UC Davis

UC Davis Previously Published Works

Title
Reframing SuicideQueer Diasporic and Indigenous Imaginaries

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5m23t397

Journal
GLQ A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 27(4)

ISSN
1064-2684

Author
Jafri, Beenash

Publication Date
2021-10-01

DOI
10.1215/10642684-9316852

Copyright Information
This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, availalbe at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Peer reviewed

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

REFRAMING SUICIDE

Queer Diasporic and Indigenous Imaginaries

Beenash Jafri

In 2010, reports of multiple suicides by LGBTQ students provoked anxieties about the futures of queer youth. One response, by sex columnist Dan Savage and his husband, Terry Miller, was a short YouTube video called *It Gets Better: Dan and Terry* (Savage and Miller 2010). Staging a narrative structure that was simultaneously confessional and didactic, Savage and Miller drew upon their own stories of overcoming the strife of bullying to reassure youth that life "gets better" over time. The examples they provided as proof of life's getting better centered on race and class privilege and upward mobility, including marriage, forming a nuclear family, vacations in Paris, and skiing in the mountains. Savage and Miller's video launched a broad-based social media project that circulated throughout the United States and beyond, including in Canada, where I witnessed a plethora of responses over my Facebook and Twitter feeds. Despite the fact that the "It Gets Better" project addressed the deaths of US youths, it had resonance in Canada, where LGBT youth bullying was already a topic of public conversation. Canadian news media framed the suicides as a cross-continental phenomenon, particularly as October 2010 also saw the double suicide of a teen lesbian couple in Orangeville, Ontario, a small town northwest of Toronto (Harper 2010). Vigils commemorating the cross-continental lost lives took place across Canada, one of which was organized by Vivek Shraya (see Vu 2010), whose short film is one of the foci of this essay. In the years following Savage and Miller's launch of It Gets Better, queer Canadian celebrities, politicians, and others produced their own versions.

In their criticisms of It Gets Better and of general public responses to gay youth suicides, queer studies scholars such as Tavia Nyong'o (2010), Eng-Beng Lim (2010), and Jasbir Puar (2017) raised questions about the exceptionalization of the deaths. For instance, Nyong'o (2010), querying It Gets Better's appeals to a fantasy of gay assimilation, noted that vulnerability is not something everyone can

GLQ 27:4
DOI 10.1215/10642684-9316852
© 2021 by Duke University Press

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

grow out of. In *The Right to Maim*, Puar (2017: 11), drawing on Lauren Berlant, asked how framing these deaths as "gay youth suicide" obscured the economic and geopolitical processes that produce precarity among racialized and colonized populations. "Slow death, according to Berlant (2007: 754), is "the physical wearing out of a population and the deterioration of people in that population that is very nearly a defining condition of their experience and historical existence. The general emphasis of the phrase is on the phenomenon of mass physical attenuation under global/national regimes of capitalist structural subordination and governmentality." Insisting that we read suicide within such uneven contexts of structural violence, Puar (2017: 11) asked, "What kinds of "slow deaths" have been ongoing that a suicide might represent an escape from[?]."

These criticisms of It Gets Better get at some of the broader patterns of pathologization and explanation that characterize dominant discourses of suicide. For example, the most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association 2013) lists suicide as an independent clinical diagnostic entry rather than as a complication of other forms of mental illness. And media reporting on suicides spectacularizes them as tragedies or calls for biopolitical interventions such as surveillance, mental health provision, education, and jobs, without reckoning with forms of structural violence such as settler colonialism. Thus, in a *New York Times* article covering suicides among youth at the Pine Ridge Reservation, reporter Julie Bosman (2015) neglects to situate a "legacy of oppression and forced removals" in terms of colonization. She includes these among a laundry list of items affecting Native youth ("lack of jobs and economic opportunity"; "high levels of drug and alcohol use"), all of which she names as discrete issues rather than as the direct consequence of ongoing colonization. Michel Foucault ([1978] 1990: 138–39) describes this assimilation of suicide into regimes of modern governance in *The History of Sexuality*:

> . . . suicide—once a crime, since it was a way to usurp the power of death which the sovereign alone, whether the one here below or the Lord above, had the right to exercise—became in the course of the nineteenth century, one of the first conducts to enter into the sphere of sociological analysis; it testified to the individual and private right to die, at the borders and in the interstices of power that was exercised over life. This determination to die, strange yet so persistent and constant in its manifestations, and consequently so difficult to explain as being due to particular circumstances or individual accidents, was one of the first astonishments of a society in which political power had assigned itself the task of administering life.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

Suicide's shift in status from crime to object of sociological analysis and biopolitical intervention exemplifies a shift in sovereignty itself, then, from the power to "make die or let live" to the power to "make live or let die." It Gets Better aligns itself with this power to make some subjects live, while passing over populations consigned to slow death. However, although the concept of slow death enables a diagnosis of the obfuscations of biopower, it does not account for the differential stakes of these obfuscations. This is particularly significant when considering the complexity and scale of suicide in Indigenous communities, which is part and parcel of the *longue durée* of settler colonialism (Chrisjohn, McKay, and Smith 2017); Indigenous suicide not only represents an escape from the slow death of colonial violence, it is symptomatic of colonialism itself. If settler colonialism functions through what Patrick Wolfe (2006: 387) has termed a "logic of elimination," then suicide—produced through colonial state policies (which create conditions of impoverishment and scarcity for Indigenous peoples)—furthers that logic. Moreover, policies and programs addressing suicide continue the work of those policies. As Carmela Murdocca (2013: 96) notes, "In the settler state, Indigenous suicide, and youth suicide in particular, is a fetish object—a site of memorialised biopolitical and necropolitical governance." This fetishization or spectacularization of suicide displaces and attempts to contain the decolonial practices that might, in fact, disappear suicide. In other words, the biopolitical management of suicide not only makes colonization invisible but actively suppresses Indigenous sovereignty.

Thus, while cultural texts on suicide by feminist, queer, and trans people of color may collectively offer alternate conceptions of life, death, nation, and futurity—and place pressure on the logics of dominant narratives that reproduce existing configurations of power—the differential stakes of these texts also demand attention. Engaging with critical ethnic studies scholarship on relationality, this essay comparatively analyzes the alternate imaginaries found in two films: *Fire Song*, a 2015 feature film by queer Cree/Métis filmmaker Adam Garnet Jones, and *I want to kill myself*, a 2017 short film by trans/femme/bisexual South Asian Canadian artist Shraya. The alternate frameworks found in these films are situated within a broader landscape of Indigenous and diasporic critiques and revisions of It Gets Better. For example, a video by the Wabanaki Two Spirit Alliance (on the East Coast of Canada) replicated the form and genre of Savage and Miller's video but enacted modes of "health sovereignty" (Morgensen 2011: 196) by emphasizing how a re-memory of the historical incorporation of diverse sexualities within Indigenous societies—rather than neoliberal success—allowed Alliance members to embrace their identities. The "We Matter" campaign similarly drew on the confessional-didactic model of It Gets Better to crowdsource video messages to Native youth

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

across Canada considering suicide. However, rather than flaunting the prospect of upward mobility as a reason to keep living, most shared coping strategies, from building community to finding strength in ceremony. Other examples include the "Embracing Intersectional Diversity" project in Montreal led by the Black masculine-identifying queer activist-artist-entrepreneur Tomee Sojourner, who flipped the It Gets Better script to ask prospective allies to consider how *they* were supporting young queers, especially queer youth of color and queer Indigenous/two-spirit youth; and Ciiku Thuo's short video *Sarah*, produced through Toronto's Inside Out LGBT Film Festival mentorship program, which compared the silence surrounding a Gikuyu woman's death (possibly by suicide) to the media spectacle surrounding the suicide of queer Rutgers student Tyler Clementi.

