witness repatriation projects. They induce moments of vertiginous consciousness.

As many scholars suggest (Churchill 2001, Wilderson 2010) such moments of vertiginous consciousness constitute a menace so great that they are quickly diverted, dismissed, or folded and neatly re-narrativized. This re-narrativization takes multiple forms ranging from violent repression, to an insidious type of misreading or misrecognition of Indigenous material remains, presence and demands by non-Indigenous populations. When it comes to how gestures of Indigenous re-appropriation or repatriation might be received, scholar Audra Simpson from the Mohawk nation, notes: “[t]he very notion of Indigenous nationhood which demarcates identity and seizes tradition in ways that may be antagonistic to the encompassing frame of the state, may be simply unintelligible to the western and/or imperial ear” (Simpson 114). Simpson echoes here Jodi A. Byrd’s notion of “colonial agnosia” or the incapacity for the non-Indigenous to read Indigenous presence and comprehend Indigenous demands outside of reductive colonial narratives (Byrd 2012).

In the case of Grondin’s critique, colonial agnosia is the refusal to encounter the illegible body onstage. It is also the demand that First Nations bodies make themselves legible to “us” rather than “us” having to face a body that exceeds our meager vocabulary. For the UC scientists, colonial agnosia is a complete refusal to see the remains as other than inert objects ready for the taking. The Kumeyaay’s repatriation

project and Ondinnok's theatre of repatriation complicate and at times decouple visibility and legibility, burying and forgetting. They propose instead that to unearth in the name of science does not necessarily lead to a better understanding of the remains that have surfaced. As the Kumeyaay case suggests, excavating remains can trigger instead a re-enactment of colonial violence and a further mis-reading of Indigenous bodies. Conversely, as Ondinnok illuminates in its theatre-ritual, unearthing remains in the symbolic realm can be a way to mourn and reclaim a common lineage across the borders imposed on Indigenous communities by colonial and settler states. In the cases of Ondinnok and of the Kumeyaay it is the gesture of burying that allows memory and lineage to be performed and reclaimed. To bury is to restore complexity, to finally undo the reductive markings of colonial gaze. The Kumeyaay's and Ondinnok's understanding of burying stands in sharp contrast to Western notions of burying. The act of burying is not coupled by the Kumeyaay or Ondinnok with loss, finality, or the repressed. Both repatriation projects gesture to opacity as a way to perhaps see what "we" cannot (normally) see. More importantly, these two performances illuminate how stages –from the theatrical stage to the performance platforms afforded to scientists and representatives of settler states- are still far from being a level playing field for Indigenous bodies and epistemologies. The Indigenous groups who perform and demand repatriation continue to face structures and audiences that are profoundly threatened by their claims of presence, filiation and, ultimately, of futurity.

Conclusion

This dissertation begins with a photo taken in 1990 during the events that shook the border between Kanehsatake and Oka, and radically reshaped First Nations activism in Quebec and in Canada. It seems fitting to end with a reflection on Idle No More, a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit grassroots movement that started in December 2012 and remains active today. The waves of activism and political protests that organized around Oka and, more recently, around Idle No More, feature condensed and highly visible public spectacles of First Nation-ness, moments in which First Nations performances of presence, community, and sovereignty, burst into the public sphere and disrupt Canada and Quebec's *status quo*. These two political movements were born in reaction to similar unilateral moves by settler colonial governments, and together, they illuminate settler colonialism as an ongoing structure rather than a discrete moment from the distant past. The strategies deployed in Oka and those employed by Idle No More in their nationwide protests are vastly different. Read together, these two moments of colliding encounters between First Nations and settler communities encapsulate this dissertation's investigation.

