

that Canada did not have a history of colonialism, the role of the conservative government's antagonistic relationship with indigenous peoples could have been explored in greater depth.

This is not a book about residential school survivors. Rather, Miller privileges the experiences of "central players" (5), principally bureaucrats, church officials, lawyers, judges, and indigenous leaders intimately involved in shaping official reconciliation policies and processes. Though his investigation into the IAP is strikingly detailed and moving, as are the examples he provides of healing and ceremony that occurred during the Alternate Dispute Resolution and TRC consultations, this top-down focus means that survivors often appear as merely another stakeholder group in the reconciliation process.

Overall, Miller concludes that we have made only "modest progress" (243) in the last thirty years and despite focusing on institutional responses to reconciliation, maintains that "small gestures" (271) have the best chance of dispelling historical myths and changing Canadian attitudes. He makes it very clear that the enormity of the task of atoning respectfully and sufficiently for a system described by the TRC as "cultural genocide" has just begun. And while our understanding of the impact of government residential schools and survivor experiences has grown exponentially, many aspects of their operations and impact require further research. In what appears to be the first concise study of reconciliation policy in Canada, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation* is a laudable but "official" contribution to our understanding of this process and of the survivor's quest for justice.

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Sovereign Acts: Contesting Colonialism Across Indigenous Nations and Latinx America. Edited by Frances Negrón-Muntaner. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017. 408 pages. \$39.95 paper.

What does it mean to be sovereign? What are its limits, and how does such an unruly concept serve as the continued locus of desire and a tool for continued domination by a settler state? How and when can sovereignty be conceived as liberatory, and what is its relationship to both the nation and the political realm? These are some of the larger questions addressed in *Sovereign Acts*, an ambitious and thoughtful collection that grapples with the unruly, amorphous, and compelling aspects of the concept of sovereignty.

While some edited collections suffer from a sense of incoherence, disjointedness, or forced thematics due to a diversity of authors, *Sovereign Acts* uniquely benefits from the diversity of perspectives. The near-cacophony that results from the polysemous nature of sovereignty allows for a rich discussion of an idea that can mean many things to many people simultaneously. Rather than impose a singular order or theme upon understandings of sovereignty, Negrón-Muntaner and the contributing authors wisely lean into this tapestry of conflicting and often incommensurate meanings. Such a decision not only deconstructs the idealized idea of political sovereignty based upon

the seventeenth-century Peace of Westphalia, but also reveal the fault lines between marginalized indigenous claims to autonomy and agency in a contemporary world.

As a result, *Sovereign Acts* allows for a wider view of sovereignty beyond North American indigenous/settler struggles. As Negrón-Muntaner argues, “the near exclusive theorization of sovereignty from the vantage point of powerful nation-states” obscures that a variety of sovereignty claims “have been—and continue to be—sites of tension within presumably ‘settled’ nation states” (4). An analysis of the geographies of sovereignty makes space for critical discussions of sub-imperial political formations within the United States and Canada ranging from Samoa to Puerto Rico to the Dene Nation. These competing views complicate understandings of indigenous agency, offering a variety of approaches, imaginations, and views of a potentially decolonial future. With this in mind, Negrón-Muntaner has divided the book into three broadly outlined sections, “Navigating Sovereignty,” “Sovereign Bodies,” and “Life Without Sovereignty,” each speaking to the multivalent and contested views of agency within and without US settler imperial formations.

The first section, “Navigating Sovereignty,” examines the complicated intersections of sovereign claims and counterclaims within the framework of an imperial settler state. In “Contested Sovereignties,” Fáanofo Lisaclaire Uperesa and Adriana María Garriga-López explore the similarities and marked differences between Samoan and Puerto Rican claims to autonomy within the context of American political hegemony. Uperesa and Garriga-López argue for a view of “sovereignty as a discursive and political practice” in both territories, albeit with marked differences shaped by local histories and contemporary realities (41). In the Puerto Rican case, the lack of formal state autonomy outside American structures of domination are seen as evidence of the island’s colonial position, whereas in American Samoa, such a lack of formal structures is viewed as essential to indigenous sovereign action through the preservation of *fa’asamoa* (Samoan custom) and *fa’amatai* (the chiefly system). While both systems remain structured through a liminal colonial relationship between a settler state and overseas land claims, articulations of sovereignty are messy, contingent, and negotiated daily through contested histories.