If projects such as these share an (unevenly) critical stance in relation to dominant narratives of suicide, the futurities they propose are not necessarily commensurable with one another. Considering *Fire Song* and *I want to kill myself* alongside one another thus raises questions about the cohesiveness of what one might call a QTBIPOC (queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, and people of color) film/video archive. The imaginary refusals—or failures—to conform to neoliberal expectations of living and dying in these films are not equivalent to one another. This is to consider, in other words, the "not yet here"-ness of QTBIPOC imaginaries, to use José Esteban Muñoz's (2009: 1) phrase. Rejecting Lee Edelman's (2004: 1) infamous claim that "the future is kid stuff," Muñoz's intervention into the cynical queer antifuturist relationalities proposed by Edelman and by Leo Bersani (2010) framed queer—and especially queer-of-color—performance and activism not as a rejection of hope and futurity but as oriented toward a critical reformulation of kin, community, and relationality that is perpetually unfinished, or "not quite here." Muñoz insisted on queer as a project in-formation in need of critique that also contained traces of alternate futurities working toward *something else*. Thinking about *Fire Song* and *I want to kill myself* alongside one another is one way of excavating the queer politic that Muñoz theorized: relational film criticism reveals both the necessity and the fraught nature of a QTBIPOC film/video archive that is held together by simultaneously elastic and fragile bonds. While both *Fire Song* and *I want to kill myself* expose the structural violence underpinning biomedicalized suicide, the critical imaginaries they offer also reveal fissures between queer diasporic and queer Indigenous positionalities, demonstrating in particular the limits of queer diasporic critique with respect to the settler colonial condition. I sit with, and listen to, these disjunctures. The lengthy, awkward acronym "(QT)BIPOC" itself—a grassroots Toronto innovation that modifies the term "(queer and trans) people of color" to acknowledge the particularities of anti-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

blackness and settler colonialism without letting go of its relational/coalitional impulse—speaks to the necessity of attempting to love, live, and work with one another through conflict and tension.[1] Bernice Johnson Reagon's (1983: 356–57) remarks in 1981 (addressing the women's movement at the time) capture this sentiment: "You don't go into coalition because you just *like* it. The only reason you would consider trying to team up with somebody who could possibly kill you, is because that's the only way you can figure you can stay alive."

I specifically engage with film here, rather than social movement coalitions, both because of film's capacity to visualize imaginary worlds and because of the medium's investment in producing spectacle and visual pleasure. These qualities make film an ideal site from which to simultaneously think through questions of structural violence and of futurity. Both *Fire Song* and *I want to kill myself* subversively engage film form to challenge the spectacularity of suicide, effectively situating suicide on a continuum of structural violence. Their mobilization of film in this manner corresponds to Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt's conceptualization of queer cinematic time that critiques what Elizabeth Freeman (2010: 35) refers to as the "chrononormative" impulses of narratives toward biological and social reproduction. As Schoonover and Galt (2016: 266–67) elaborate:

> Cinema forms a rich corpus of texts that are able to articulate the nonnormative shapes of queer lives, but . . . it provides more than a series of examples. Cinema's construction of virtual times and spaces enables a political analysis of temporality alongside an affective encounter with queer desires and losses. Moreover, cinema as an institution creates pockets of queer space, time, and experience, delimited by systems of homophobia and repression, elaborating a fractured archive of queer history.

Schoonover and Galt importantly gesture to the formal and narrative distinctiveness of a "queer cinema," which for them is less about representational politics than about the spatiotemporal interruptions of queer film. The question of how *Fire Song* and *I want to kill myself* queerly construct time and space is a generative one. Each film's intervention is distinct, reflecting the different relationships between suicide, sexuality, and the state that emerge from diasporic and Native positionalities within a white settler society. For Shraya, coming into conversation with chosen family opens up a way to work through suicidal feelings, arguably preventing suicide; in Jones's *Fire Song*, sharing suicidal feelings and tendencies collectively does not lead to suicide prevention, because ongoing colonial occupation places persistent pressures on the foundations of community. Instead, *Fire Song* centers

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

(limited) practices of Indigenous resurgence—which recuperate community—as essential to surviving suicide. These distinct relationships to community, in turn, gesture to the *particular* forms of violence bound up with living under occupation, which, while they may be related to the violence experienced by other marginalized populations, are not equivalent to them. Whereas Shraya's diasporic struggle with suicide is alleviated by forging community within settler spaces, *Fire Song* counters pathologizing depictions of reserve communities by emphasizing the resurgence of Indigenous practices that attempt to refuse settler logics, though unevenly and incompletely.

The theoretical conversations framing my analysis come from research within and across Indigenous, Black, Asian American/Canadian, Chicanx/Latinx and critical ethnic studies regarding the role and position of non-Native people of color within settler colonialism. Can people of color be settlers? Are there ways in which people of color become complicit in settler violence? Haunani-Kay Trask (2000), Candace Fujikane (Fujikane and Okamura 2008), Dean Saranillio (2013), and others have provided clear evidence documenting how Asians have become settlers in Hawai'i through their participation within settler institutions and through the production of settler imaginaries through cultural texts. In other settler contexts—where people of color remain socially, politically, and economically marginalized—the relationship has been more ambiguous. In these contexts, as I have suggested (Jafri 2012), while non-Native people of color may be (in)advertently complicit with settler violence, they do not necessarily accrue all its benefits. Scholars have theorized the position of people of color within the settler state in terms of histories of colonialism, imperialism, and racial capitalism. In *The Transit of Empire*, Jodi Byrd (2011: xxx) distinguishes people of color from both white settlers and Indigenous peoples through the third position of "arrivant." She frames tensions between Indigenous peoples and arrivants in terms of colonization's "cacophony" of competing and entangled representations and claims to land, identity, and politics (2011: xiii). For Byrd, these entanglements emerge through the context of US empire, in which Indigeneity serves as a site of transit through which colonial ideologies and imperatives transmit to imperial ventures elsewhere. Tiffany Lethabo King (2019) argues that antiblackness and settler colonization are mutually entwined in the United States, where settler-slaveholders deployed fungible Black bodies to transform the land they seized from Indigenous nations. King's work also calls upon Black and Native feminist relationalities as critical interventions into the antiblackness and Indigenous erasure that are foundational to the white supremacist settler state. Iyko Day (2016) suggests that settler colonial capitalism casts Asian migration and labor in opposition to the romantic anticapi-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

talism that characterizes settler imaginaries. She establishes anti-Asianness as constitutive to settler colonial capitalism. The work of Byrd, King, Day, and others historicizes the tensions of diaspora and Indigeneity (also see Jackson 2012; Lee 2015; Lowe 2015; Vimalassery, Hu Pegues, and Goldstein 2016; Tuck et al. 2014; and Wong 2008). Not only does this work challenge essentializing frameworks of intergroup conflict, but it disrupts the native/settler binary that structures settler colonialism.