Idle No More began in late 2012 when four women used the catalyzing power of social media to organize nationwide protests against Canada's proposed Omnibus Bill C-45. This sweeping bill, which was ultimately adopted, unilaterally changed legislation contained in 64 acts and regulations, among them the Indian Act, the Navigation Protection Act, and the Environmental Assessment Act. These changes dramatically impact First Nations communities (who were not consulted), their eroding territory, and

their infringed-upon sovereignty.[89] Canada's unilateral revisiting of the laws that organize its relationship with First Nations is not surprising, and echoes the gesture posed by the mayor of Oka in 1990, when he decided to expand a golf course on contested Mohawk land. Little has changed in a quarter of a century. Despite the adoption of Bill C-45, or, more likely, because of it, Idle No More is still active on many fronts today, protesting against Oil and Mining development projects that impact First Nations communities for example, or demanding a public inquiry on the hundreds of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

The early days of the movement were marked by high profile hunger strikes by Chief Teresa Spence and Grand Elder Raymond Robinson, as well as by flash mobs and other seemingly spontaneous gatherings that reinvested public spaces with political power. Idle No More's more recent interventions have taken the shape of peaceful demonstrations, long distance marches, artistic projects, and teach-ins springing up across the country. With no official leader, the movement relies on many spokespeople and on provincial coalitions to deliver its decolonizing message. The movement is, in many ways, indebted to the Mohawk protesters who occupied the border between Kanehsatake and Oka in 1990. But, while the Oka crisis energized a new wave of First Nations resistance in Canada, the Mohawks' stance – perceived by many settlers as threatening and violent, as seen in Alanis Obomsawin's film – failed to rally a significant number of settler allies. The issues around which Idle No More rallies today are in essence not that different from those that united the Mohawks in 1990. Both the Mohawks and Idle No

[89] For instance, changes to the Indian Act reduce the protection afforded to treaty lands, and opens them to development without a majority approval from the community. The changes to the Navigation and Environmental Assessment Acts effectively remove most of the environmental assessment requirements previously asked of natural resources developers.

More activists are decrying Canada's ongoing settler colonial encroachment on First Nations' rights, lands, and resources. Despite this common critique however, Idle No More, unlike the Mohawks' movement, has attracted many settler allies who join protests and post messages of solidarity and support on Facebook or other social media.

For many journalists and activists, these talks of solidarity and alliances between settlers and First Peoples are encouraging, signaling a change between 1990 and today, and indicating that reconciliation between First Peoples and settler Canadians is possible. For their part, many weary Indigenous activists have raised concerns about the very concept of settler allies, and the role these allies might play in co-opting, settling, and domesticating a movement like Idle No More. As these self-proclaimed allies start to employ the language of analogy, or deploy "decolonization as a metaphor", to borrow from Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang's work, it becomes clear that decolonization movements like Idle No More can be penetrated by settler colonialism's logic of elimination, erasure, and replacement. Tuck and Yang write:

> When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future. Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks… When we write about decolonization, we are not offering it as a metaphor; it is not an approximation of other experiences of oppression. Decolonization is not a swappable term for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. Decolonization doesn't have a synonym. (Tuck & Yang 3)

Tuck and Yang contend that an "easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation," another way for settler colonial subjects to avoid facing the difficult questions that decolonization practices, if

embraced, bring to the fore (Tuck and Yang 3). Decolonization, these two authors argue, should be unsettling, for it requires what Frantz Fanon called "a program of complete disorder" (Fanon 36). To decolonize is to radically rethink and undo the current structures of power. It begins by rendering visible what settler colonialism continually attempts to erase or naturalize, and, crucially, with the repatriation of "Indigenous land and life" (Tuck & Yang 1). Given decolonization's exigencies, settler solidarity should be demanding and confronting, and it should translate into real listening followed by meaningful actions. Solidarity, these critiques argue, cannot be limited to "liking" a post on Facebook.

The First Nations performances that this dissertation examines labor for decolonization and, in doing so, collide with settler interlocutors. The repatriation work that I document in chapter four, performs the demands on settlers that Tuck and Yang articulate so urgently in their work. The repatriation that Ondinnok perform onstage and the Kumeyaay demand from UCSD, render visible the threatening nature of solidarity, especially when such a stance demands that settlers let go of privileges long unquestioned. Ondinnok's deployment of opacity, its tactic of illegibility onstage, and refusal of facile empathy when it comes to Indigenous bodies and performances, all aim to unsettle the settler audience. Ondinnok challenges audience members who may be used to the privilege that underpins settler colonialism and that positions settlers as experts when it comes to naming and reading Indigenous bodies. Ondinnok makes demands of its audiences and holds them accountable. Similarly, the Kumeyaay's repatriation demands challenges UC scientists' so-called neutral scientific expertise on the remains found under the Chancellor's House at UCSD. In doing so, the Kumeyaay

articulate a difficult concept, namely that decolonization demands a greater respect for differences and that Western worldviews may be, in some instances, irreconcilable with First Nations epistemologies. The Kumeyaay people, then, refuse to see decolonization as a metaphor, and place repatriation as decolonization's central and non-negotiable starting point. The scientists' reactions, their attempt to rewrite the remains as non Native American, betray the profound threat that decolonization poses to the edifice of settler colonial privilege.