“Navigating Sovereignty” also features Glen Coulthard’s widely cited piece, “Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Recognition.” Theorizing through anticolonial theorist Frantz Fanon, Coulthard argues that the politics of recognition that is extended to First Nations peoples by settler states like contemporary Canada is fundamentally insufficient for dealing with the still-extant traumas and imperial hierarchies that exist within the contemporary political moment. Coulthard decries actions from the settler state to recognize indigenous rights and identities as being contingent upon such recognition “not call[ing] into question the legal, political, and economic framework of the colonial relationship itself” (95). Like Uperesa and Garriga-López, Coulthard complicates the notion of indigenous/settler sovereignties and troubles the idea of a recognition from a settler state as offering true sovereignty on indigenous terms.

The second section, “Sovereign Bodies,” offers insight into the limits of discursive and cultural claims to sovereignty, particularly outside the realm of the political. Jennifer Denetdale critically assesses the role of gender and tradition-making within the Navajo Nation in “Chairmen, Presidents, and Princesses.” Denetdale traces Navajo/

Diné attitudes toward women in leadership to critically engage with the very gendered nature of claiming nationhood, often on lines that purposefully mirror structures within US settler society. She concludes that many claims to Navajo/Diné authority rest upon patriarchal and colonial interpretations of tradition and require considerable decolonial praxis. Similarly, Jessica Harkins and Brian Klopotek trace assertions of indigenous sovereignty intertwined with heteronormativity and anti-blackness present within US settler colonial systems, respectively. For Harkins, debates over same-sex marriage within the Cherokee Nation are important domains for contesting sovereignties, but also provide a critical lens for understanding queer and liberal exceptionalisms that continue to privilege same-sex marriage as a benchmark for judging indigenous peoples as insufficiently “modern” in a US context. Klopotek likewise avoids an easy articulation of regressive or noninclusive indigeneity in studying the fraught relationship between blackness and indigeneity among Choctaw peoples in Louisiana, instead examining the enmeshed structures of white supremacy and liminal recognition offered to indigenous peoples within the contemporary settler state.

The final section, “Life Without Sovereignty,” opens to a wider exploration of what sovereignty can look like in all of its messy and contradictory iterations in the contemporary political moment. Madeline Román’s “Sovereignty Still?” bluntly asserts that it is impossible to discuss sovereignty “either in terms of nation-states or in terms of singular lives,” because “supremacy of power and authority, self-government, and the capacity for independent action and autonomous agency” cannot truly be conferred to nation-states or individuals solely as members of such states (285–286). Román maintains that in a globalized, transnational world, the nation-state fails to guarantee the sovereignty it claims and gestures to the idea that sovereignty as a project might ultimately be an illusory repetition of colonial claims, echoing the assertions of Coulthard. In one of the book’s most creative and thoughtful chapters, Negrón-Muntaner and Yasmin Ramirez analyze the complex oeuvre of Jean-Michel Basquiat and explore the significance of the many crowns in his work. What does it mean to be “king” as a black (post)colonial Caribbean-American subject? Negrón-Muntaner and Ramirez offer a variety of contested, competing meanings of sovereignty within the painter’s work, and connect the political and the discursive in a wide-ranging and innovative study.

Sovereign Acts is a strong collection that offers competing pictures of sovereignty at its messiest, most fractious, and most elusive. It also admirably does the difficult work of pushing indigenous theorizing into a fruitful conversation across multiple forms of settler colonialisms, including parts of Latin America, although more of Latin America could have been generative in complicating the centrality of North American settler dynamics. The collection could have further been strengthened by inclusions of nested or competing sovereignties from locations such as New Zealand/Aotearoa or contemporary South Africa, where the notion of indigenous identity is particularly fraught even under an indigenous-led government. Yet these are minor quibbles with what is a powerful and thoughtful collection.

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