However, while knowledge of colonial dynamics can inform more nuanced and resilient kinds of relations, that knowledge alone cannot unravel some of the critical sites of tension. Black, postcolonial, and Indigenous studies emerge from overlapping but distinct histories and political movements that have produced divergent theories and political tactics. The nation has been one site of vexed conversations. For instance, as I will discuss shortly, *I want to kill myself* and *Fire Song* open imaginative space to think about *futurity* in the wake of suicide: both suggest that Euro-American medicalized models of healing are inadequate; that *something else* is necessary. The differences between the two films' "something else" proposals are intelligible in terms of the debates on nation and nationhood across queer-of-color / diasporic and queer Indigenous studies.

To be sure, queer-of-color and queer Indigenous studies share critiques of the modern nation-state, identifying the way in which gender and sexuality have been sites for the enactment of the racial-colonial violence that defined settler states, like the United States and Canada, as well as imperial centers. Racialized and colonized others were figured as sexually deviant, with their lack of respectability distancing them from bourgeois whiteness (Smith 2010; McClintock 1995). Family and kinship structures emerged as key sites for the regulation of racialized-colonized bodies. In *Aberrations in Black*, Roderick A. Ferguson (2003) describes how this naturalization of heteropatriarchy by the capitalist nation-state has been taken for granted by both Marxist and liberal pluralist praxes, which have configured the family as a site of rescue from capitalism's wreckage. He introduces queer-of-color critique, by contrast—a historical-materialist framework that refuses to separate capitalism from its entanglements with race, gender, sexuality, ability, and class—in order to expose how naturalized heteropatriarchy enacts violence *through* cultural sites such as the family. In *Impossible Desires*, Gayatri Gopinath (2005) similarly describes the conservatism of South Asian diasporic formations that cling to essentialized constructions of authentic homelands characterized by heteronormative family structures; and Puar (2007: 172) correspondingly argues for queer diasporic assemblages that are unmoored from homelands and instead oriented by affective forms of connection.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

However, as Mark Rifkin (2014) has argued, while critiques such as these expose the violence of modern biopolitics, they obfuscate the alternate sociopolitical formations that racial-colonial capitalism has erased and displaced. This is where queer-of-color and queer Indigenous thought diverge even as they share a mutual diagnosis of the modern nation-state's violence. Queer Indigenous (and Indigenous feminist) critiques of the nation draw attention to the displaced modes of sovereignty that fundamentally critique and challenge racial-colonial capitalism. If settler colonialism enacted genocidal policies that constructed Indigenous sexualities as perverse in relation to Euro-American ones, it specifically did so by targeting modes of polity and sociality that enabled radical relationalities among people and with nonhuman life and land (Rifkin 2011; Driskill et al. 2011). Sovereignty—a European term emerging vis-à-vis Enlightenment thought—is in fact an inadequate descriptor for the kinds of social relationalities that Indigenous praxes have developed. From the Anishinaabe tradition, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2015: 18) expansively describes sovereignty (via her Elder, Gidigaa Migizi) as "Kina Gehi Anishinaabe-ogaming," or "the place where we all live and work together." L. B. Simpson's (2014) discussion of land pedagogies—embedded in connections to family, community, and nonhuman life—as integral to the resurgence of Indigenous nation building radically challenges our conceptions of what constitutes the nation. Simultaneously, queer Indigenous scholarship (and art and activism) critiques the heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobia inherited from colonial violence and trauma within contemporary articulations of sovereignty (Belcourt 2020; Finley 2011a; Simpson 2017; Tatonetti 2015; Whitehead 2017).[2]

By contrast, while memory, archives, and ancestors have certainly been of critical import to queer-of-color and queer diasporic art and scholarship—Cheryl Dunye's *Watermelon Woman* (1996), Richard Fung's *Dirty Laundry* (1996), and Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* (1989) are but three examples—questions of land, nation, and sovereignty have not figured anywhere near as prominently as they have for their Indigenous counterparts. It is these tensions between diaspora and Indigeneity, alongside the connections noted above, that ground my analysis of the two films: in *Fire Song*, the nation emerges as a potential site of healing and transformation, whereas in *I want to kill myself*, the nation implicitly figures as a site of violence producing suicide, and it is chosen family that furnishes hopefulness.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

Fire Song: Suicide and the Politics of Refusal

An independent feature film, *Fire Song* premiered at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival. Written and directed by Jones, it is a coming-of-age story about sexuality, community, and the looming threat of suicide on a First Nations reserve in Northern Ontario. The film centers on Shane, a young man who, along with others on the reserve, is grieving the recent suicide of his sister, Destiny. As he attempts to take care of his heartbroken mother and juggle between his girlfriend Tara and secret lover David (who's an aspiring healer), Shane plans his escape from the reserve. He has been accepted to college in Toronto, where he fantasizes about a life where it is possible to be both Native and gay. His experience of the reserve as homophobic reflects the effects of settler policies, which, as Rifkin (2011) argues, were part of an effort to make heterosexuality compulsory, which in turn was part of a colonial strategy to deterritorialize, "detribalize," and assimilate Native social, political, and economic structures. Queer Indigenous studies scholars have established that there is ample historical evidence demonstrating how Indigenous nations incorporated diverse expressions of gender and sexuality (Driskill et al. 2011); settler colonial policies and programs specifically targeted gender and sexuality with the aim of Indigenous elimination and settler indigenization (Morgensen 2012: 10). For instance, as Chris Finley (2011a: 32) notes, sexual shame was systematically transmitted through boarding schools and passed down across generations. Thus, as she writes, "throughout the imposition of colonialism in the United States, one of the methods Native communities have used to survive is adapting silence around sexuality." Accordingly, writing, scholarship, and activism by queer and two-spirit Indigenous peoples has been grounded in the development of a sovereign erotic—to use Qwo-Li Driskill's (2004) term—that links the reclamation of sexuality to the reclamation of bodily sovereignties targeted and abused by colonization.