For many well-meaning settler allies, joining Idle No More's struggle for decolonization makes possible what Tuck and Yang call "a set of evasions, or settler moves to innocence, that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity." (Tuck & Yang 1) These moves to innocence give settlers respite, and allow them to fantasize about reconciliation without having to do the uncomfortable and destabilizing work of decolonization. These moves to innocence can take on many forms, but they always perform the foundational parasitic scenario of settler colonialism, wherein settlers arrive, appropriate Indigenous space (be it material or epistemological), eliminate or erase Indigeneity (but not entirely since this Indigeneity serves to demarcate the settler from others), and stay. In attempting to find respite and to claim innocence, settlers often invoke settler colonialism as an event of the past, asking why they should pay for the crimes of distant ancestors, and thus refusing to recognize settler colonialism as a structure that organizes and permeates entire societies.

Alexis Martin's play *Invention du chauffage central en Nouvelle France*, and by extension, the Quebec it historicizes, resorts to such "moves to innocence." In his play, Martin takes refuge in an idyllic, prelapsarian Nouvelle France, which he dramatizes as a

moment of alliances and friendly encounters with First Peoples. By removing First Nations characters from the later chapters of his historical play, Martin avoids the difficult reality that Quebec later betrayed all the alliances and friendships made during the early moments his play celebrates. The narrative of Nouvelle France as having been a lesser colonial force, a more benevolent one at least, constitutes an important move to innocence in Quebec's mythscape. Added to this benevolent colonial narrative is one that defines francophone settlers as a community colonized by the British. While the British did attempt to assimilate French-Canadians and deployed oppressive political and economical policies, the intra-colonial conflict between Francophone and Anglophone settlers too often serves to absolve Quebec of its past and present complicity in oppressing First Nations people.

This self-absolving move is present in *Invention* when Takraliq, the play's only contemporary First Nations character, appears onstage. Her testimonial of residential school abuse serves as what Tuck and Yang call "a fantasy of reconciliation" (1). After telling her harrowing story, Takraliq makes no demand on her Quebecois interlocutor, and offers a form of absolution through the sharing of a piece of seal blubber. The blubber, which warms Mireille's body, creates a connection between the two women. This reconciliation performed onstage by two white actresses performs a settler move to innocence that is, in essence, a foreclosing of decolonization. It is no less violent than the outbursts of settler intolerance that Obomsawin films in the street of Chateauguay. Like the protesters, Martin forecloses dialogue and refuses to be unsettled. In fact, *Invention* illuminates Takraliq's pain as a way to solidify its narrative of Quebec and thus Martin's play operates within a settler colonial logic of elimination: it settles Takraliq's pain,

pushes Takraliq over, and replaces her with a settler body. Her pain serves to assuage Mireille's guilt while making very little demands on her.

The performances by First Nations artists and activists examined in the chapters that form this dissertation all struggle with strategies of avoidance and moves to innocence deployed by their settler interlocutors. Performances like Nadia Myre's *Indian Act* and *La Marche Amun* deploy endurance as decolonizing gestures. They perform their critique of the Indian Act through endurance work that both embodies and questions settler colonialism's logic of elimination and the genocidal policies that maintain First Peoples in a constant state of endurance. Myre, Viviane Michel, and Michèle Taïna Audette perform endurance to mirror and denaturalize the ways in which Canada's Indian Act projected the end of First People's endurance through a gendered process, discriminating against First Nations women. The endurance Myre, Michel, and Taïna-Audette embody and render visible, is not an act of bravura but a foregrounding of the structural position and ontology of First Peoples.