Shane eventually realizes that the reserve is not the space of despair and homophobia he imagined it to be, but the opposite. Jones, who as noted above is queer-identified and of Cree and Métis ancestry, drew upon his own experience struggling with depression and suicide as a teenager in Edmonton—an experience that was shared by others, as he later learned through his work with Indigenous youth. Disrupting conventional narratives of queer migration from rural to urban spaces and figurations of the city as a mecca for gay liberation and freedom (Halberstam 2005; Weston 1995), *Fire Song* recasts the reserve in terms of life, renewal, and regeneration. In its presentation of a more complex, nuanced portrait of queer Indigeneity that is intertwined with a politics of decolonization—of

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

a sovereign erotic, in other words—it is a landmark film that contrasts with earlier works that construct a false binary between queer sexualities and Indigeneity (see Tatonetti 2014). The film is particularly significant in light of recent international media attention to what government officials call a suicide epidemic in Indian Country: in April 2016, the Attawapiskat First Nation in Northern Ontario declared a state of emergency after eleven people attempted suicide in one day. This was following twenty-eight suicide attempts in March 2016 and more than one hundred attempts since September 2015, in a community with a population of just two thousand. In contrast to coverage of queer youth suicides, there was little by way of individual accounts of the youth (or adults) in Attawapiskat who had passed away. Media coverage focused on the "problem" of reservations that were affecting First Nations community members en masse. The moral panic was framed not in terms of "saving the children" but in terms of the blight of reservations. For example, in response to the situation in Attawapiskat, former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien declared, "There is no economic base there for having jobs and so sometimes they have to move, like anybody else" (quoted in Canadian Press 2016). Chretien, who had held the post of Indian affairs minister prior to becoming prime minister, drafted the infamous 1969 "White Paper" that recommended the full assimilation of Indigenous peoples through the abolition of legal status as guaranteed through the federal Indian Act. *Fire Song*'s representation of reserve communities provides a counterpoint to such pathologizing discourses, which cast the reserve as a space of degeneracy and blame the survivors of settler violence for remaining in their community.

Specifically, *Fire Song* slows down the spectacularity of suicide, both through its plot structure and by depathologizing the reserve as a space that produces suicide. The film does this from the beginning through its representations of land: the first two takes are moving close-ups of a quiet pond, which pan out onto a wider shot approaching the reserve. These, along with the four slow-moving shots of buildings that follow, establish the reserve as a place of beauty. The film continually showcases this beauty even as we witness the impoverished conditions of the reserve, compelling the audience to meditate more deeply on their assumptions (see figs. 1 and 2). Moreover, it is when Shane is out on the land, often with David, that he appears to be most at peace, and the scope of his world expands, as suggested by the vivid colors and wide takes of these scenes. *Fire Song*'s depiction of land contrasts with dominant depictions that emphasize the erasure of Native bodies into landscapes—recalling the *terra nullius* doctrine that enabled Euro-American colonizers to claim Indigenous lands as open for settlement—as illustrated in images published in 2015 *New York Times* articles on suicides at

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

Figure 1: *Fire Song* film still: David and Shane in a canoe, harvesting wild rice from a lake (Big Soul Productions, 2015)

Figure 2: *Fire Song* film still: Shane and David lie together in a lush green landscape, sharing a peaceful and intimate moment together (Big Soul Productions, 2015).

the Pine Ridge reservation, in which bodies blend into landscapes, becoming one with the land (Flood 2015; "Suicides" 2015).[3] The soothing nature of these scenes affectively pulls against Shane's fantasy of Toronto as an urban utopia, which the film presents primarily through his dialogue with other characters. Throughout the film, Shane articulates a desire for the sort of success that Dan Savage's It Gets Better campaign promises. However, in Shane's imagination, "better" is a place, not a time. As he pleads to David: "I know how things will go if I stay here. I just

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

wanna go where I can be with you." As the two pore over a Toronto guidebook, he points out that "there's a Native centre. And there's a gay street."

In an interview with *Seventh Row* magazine, Jones describes *Fire Song* as "a film about feeling," noting that he "had a tone in mind more than a story at first" (quoted in Heeney 2016). He continues: "I wanted to write a film that took place in a community after a suicide in that community . . . to capture that feeling of all these people waiting for the other shoe to drop—the nervousness that gets mixed up with grief when a young person dies. There's this fear that it'll be the first in a string or cluster of suicides." Though suicide is shocking and violent in *Fire Song*, it is not presented to titillate; rather, the film contemplates its everydayness, as the story is bookended by suicide at the beginning and end. Destiny's death opens the film and catalyzes its plot: Shane is tasked with consoling his grieving mother, creating an obstacle to his plans to attend college in Toronto; he feels guilty that he was unable to prevent his sister's suicide because, at the moment of her death, he was with David; he contemplates suicide as his Toronto plans move out of reach and he fears the prospect of continuing to live a closeted life on the reserve. Around him, other youth on the reserve also struggle with suicidal ideation. In a scene featuring a group counseling session in which the youth reluctantly participate, there is an aura of unease; nobody wants to talk. One youth's exclamation that "people kill themselves all the time. No one cares until they're dead," captures the anger and frustration in the room. Shane's girlfriend Tara recounts an early suicide attempt, and toward the end of the film hangs herself after learning about Shane's sexuality and after she is violently raped by a friend.

For the film's Native (and some non-Native) audiences, it is no secret that migration from northern reserves to Toronto is not an easy process; impoverishment due to systemic discrimination and a lack of appropriate social services is a reality. While (contrary to popular assumptions) there are vibrant, thriving urban Native communities across the continent (see Andersen and Peters 2013), neither is the move off the reservation the solution to the effects of ongoing colonization. We never see Shane and David make the trip to Toronto; in the end, even though Shane's mother sells the family home to help pay his college tuition, migrating to Toronto is not what resolves the film's central conflict: the reconciliation of his queer and Native identities. In fact, it is precisely Shane's failure to comply with the demands of neoliberal (settler) citizenship via uplift through urban migration and higher education that opens up other possibilities, as he finds relief and strength through his mother and David's grandmother Evie, a community elder. They come to support his relationship with David and provide the spiritual nourishment necessary for Shane to make peace with Destiny's and Tara's suicides. David decides

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

to stay on the reserve to pursue his calling as a spiritual leader, echoing historical documentation of two-spirit members of Native nations taking on these roles; this is also reflected in the casting of two-spirit elder Ma-Nee Chacaby in the role of Evie. This possibility-in-failure corresponds to Jack Halberstam's argument in *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011). He writes: "Under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world" (2–3). In *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), Sara Ahmed similarly suggests that unhappiness of queer or feminist subjects or of the melancholic migrant may be a productive affect insofar as it enables the critique and transformation of the social conditions that produce unhappiness.

However, while Shane's failures open him up to alternate futurities, for other characters this failure leads to death. Here it is worth noting that *Fire Song* problematically positions queer futurity alongside the antifuturity of young Native women: whereas Shane and David negotiate their existence amid colonial conditions, Destiny and Tara are unable to survive. This aspect of the film is particularly disturbing given that violence against Native women has been—and continues to be—foundational to the colonial project (Bourgeois 2015; Razack 2000). Currently, thousands of Indigenous women across the continent have gone missing or have been murdered, with little consequence for perpetrators (Native Women's Association 2015; Rosay 2016). In this respect, *Fire Song* echoes countless settler narratives in which the death of Native women propels plots and destinies forward (Finley 2011b; Marubbio 2006). The film seems consequently unable to imagine futurity that is queer *and* that centers Indigenous women. If young Indigenous women symbolize biological reproduction in the film—as suggested in the final scene and through anxious dialogue at multiple moments focused on young women "getting knocked up"—then through its representation of young Native women's suicide the film implicitly endorses a queerness that is tied to Edelman's queer antifuturity. The film preserves the futures of older Indigenous women, meanwhile: because she is selling the family home, Shane's mother makes arrangements with Evie (David's grandmother) to move in with her. Insofar as they serve the symbolic function of cultural gatekeepers, their survival enables the transmission of culture across generations to continue; the film emphasizes this transmission in the final scene, in which Shane's mother and Evie share ceremonial space ("fire song") with Shane and David. In other words, *Fire Song* paradoxically assumes Edelman's antifuturity, one devoid of reproductive possibility, in order to construct a queer Indigenous futurity. The film thus unwittingly produces a binary of Indigenous women and queerness by suggesting biological reproduction cannot coexist with

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

queer futurity: that queer/two-spirit Native men must symbolically displace young Native women (presumed to be perpetually straight and cisgendered) in order to create Indigenous futures. Indeed, despite the deaths of these two young women, the film ends with a feeling of hope and forward momentum. The final few shots are close-ups of Shane. With a contented expression, his head turns upward and then downward again, gesturing to the reconciliation of his desires.

The hopeful feelings that *Fire Song* evokes are, on one hand, distinct from the rescue mission that Savage and Miller perform in *It Gets Better*. Savage's invocation to LGBT youth that "it gets better" uplifts them from a perceived space of degeneracy into respectability. *Fire Song* does not symbolically rescue Native youth from the degeneracy of the reserve; it invokes projects of Indigenous resurgence, which—to use Audra Simpson's (2014) concept—refuse the terms through which settler politics frame the reserve as degenerate space. At the same time, in its inability to reconcile Indigenous women and queer Indigenous men's futures, *Fire Song*'s vision of Indigenous resurgence reaches its limit. As Sarah Deer (2015: xvi) writes, "Self-determination for individual survivors and self-determination for tribal nations are closely connected. It is impossible to have a truly self-determining nation when its members have been denied self-determination over their own bodies."

Vivek Shraya's *I want to kill myself*: Failure and Melancholia

Whereas a negotiated return to (a still patriarchal) community furnishes hopefulness for the young queer Native men at the center of *Fire Song*, for Shraya it is the cultivation of chosen community in city spaces following estrangement from community of origin that enables her to keep living. Shraya released the experimental short *I want to kill myself* over social media on February 15, 2017, her thirty-sixth birthday. As she explained to the CBC, "Historically, my birthday and the months of January and February are ones where I tend to think about suicide the most, and recognizing this pattern was . . . part of the rationale for this release date" (quoted in Knegt 2017). The release date also affirmed the film's focus on continuing to live: the eight-and-a-half-minute film is an autobiographical reflection on Shraya's relationship to suicide and its entanglement with race, gender, and sexuality. Moving from adolescence to the present, Shraya recounts how opening up to chosen community has helped her to cope with ongoing struggles with suicide.

A trans/femme/bisexual–identified South Asian artist, Shraya counts among her projects musical albums, films, photography, poetry, and novels that

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

investigate gender, sexuality, race, and spirituality. A running thread across her work is the question of what it means to inhabit the intersections of these identities and their concomitant pain, pleasure, and complexity. The theme of relationships—with biological family and within queer communities—is particularly prominent. For instance, in the 2016 photo essay "Trisha," Shraya (2016b) restages vintage photographs of her mother, mimicking her clothing, expressions, and gestures. The accompanying text reflects on Shraya's struggle to accept her own body and on her admiration for her mother.[4] In the 2010 short film *Seeking Single White Male*, which features a series of Polaroid selfies overlaid with text from Internet dating sites, she investigates the process of self-whitening in order to conform to dating ideals in queer spaces. Her 2012 short film *What I Love about Being Queer* is a series of candid profiles of queer artists, scholars, and activists responding to the question: "What do you love about being queer?" A feature on the project in *Xtra* magazine states that "unlike other 'forward-thinking' film projects, like Dan Savage's It Gets Better project, *What I Love about Being Queer* strives to embrace the perks of being queer in the present. It is a step away from the 'tragic' culture of queer youth suicides; rather, Shraya says, it examines 'what happens when [queers] *live*'" (quoted in Lenti 2012).

I outline these earlier projects in order to provide a sense of Shraya's intersectional political grounding, which also contextualizes *I want to kill myself*. The film chronicles Shraya's journey toward making peace with a melancholic condition of being and toward accepting the threat of suicide as an everyday one. As in *Fire Song*, *I want to kill myself* affectively slows down the spectacularity of suicide: the film is primarily a series of stills, advancing at a rate of one to two per second. The industry standard is twenty-four frames per second, fast enough for our minds to weave them together into an illusion of fluid time. That illusion of unity and linearity is something that Shraya's one to two images per second refuses, thus emphasizing the fragmented nature of memories and archives.

The slow pace of *I want to kill myself* invites audiences to reflect on the everydayness of suicide: suicide as affect. Each frame restages a moment when Shraya contemplated suicide, overlaid with a voiceover by Shraya, stating: "I wanted to kill myself when I was. . . ." The repetition of this phrase echoes Shraya's relationship to suicide: it is an ongoing and endless dance with death, suggesting that for trans/genderqueer diasporas, suicide is always on the horizon, because life is melancholic. For Shraya, it does not get better, but it gets different: there are moments of joy and there are shifts in melancholia. In this regard, the film bears echoes of Ann Cvetkovich's *Depression: A Public Feeling* (2012: 206):

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

> If depression is a version of Lauren Berlant's slow death, then there is no clean break from it. The bad feelings that hover around daily practices of survival are always there, especially if it's a political depression, which won't end until there is real economic justice and a better reckoning with histories of violence. But just because there's no happy ending doesn't mean that we have to feel bad all the time or that feeling bad is a state that precludes feelings of hope and joy.

Whereas in *It Gets Better*, suicide is an event (or moment in time) to be overcome, the narration and pacing of frames in *I want to kill myself* suggest that suicide is slow, persistent, and repetitive; not an event but a constant, looming feeling that coexists even amid moments of joy and pleasure.