The demands that Myre, Michel, and Taïna-Audette's endurance/enduring performances make on audiences are perhaps less confrontational than those articulated by the Mohawks' barricades and road blocks, or the Kumeyaay's legal battle with UCSD, but they are nevertheless deeply challenging. The women ask settler audiences to contemplate their tacit agreement with the Indian Act as a genocidal social contract, unilaterally devised by the settler state to organize its relationship with First Nations. As settler audiences, we are asked to position ourselves vis a vis this pervasive social contract, and hold ourselves accountable for the privileges that we derive from this positioning. This is the unsettling work that decolonization demands. Given the format of

Myre's piece, it may be possible for viewers to evade answering the challenging questions posed by her visual arts work. But, for those willing to be unsettled by her work's political intervention, Myre's *Indian Act* denaturalizes settler colonialism's gendered violence and imagines its end. That *La Marche Amun*, along with other forms of lobbying, succeeded in having the Indian Act amended in 2010 attests to the power of its intervention. Some might criticize the amending of the Indian Act as merely participating in the futurity of settler colonialism rather than demanding its end. Indeed, as many First Nations' scholars have argued, the Indian Act is, in fact, profoundly incompatible with decolonization. For their part, Michel and Taïna-Audette who both lead major First Nations' women coalitions in Quebec and Canada respectively, position their performances as belonging to a decolonizing continuum built through multiple un-settling gestures, small and big.

In showing the violence that organizes the reserve, both Obomsawin and Sioui Durand perform courageous work. Sioui Durand's portrait of the reserve offers little respite to viewers, mirroring the continuous settler colonial violence that shapes and erodes the reserve. Similarly, Obomsawin documents a moment of First Nations' dissent that triggered a response in Quebec's society that bypassed its usual move to innocence. As Obomsawin's film reveals, the threat that Mohawk sovereignty posed to Quebec's national discourse in 1990 was met with anxiety and violence rather than evasion. Quebec's call for a military response revealed how two seemingly opposed settler colonial communities, namely Canada and Quebec, suddenly align when it comes to protecting settler colonialism's ethical coherence and cartographical integrity.

Taken together, the aforementioned performances illuminate the profoundly challenging nature of decolonization, and reveal how settler colonialism infiltrates even the most progressive and reparative projects. More than diagnostic tools, these performances also interrupt, mirror, challenge, and unsettle settler colonialism. They do so at times by mirroring and denaturalizing its logic of elimination. In other cases, they collapse time through performance in order to illuminate a repetitive scenario of erasure and displacement, rendering visible for a moment the Indigenous presence and genealogies that settler colonialism constantly tries to erase.

In response to Quebec's national discourse, these First Nations performances collectively refuse the province's move to innocence and remind the province of its ongoing role as a settler colonial force. These performances echo and support the repeated stance of First Nations communities in Quebec, affirming that Quebec cannot dream of a nation without first talking to the original occupants of the territory. During the recent election campaign in Quebec, which culminated with the Parti Quebecois' defeat, Melissa Mollen-Dupuis (Innu), a spokesperson for the Quebec chapter of Idle No More, posted a detailed analysis[90] of each political party's political platform regarding First Nations one her Facebook page. While the Green Party, Option Nationale, and the Quebec Solidaire outlined policies and affirmed their commitment to ameliorating the strained relationship between Quebec and First Peoples, the two main parties –the Parti Libéral du Québec and the Parti Québécois – barely mentioned First Nation in their respective agendas. Ghislain Picard, the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of

[90] https://www.facebook.com/notes/melissa-mollen-dupuis/plateforme-%C3%A9lectorale-2014-autochtones-et-premi%C3%A8res-nations/10152171578801743

Quebec and Labrador, later posted a comment on his own facebook page, voicing his frustration with what he perceived as yet another failed encounter between First Nations and Quebecois leaders. He wrote: "Quebec politics leaves me with a bad taste." Then borrowing from the lyrics of the famous 1987 song "Beds Are Burning" written by the group Midnight Oil in support of Australia's Pintupi nation, Picard writes: " My 1st letter to the head of the new government will say this: " the lease is up and there is rent to pay."[91]

Picard's comments are more than a boutade, they translate a real sense of impatience and frustration among First Peoples when it comes to Quebec's political discourse. Idle No More is born in part of this feeling of political impasse. This dissertation, which offers a critique of Quebec's national project, might be criticized for offering little in terms of solution. As a performance studies scholar, I remain cautious when it comes to celebrating performances as liberatory or as prescriptions for change. As this dissertation argues, performances act as powerful diagnostic tools, and can render visible what national discourses consistently aim to erase. They can challenge, they can unsettle, they can participate in decolonization, but they can also be, as Tuck and Yang argue, infiltrated by the very discourses and practices that they seek to undo. The performances analyzed in this dissertation do all this, and for it, demand critical attention. In meditating on these performances' proposed "program of complete disorder", or in tracing the ways in which they fail to meet their inclusive mission, I offer a self-critical and vigilant attempt to stand in solidarity with decolonization.