In contrast to *Fire Song*, *I want to kill myself* does not directly engage with settler coloniality or Indigenous politics. However, Shraya's work is deeply embedded in queer and trans-of-color communities in Toronto (where she was based until 2017) and specifically queer South Asian diasporic communities that have come into formation in relation to Indigenous decolonization movements. Since the epic ninety-day standoff between Canadian Armed Forces and Mohawk warriors in Kahnesatake (outside Montreal) in summer 1990, South Asian Canadians have had sporadic conversations about diasporic relationships to Indigenous self-determination. The queer South Asian diasporic festival, Desh Pardesh, for instance, which took place in Toronto in the 1990s and early 2000s, included workshops on First Nations solidarity, and the organization took part in community actions, including protests against the police shooting of Native activist Dudley George in 1995. More recently, queer and trans-of-color communities in Toronto continue to reflect on these questions, as evidenced by the mutual support between Black Lives Matter Toronto and Indigenous organizations and by the conversations documented by Marvellous Grounds, a project mapping queer and trans-of-color geographies in the city (see Haritaworn, Moussa, and Ware 2018). Working within this context, in her book of poetry titled *even this page is white* (2016a), Shraya includes multiple poems exploring and acknowledging her complicity in antiblackness and settler colonialism: In "Indian," Shraya reflects on the practice of Indigenous land acknowledgment that often happens at the start of academic, activist, and art events. She writes: "Is acknowledgement enough? / *I acknowledge I stole this /* but I am keeping it social justice / or social performance / what would it mean to digest you and yours and blood and / home and land and minerals and trees and dignities and legacies / to really honour no / show gratitude no / word for partaking in violence in progress" (17). The poem reflects on the paradox of per-

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

forming solidarity through land acknowledgment while simultaneously benefiting from occupation.

As noted earlier, *I want to kill myself* does not explicitly address Indigenous politics, but as I will show shortly, it is intelligible in the context of Shraya's liminal position within settler dynamics and, in particular, in the tension between Shraya's failure as a queer, trans, racialized body to fully embody settler subjectivity, on one hand, and her attachments to that subjectivity on the other. This liminal positioning also contextualizes solidarity and coalitional acts—which are also often moments of performance, as Shraya observes in "Indian"—pointing to the chasms between diasporic and Indigenous politics. The liminal settler-identifications of *I want to kill myself* and the explicit acknowledgment of indigeneity in *even this page is white* sit together on a continuum. If *even this page is white* performs solidarity, *I want to kill myself* considers Shraya's attempts to perform white middle-class settler femininity through her citation of two popularly known representations of suicide. As a seventeen-year-old, Julianne Moore's character's attempted suicide in the 1999 film *Magnolia* provides inspiration to Shraya: "I learned about carbon monoxide from *Magnolia*. Julianne Moore looked peaceful. Or resigned. Maybe they're the same thing." Later, at thirty-five and an established artist fearful of failure, she fantasizes about walking into a lake, like Virginia Woolf: "It's fitting then that I wanted to walk into the lake, walk in the footsteps of a great authorly tradition." Both the *Magnolia* scene and Woolf's suicide highlight the toxic implications of settler culture even for its direct beneficiaries (white women), and both take place in the privileged, sanitized spaces produced through colonization (the suburbs; pristine wilderness).

These suicide attempts, like all Shraya's other attempts, end in failure: she is unable to fight the resolve to breathe; she is beat to it by someone else; suicide note writing takes too long; a friend's call interrupts the attempt; the thought of how her sister would deal with it overcomes the attempt. If suicide events take place because of a perceived failure at life, then Shraya also, ironically, fails at suicide. Like Shane's in *Fire Song*, these are failures that enable Shraya's futurity. At the same time, while Shraya's attempts to mimic settler subjectivity—even through death—fail, this does not guarantee her detachment from that subjectivity. Anne Anlin Cheng's careful elaboration of fantasy's constitutive function is useful here. Drawing on psychoanalysts Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, Cheng (2000: 20) notes: "The fantasmatic negotiates the real and the unreal, the conscious and the unconscious, in such a way as to render possible the sense of one's life as a whole. It is the fantasmatic that allows for a sense and structure of identity to take hold. The fantasmatic enables identification." *I want to kill myself* exposes

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

the fantasy of identification with white settler femininity that undergirds Shraya's racialized subjectivity within settler colonialism. Tellingly, she does not reject this identification; she recalls it and announces her failure to successfully perform it. As in her photo project "Trisha"—in which, as noted earlier, Shraya restages and mimics old photographs of her mother—it is the film's enunciation of that fantasy that in fact opens up her conditions of being/possibility.

In revealing Shraya's desire, and failure, to commit suicide, *I want to kill myself* participates in a culture of confession that is similar to that of the It Gets Better project. However, unlike that project's orientation, the confession is not didactically oriented toward participation in neoliberal citizenship; rather, it is bound up in the new forms of community Shraya establishes as an adult. These new bonds—critical, counterhegemonic diasporic formations—juxtapose two moments of tension she recounts earlier in the film, which she experienced with her family and the conservative Hindu, South Asian Canadian community she grew up in. The first moment revolves around the shame she is made to feel around her genderqueer body: "My mother told me that I would end up like my uncles—'This is your destiny' / Years later, I discovered that both my uncles had killed themselves before I was born. Can the desire to die be inherited?" Yoking sexuality and suicide to genetics, Shraya's mother pathologizes both.

The second moment of tension concerns the shame the community confers onto a loved one who committed suicide: "I wanted to kill myself when I was sixteen / but she beat me to it / I watched my community grieve through ritual, wailing and pointing fingers / I listened to adults conjecture about the precarious destination of a suicide soul. Suicide killed community for me." Here, diasporic community's grieving rituals do not provide solace and healing but serve disciplinary and regulatory functions. Community does not provide futurity in the wake of suicide, it is *killed by suicide*. Suicide, and genderqueerness, mark the limits of diasporic conservatism and drive Shraya deeper into alienation until the film's resolution. These two moments echo the work of critical race, queer, and feminist critiques of diaspora, which point to the propensity of diasporic communities to regulate the boundaries of "homelands" through social and moral policing within social, familial, cultural, and political institutions that reproduce norms based on gender, sexuality, class, caste, and religion (for example, see Brah 1996; Desai 2004; and Gopinath 2005).

By contrast, toward the end of the film Shraya shares her newfound understanding and acceptance of suicide as an ordinary part of existence, specifically noting that vocalizing her desire for death with chosen family—community forged through queer and trans-of-color city spaces (including, presumably, the film's

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

audience)—motivates her to keep living. Here we see stills of Shraya with two friends (one of whom is her ex-wife, Shemeena) in various settings: near a lake, walking on the street, browsing magazines, at the grocery store, at the movies. In its emphasis on the alternate relationalities of chosen family, *I want to kill myself* gestures toward a futurity that potentially resonates with that presented in *Fire Song*, despite their divergent takes on the nation. As Kath Weston explains in her 1991 study, "chosen family" is a queer response to the loss—and shortcomings—of hetero family, one that is often imbued with hope and optimism for forging new forms of intimacy and relationality.[5] Because it is not limited to institutions of biopolitical capture (marriage or blood family), chosen family/community can function as an alternate space for imagining responses to the conditions of slow death that lead to suicide. The final scene marks this possibility: the frames transition from moving stills to live action, with Shraya filmed from behind—the camera following her, just as suicide follows her—walking along Toronto's Bloor Viaduct bridge, which until recently was one of the most popular spots to commit suicide in the city. The transition from photo stills to moving action emphasizes a shift away from the shame and secrecy of suicide that is buried in family archives and toward the possibility opened up through new bonds with chosen family. The film's last line aligns Shraya's public reckoning with suicidal ideation with the structure of a coming-out narrative: "Saying 'I want to kill myself' kept me alive."

Conclusion

Dominant responses to suicide often frame suicide as a matter of individual or communal pathology, requiring mental health interventions, educational opportunities, or jobs. These response frameworks fold suicidal individuals into existing social structures. Because they do not imagine an outside to these structures, the onus for transformation falls onto vulnerable individuals or communities. Hope, in this case, is about the possibility of being successful, happy, and productive within the world as it is. For the Native youth in *Fire Song* and for Shraya, hope and futurity in the wake of suicide are deeply connected not only to transformed relationships to community but to transforming what constitutes community. In particular, *Fire Song* invites those who would read suicide as a sign of social crisis to work toward decolonizing the future, although the future that it imagines replicates gendered colonial violence. Reading *Fire Song* and *I want to kill myself* relationally exposes the limits of queer diasporic imaginaries such as Shraya's, where futurity remains bound up with settler attachments. It also compels a meditation on the potential space chosen family opens up for grappling with those attachments and

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

imagining decolonial futures. The interrogation of these two films alongside one another, moreover, points to the *necessity* of an oppositional yet fraught QTBIPOC film archive for whose incommensurabilities we must also look and listen.

Notes

Much appreciation to Hsuan Hsu, Helen Jun, Ronak Kapadia, Natalie Kouri-Towe, Eric Larson, and Elizabeth Son for reading and providing suggestions on earlier drafts of this essay. I am also grateful to two anonymous reviewers and the *GLQ* editorial team for their generative feedback and support.

1. A Twitter search shows that use of the acronym *BIPOC* to denote "Black, Indigenous, and People of Color" (rather than "bisexual people of color") first appears around 2013 in tweets posted by Toronto-based user accounts. The *Marvellous Grounds* archive project captures the Toronto-specific relational ethos I speak of: see Haritaworn, Moussa, and Ware (2018) and the accompanying website, marvellousgrounds.com (accessed August 1, 2018).
2. A new generation of Indigenous artists and scholars, including Billy-Ray Belcourt and Jas Morgan (see Belcourt and Nixon 2018), are turning their attention to the "undoing" work of queer Indigenous onto-ethics, not only in their historical iterations but in the present; in Belcourt's case, this entails a critique of sovereignty's constraints and a turn to "non-sovereignty" (see Belcourt 2018). For Tiffany Lethabo King (2019), Belcourt's work—which she reads alongside Audre Lorde's—opens up new possibilities for understanding Black-Native relationalities and futures.
3. Other examples of Native erasure and disappearance into landscape include nineteenth-century US and Canadian landscape paintings, including the Group of Seven and Hudson River School. See also the depiction of Sacajawea in the 2006 film *Night at the Museum*, as discussed by Finley (2011b).
4. In "Trisha" and in Shraya's broader oeuvre, India and Hinduism appear almost as fetish objects, absent critiques of caste. Given the recent emergence of homonationalism in India leading up to the decriminalization of homosexuality in 2018 (see Upadhyay 2018), this has implications for how we might characterize diasporic conservatism. One could argue, for instance, that in homonationalist times Shraya's work may in fact be more palatable to particular forms of diasporic conservatism than it might have been in the past.
5. Chosen family formations do not necessarily imply a rejection of biological ones, which for many QTBIPOC may not be a possibility (see, e.g., Johnson 2003; and Rodriguez 2009). While they are spaces of possibility and radical imagination, neither are they free from the broader conditions of violence in which they are embedded.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

References

Ahmed, Sara. 2010. *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

American Psychiatric Association. 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5)*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.

Andersen, Chris, and Evelyn Peters, eds. 2013. *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Belcourt, Billy-Ray. 2018. "Meditations on Reserve Life, Biosociality, and the Taste of Non-sovereignty." *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 1: 1–15.

Belcourt, Billy-Ray. 2020. *A History of My Brief Body*. Columbus, OH: Two Dollar Radio Press.

Belcourt, Billy-Ray, and Lindsay Nixon. 2018. "What Do We Mean by Queer Indigenous Ethics?" *Canadian Art*, May 23. canadianart.ca/features/what-do-we-mean-by-queerindigenousethics/.

Berlant, Lauren. 2007. "Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)." *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 4: 754–80.

Bersani, Leo. 2010. *Is the Rectum a Grave? and Other Essays*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bosman, Julie. 2015. "Pine Ridge Indian Reservation Struggles with Suicides among Its Young." *New York Times*, May 1. www.nytimes.com/2015/05/02/us/pine-ridge-indian-reservation-struggles-with-suicides-among-young-people.html.

Bourgeois, Robyn. 2015. "Colonial Exploitation: The Canadian State and the Trafficking of Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada." *UCLA Law Review* 62, no. 6: 1426–63.

Brah, Avtar. 1996. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge.

Byrd, Jodi. 2011. *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Canadian Press. 2016. "Attawapiskat: Jean Chretien Says 'Sometimes' People on First Nations Reserves 'Need to Move.'" *Global News*, April 13. globalnews.ca/news/2635738/attawapiskat-jean-chretien-says-sometimes-people-on-first-nations-reserves-need-to-move/.

Cheng, Anne Anlin. 2000. *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chrisjohn, Roland D., and Shaunessy M. McKay, with Andrea O. Smith. 2017. *Dying to Please You: Indigenous Suicide in Contemporary Canada*. Penticton, BC: Theytus.

Cvetkovich, Ann. 2012. *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Day, Iyko. 2016. *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

Deer, Sarah. 2015. *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

Desai, Jigna. 2004. *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film*. New York: Routledge.

Dirty Laundry. 1996. Directed by Richard Fung. Toronto/Banff, AB: Richard Fung/Banff Centre for the Arts.

Driskill, Qwo-Li. 2004. "Stolen from Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 16, no. 2: 50–64.

Driskill, Qwo-Li, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen. 2011. Introduction to *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*, edited by Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, 1–28. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Edelman, Lee. 2004. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ferguson, Roderick A. 2003. *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Finley, Chris. 2011a. "Decolonizing the Queer Native Body (and Recovering the Native Bull-Dyke): Bringing 'Sexy Back' and out of Native Studies' Closet." In *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*, edited by Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, 31–42. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Finley, Chris. 2011b. "Violence, Genocide, and Captivity: Exploring Cultural Representations of Sacajawea as a Universal Mother of Conquest." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 4: 191–208.

Fire Song. 2015. Directed by Adam Garnet Jones. Toronto: Big Soul Productions.

Flood, Joe. 2015. "What's Lurking Behind the Suicides?" *New York Times*, May 16. www.nytimes.com/2015/05/17/opinion/sunday/whats-lurking-behind-the-suicides.html.

Foucault, Michel. (1978) 1990. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, translated by Robert J. Hurley. New York: Vintage.

Freeman, Elizabeth. 2010. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Fujikane, Candace, and Jonathan Y. Okamura, eds. 2008. *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

Gopinath, Gayatri. 2005. *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Halberstam, J. 2005. *In a Queer Time and Place*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Halberstam, J. 2011. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Haritaworn, Jin, Ghaida Moussa, and Syrus Marcus Ware. 2018. *Marvellous Grounds: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

Harper, Lina. 2010. "Two Lesbian Youth Found Dead in Orangeville." *Xtra*, October 4. www.dailyxtra.com/two-lesbian-youth-found-dead-in-orangeville-30052.