---

[91] https://www.facebook.com/ghislain.picard.7?fref=ts. 21 March 2013.

Works cited:

AANDC. *Terminology*, Aboriginal and Northern Development Canada. Web.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998. Print.

Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. Print.

Alfred, Taiaiake. "Restitution is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples." In *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey*. Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series, 2009.

- *Peace, Power, Righteousness; An Indigenous Manifesto*. 2nd Edition. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 2006. Print.

Anderson, Patrick. "I Feel For You." in *Neoliberalism and Global Theatres: Performance Permutations*. Eds. Lara D.Nielsen and Patricia Ybarra. New York: Palmgrave Macmillan, 2012, 81-96. Print.

- *So Much Wasted: Hunger, Performance and the Morbidity of Resistance*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. Print.

Audette, Michele Taina. "Michele Audette, la militante nomade" *Le 21eme*. Radio-Canada. 16 April 2012. Web.

Auslander, Philip. *Liveness: Performance as Mediatized Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.

Bacon, Joséphine. *Bâtons à message – Tshissinuatshitakana*. Montréal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2009. Print.

Barker, Joanne. "For Whom Sovereignty Matters' in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. 2-31. Print.

BC Treaty Commission. "A Lay Person's Guide to Delgamuukw." Vancouver: BC treaty Commission, 1999. Web.

Bélair, Michel. "L'hiver: mode d'emploi". In *Le Devoir*. 4 Feb. 2012. Web.

Bell, Duncan S. A.. "Mythscapes: memory, mythology, and national identity". *British Journal of Sociology*. 54.1. (March 2003). 63-81. Web.

Boal, F.W. & Murray, Russell. "A City in Conflict" in *Geographical Magazine*. 44: 364-71 (1977). Web.

Bouchard, Denis, Cardinal, Eric & Picard Ghislain. *De Kébec à Québec ; Cinq siècles d'échanges entre nous*. Montréal: Les Intouchables, 2008. Print.

Bray, Tamara L. "Repatriation and Archaeology's Second Loss of Innocence: On Knowledge, Power, and the Past." in *Opening Archaeology: Repatriation's Impact on Contemporary Research and Practice*. Ed. Thomas W. Killion. Santa Fe: School For Advanced Research Press, 2008. 70-90. Print.

Breton, Alain. *Rabinal Achi: A Fifteenth-Century Maya Dynastic Drama*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007. Print.

Bruyneel, Kevin. *The Third Space of Sovereignty*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. Print.

Byrd, Jodi. A. "Fracturing Futurity: Colonial Agnosia and the Untimely Indigenous Present", Presentation at University of California San Diego's Ethnic Studies Department, San Diego, 3 February 2012.

- *The Transit of Empire*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. Print.

Cadieux, Alexandre. "Acte de mémoire et de dialogue", *Le Devoir*, 22 June 2010. Web.

Cardinal, Harold. *The Unjust Society*. 2nd ed. Vancouver: Douglas &MacIntyre, 1999. Print.

CBC News. "Human Rights Museum Sparks Debate Over Term 'Genocide.'" 26 July 2013. Web.

CBC News. "Paul Martin accuses Residential Schools of 'Cultural Genocide.'" 26 April 2013. Web.

Chrétien, Jean. "La politique indienne du gouvernement du Canada" presented at the 28 session of the parliament. 1969. Web.

Churchill, Ward. *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas 1492 to the Present*. San Francisco: City Lights Publisher, 2001. Print.

- *Indians Are Us? Culture and Genocide in Native North America*. Toronto: Between The Lines Press, 1994. Print.

Ciaccia, John. *The Oka Crisis: A Mirror of the Soul*. Dorval: Maren Publications, 2000. Print.

Cole, Catherine M. *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2010. Print.

Conquergood, Dwight. "Performance Studies: Intervention and Radical Research." *The Drama Review,* 46. 2 (2002): 145-156. Print.

Cornellier, Bruno. *Other Settlers/Settling Other: The Contest over Nativeness in Quebec's Intercultural Debate*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba' Native Studies Department Colloquium Series Talk. Jan 13, 2012. Web.

- *Je me souviens (maintenant): Altérité, Indianité et Mémoire Collective*. Canadian Journal of Film Studies, 19.2. (Fall 2010). 99-127. Print.

Coulthard, Glen S. "Recognition, Reconciliation and Resentment in Indigenous Politics" Talk. Simon Fraser University, Nov. 16, 2011. Web.

- "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and "The Politics of Recognition" in Canada." *Contemporary Political Theory*. 6 (2007) 437-460. Web.

De Certeau, Michel. *The Writing of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. Print.

Deloria, Philip J.. *Playing Indian.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. Print.

Deloria, Vine Jr. *Custer Died For Your Sins; An Indian Manifesto*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969. Print.

Diablo, Russell. "Harper Launches Major First Nations Termination Plan", in *People, Land, Truth*. 2-9 (2013). 41-48. Web.

Dupuis, Renée. *Quel Canada pour les Autochtones: la fin de l'exclusion*. Montréal: Boréal, 2001. Print.

Dyck, Sandra. "Making Contact" in Myre, Nadia. *En[counter]s*. Montreal: Éditions Art Mûr. 13-33. Print.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963. Print.

Feldman, Allen. *Formations of Violence: the Narrative of the body and political terror in Northern Ireland*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. Print.

Filewod, Alain. *Performing Canada: The Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theatre.* In *Textual Studies in Canada.* Kamloops: University College of the Cariboo, 2002. Print.

Flynn, Pat. "Dispute Erupts Over Ancient Remains Found at UCSD" *Union Tribune San Diego*, 24 April 2012. Web.

Frank, Ross. n.d. "Alternative Recommendation" (presentation to UCSD NAGRA committee, University of California San Diego, San Diego, CA.)

Galloway, Gloria. "Nishiyuu: A Movement of Cree Youth Who Voted With Their Feet" in *Globe and Mail*, March 25, 2013. Web.

Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2103. Print.

Gonzales-Day, Ken. *Erased Lynching.* www.kengonzalesday.com/projects/erasedlynching/

Goodman, Lee-Anne. "On Remembrance Day, Harper Marks 200th of Key War of 1812 Battle." Canadian Press, 11 Nov, 2013. Web.

Green, Rayna. "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture" in *The Massachusetts Review*. 16-4, (autumn 1975). 698-714. Web.

Grondin, M."Fascinant mais hermétique" *Rover Arts*, 24 June 2010.

Gunn Allen, Paula. *Pocahontas; Medicine Woman, Spy, Entrepreneur, Diplomat*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2003. Print.

Hamidi, Nawel & Ross-Tremblay, Pierrot. "Les écueils de l'extinction. Les Premiers Peuples, les négociations territoriales et l'esquisse d'une ère postcoloniale". *Recherches Amérindiennes du Québec*. 43.1 (2013). Web.

- "Gamau: confluence des personnes, des idées et des actions". in *Perspectives d'avenir pour le Québec: le regard de jeunes chercheurs*. Eds. Simon Thibault and Magaly Bordeur. Quebec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2013. Print.

Harel, Simon. "Les loyautés conflictuelles de la literature québécoise." *Quebec Studies* 44 (2007-2008): 41-52. Web

- *Braconnages identitaires: un Quebec palimpseste*. Montréal: VLB Editeur, 2006. Print

Hartman. Saidiya V. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. Print.

Havard, Gilles. *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701; French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century*. Transl. Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001. Print.

Hurley, Mary C. "Bill C-21; An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act", *Parliament of Canada*. 14 Nov 2007, revised 30 June 2008. Web.

Hurley, Erin. *National Performance: Representing Quebec from Expo 67 to Céline Dion*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011. Print.

Igloliorte, Heather. *Inuit Art – Modern Meets Contemporary*. Montreal: McCord Museum, 1 August 2012, Talk.

Jasmin, Claude. "Je suis fier de ma race". Le Devoir. 30 May 2013. Web.

Kakaliouras, Ann. M. "An Anthropology of Repatriation: Contemporary Physical Anthropological and Native American Ontologies of Practice." *Current Anthropology* 53,S5 (2012): S210-S221. Print.

Kanehsatake 270 Years of Resistance. Dir. Alanis Obomsawin. National Film Board of Canada, 1993. Film.

Komulainen, Shaney "Face to Face" in *Stephen Bulger Gallery*. www.bulgergallery.com/dynamic. Web.

Larson, Thomas. "UCSD and the Land of the Dead", *San Diego Reader*, 30 April 2008. Web

Lawrence, Bonita. *"Real" Indians and Others; Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. Print.

- "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview." *Hypatia*. 18.2. (2003). 3-31. Print.

Lawrence, Bonita and Enakshi Dua. "Decolonizing Antiracism". *Social Justice*, 32.4 (2005). 120-143. Print.

Lepage, Pierre. *Mythes et réalités sur les peuples autochtones.* Quebec: Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec, 2009. Print.

Leslie, John. *The Historical Development of the Indian Act* (second edition). Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Development, Treaties and Historical Research Branch, 1978. 114. Web.

Létourneau, Jocelyn. *A History for the Future; Rewriting Memory and Identity in Quebec*. Translated by Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004. Print.

Le Peuple Invisible. Dir. Richard Desjardins & Monderie, Robert. National Film Board of Canada, 1999. Film.

Les Enfants Perdus. Dir. Dalhya Newashish. Corporation Wapikoni Mobile, 2007. Film.

Lévesque, Solange. "L'imaginaire comme territoire". *Le Devoir*. 29 May 2004. Web.

Lewis, Randolph. *Alanis Obomsawin The Vision of a Native Filmmaker*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006. Print.

Ljunggren, David. "Every G20 Nation Wants To Be Canada, Insists PM" Reuters. com, 25 Sept. 2009. Web.

Lowe, Lisa. "The Intimacies of Four Continents", in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. 191-212. Print.

MacLennan, Hugh. *Two Solitudes*. McClelland & Stewart: Toronto, 2008. Print.

Maracle, Lee. *I am Woman; A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*. Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2002. Print.

Martin, Alexis. *L'Invention du Chauffage Central en Nouvelle-France*. Unpublished Script version 9. 29 December 2011. Unpublished script, used with permission.

- *Invention du chauffage central en Nouvelle France*, Filmed version, 11 February 2012.

Matthews, Gary C. "Repatriation Request to UC San Diego." [Letter to Rory Hume], 23 May 2008. Print.

Memmi, Albert. *Portrait du colonisé (suivi de Les Canadiens français sont-ils des colonisés)* Montréal: L'Étincelle, 1972. Print.

Mesnak. Dir. Yves Sioui Durand. Perf.: Victor Andrés Trelles Turgeon, Eve Ringuette, Kathia Rock. K Films Amérique. 2012 Film.

Myre, Nadia. *Personal Interview*. 7 January 2014. Print.

Nadia Myre, artist website. April 2014. Web.

National Park Service & U.S. Department of the Interior. *Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act*. Washington: GPO. Web.

O'Dell, Kathy. *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art, and the 1970s*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998. Print.

Ondinnok, compagnie de theatre amerindien. Les Productions Ondinnok & Les Studies Calypso. 20 August 2012. Web.

Palmater, Pamela. "Human Rights Museum or Harper Propaganda? Genocide in Canada Denied" in *Rabble.ca*. 29 July 2013. Web.

Pépin, Elsa. "Au pays des mots gelés." *Voir*, 2 February 2012. Web.

Povinelli, Elizabeth. *The Cunning of Recognition; Indigenous Alterities, and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. Print.

Raheja, Michelle. *Reservation Reelism, Red-Facing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010. Print.

Regan, Paulette. *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010. Print.

Regents of the University of California, Yudof, Fox & Matthews vs. KCRC "Motion to dismiss" Filed 11 May 2012. Web.

Reynolds, Matt. "Tribes Sue University for Human Remains". *Courthouse News Service*. 17 April 2012. Web.

Rickard, Jolene. "Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors" in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 11-2 (2011). 465-486. Print.

Robinson, Dylan. "Embracing Resentment and Reconciliation" talk. Oct.25, 2013. London. *In the Balance: Indigeneity Performance, Globalization*.

Roach, Joseph. *Cities of the Dead*. Columbia University Press: New York, 1996. Print.

Schoeninger, M.J., Bada, J.L., Masters, P.M., Bettinger, R.L, White, T.D. "Unexamined Bodies of Evidence." *Science* 332,6032: 916 (2011). Web.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Gardens in the Dunes*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010. Print.

Simpson, Audra. "Paths Toward a Mohawk Nation: Narratives of Citizenship and Nationhood in Kahnawake", in *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Eds. Duncan, I., Patton, P. Sanders, W. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 113-136. Print.

Shewell, Hugh. 'Enough To Keep Them Alive': Indian Social Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. Print.

Sioui, Georges. *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle*. Transl. Jane Brierley. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999. Print.

Sioui Durand, Yves. Personal communication. 25 June 2010.

- *Xajoj Tun Rabinal Achi*. Program. Montreal, Canada, 2010. Print.

Sioui-Durand, Yves & Méssier, Jean-Frédéric. *Hamlet le Malécite*. Unpublished script. http://www.uoguelph.ca/shakespeare/a_sioui.cfm. Web.

Smith, Andrea. "Native American Feminism, Sovereignty, and Social Change." *Feminist Studies*. 31.1(2005). 116-132. Web.

Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and The Repertoire*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. Print.

- *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War."* Duke University Press: Durham, 1997. Print.

Tedlock Dennis. *Rabinal Achi: A Mayan Dance Drama of War and Sacrifice*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Print.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. *Final Report.* Vol 1. Chapter 13, section1. www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211053958. Web.

The Royal Proclamation and Reconciliation, a panel with Kiera Ladner, Clifton Nicholas, Nadia Myre. Montreal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 26 April 2013.

Thiong'o, Ngugi Wa. *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. Print.

Tillett, Rebecca. "'Resting in Peace, Not in Pieces': The Concerns of the Living Dead in Anna Lee Walters's Ghost Singer." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 17,3 (2005): 85-114. Web.

Tougas, Colette. “Les choses vraies de la vie” in Myre, Nadia. *En[counter]s*. Montreal: Éditions Art Mûr. 13-33. Print.

Trudel, Pierre. *Ghislain Picard ; Entretiens*. Montréal : Boréal, 2009. Print.

Tuck, Eve. “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities” in *Harvard Educational Review*. 79.3. (Fall 2009). 409-27. Print.

Tuck, Eve. & Yang, Wayne K. “Decolonization Is Not A Metaphor” in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, Society.* 1.1 (2012). 1-40. Print.

Tuzin, Donald. 2007 “Report on Current Issues Surrounding Human Remains.” (Internal report for the University of California, San Diego, CA). Web.

Un Incident a Restigouche. Dir. Alanis Obomsawin. National Film Board of Canada, 1984. Film

Vizenor, Gerald. *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. Print.

Vowel, Chelsea. “Âpihtawikosisân: Law, Language, Life: A Plains Cree Speaking Métis Woman in Montreal” http://apihtawikosisan.com. Web.

War Party, “Feelin’ Reserved”, *Greatest Natives from the North*, prod. Rex Smallboy, 2003. Web.

Warrior, Robert Allen. *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction*. Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005. Print.

- *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994. Print.

Wasserman, Jerry. *Spectacles of Empire: Marc Lescarbot’s Theatre of Neptune in New France.* Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2006. Print.

White, Bettinger, Schoeninger vs. UCSD, UC Regents, Yudof, Fox, & Matthews. “Notice of Removal of Action.” 20 April 2012. Print.

Wilderson, Frank B. *Red, White & Black; Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. Print.

Wolfe, Patrick. “Settler Colonialism and the elimination of the native”. In *Journal of Genocide Research*. 8.4 (Dec. 2006). 387-409. Web.

York Geoffrey & Pindera, Loreen. People of the Pines: The Warriors and the Legacy of Oka. Toronto: Little Brown, 1991. Print.

Zizek, Slavoj. *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. London: Profile Books, 2008. Print.