Heeney, Alex. 2016. "Adam Garnet Jones on *Fire Song*: 'A Film about a Feeling.'" *Seventh Row*, May 10. seventh-row.com/2016/05/10/adam-garnet-jones-fire-song-tiff/.

Jackson, Shona. 2012. *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Jafri, Beenash. 2012. "Privilege vs. Complicity: People of Colour and Settler Colonialism." *FedCan Equity Matters* (blog), edited by Malinda Smith. Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Ottawa, March 21. www.ideas-idees.ca/blog/privilege-vs-complicity-people-colour-and-settler-colonialismx.

Johnson, E. Patrick. 2003. *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

King, Tiffany Lethabo. 2019. *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Knegt, Peter. 2017. "'I want to kill myself': Vivek Shraya's New Film Is a Courageous and Vital Portrait of Mental Health." CBC Arts, February 15. www.cbc.ca/arts/i-want-to-kill-myself-vivek-shraya-s-new-film-is-a-courageous-and-vital-portrait-of-mental-health-1.3982032.

Lee, Ruthann. 2015. "Portraits of (Un)Settlement: Troubling Multicultural Masculinities in Dominique Hui's *Quiet North* and Kent Monkman's *Shooting Geronimo*." *GLQ* 21, no. 4: 459–99.

Lenti, Erica. 2012. "What I Love about Vivek Shraya: Artist Aptly Explores All the Good Things That Come with Being Queer." *Xtra*, July 9. www.dailyxtra.com/what-i-love-about-vivek-shraya-32102.

Lim, Eng-Beng. 2010. "Queer Suicide: Introduction to the Teach-In." *Social Text: Periscope*, November 22. socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/a_suicide_teach-in/.

Looking for Langston. 1989. Directed by Isaac Julien. London: Sankofa Film and Video Productions.

Lowe, Lisa. 2015. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Marubbio, M. Elise. 2006. *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

McClintock, Anne. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge.

Morgensen, Scott Lauria. 2011. *Spaces between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Morgensen, Scott Lauria. 2012. "Theorising Gender, Sexuality, and Settler Colonialism: An Introduction." *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 2: 2–22.

Muñoz, José Esteban. 2009. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

Murdocca, Carmela. 2013. "Persistence and Memorialisation: Self-Harm and Suicide in Reparation Politics in Canada." *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 38, no. 1: 93–107.

Native Women's Association of Canada. 2015. "Fact Sheet: Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls." www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Fact_Sheet_Missing_and_Murdered_Aboriginal_Women_and_Girls.pdf.

Nyong'o, Tavia. 2010. "School Daze." *Bully Bloggers*, September 30. bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/school-daze/.

Puar, Jasbir. 2007. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Puar, Jasbir. 2017. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Razack, Sherene. 2000. "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 15, no. 2: 91–130.

Reagon, Bernice Johnson. 1983. "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century." In *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, edited by Barbara Smith, 356–68. New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press.

Rifkin, Mark. 2011. *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rifkin, Mark. 2014. "Making Peoples into Populations: The Racial Limits of Tribal Sovereignty." In *Theorizing Native Studies*, edited by Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith, 149–87. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Rodriguez, Richard T. 2009. *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicano/a Cultural Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Rosay, Andre B. 2016. "Violence against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men." *National Institute of Justice Journal*, no. 277. nij.gov/journals/277/Pages/violence-against-american-indians-alaska-natives.aspx.

Saranillio, Dean Itsuji. 2013. "Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: A Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference." *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, nos. 3–4: 280–94.

Savage, Dan, and Terry Miller. 2010. *It Gets Better: Dan and Terry*. YouTube video, 8:32, September 21. www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IcVyvg2Qlo.

Schoonover, Karl, and Rosalind Galt. 2016. *Queer Cinema in the World*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Shraya, Vivek. 2010. *Seeking Single White Male*. Vimeo video, 2:20, August 1. vimeo.com/15296513.

Shraya, Vivek. 2012. *What I Love about Being Queer*. DVD, 18:23, June 11.

Shraya, Vivek. 2016a. *even this page is white*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp.

Shraya, Vivek. 2016b. "Trisha." April 24. vivekshraya.com/visual/trisha/.

Shraya, Vivek. 2017. *I want to kill myself*. Vimeo video, 8:32, February 15. vimeo.com/198124732.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

Simpson, Audra. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. 2014. "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation." *Decolonization* 3, no. 3: 1–25.

Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. 2015. "The Place Where We All Live and Work Together: A Gendered Analysis of 'Sovereignty.'" In *Native Studies Keywords*, edited by Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle H. Raheja, 18–24. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. 2017. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Smith, Andrea. 2010. "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism." *GLQ* 16, nos. 1–2: 42–68.

Sojourner, Tomee. 2010. *"I AM PROOF THAT IT GETS BETTER": Embracing Intersectional Diversity Project Campaign*. Vimeo video, 1:18, October 16. vimeo.com/15896647.

"Suicides on an Indian Reservation." 2015. Letters to the Editor, *New York Times*, May 11. www.nytimes.com/2015/05/11/opinion/suicides-on-an-indian-reservation.html.

Tatonetti, Lisa. 2014. *The Queerness of Native American Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Tatonetti, Lisa. 2015. "'Tales of Burning Love': Female Masculinity in Contemporary Native Literature." In *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, edited by Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, 130–44. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Thuo, Ciiku. 2012. *Sarah*. YouTube video, 10:32, March 26. www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXk5cjcGqEs.

Trask, Haunani-Kay. 2000. "Settlers of Color and 'Immigrant' Hegemony: 'Locals in Hawai'i.'" *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 2: 1–24.

Tuck, Eve, Mistinguette Smith, Allison M. Guess, Tavia Benjamin, and Brian K. Jones. 2014. "Geotheorizing Black/Land: Contestations and Contingent Collaborations." *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 3, no. 1: 52–74.

Upadhyay, Nishant. 2018. "Queer Rights, Section 377, and Decolonizing Sexualities." *Decolonizing Sexualities: The Website and Blog of the Decolonizing Sexualities Network*, July 19. decolonizingsexualities.com/2018/07.

Vimalassery, Manu, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Alyosha Goldstein. 2016. "Introduction: On Colonial Unknowing." *Theory and Event* 19, no. 4. muse.jhu.edu/article/633283.

Vu, Liem. 2010. "Hundreds Share Stories, Shed Tears in Vigil for Gay Teens." *Toronto Star*, October 7. www.thestar.com/news/gta/2010/10/07/hundreds_share_stories_shed_tears_in_vigil_for_gay_teens.html.

Watermelon Woman. 1996. Directed by Cheryl Dunye. New York: First Run Features.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user

Weston, Kath. 1991. *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Weston, Kath. 1995. "Get Thee to a Big City: Sexual Imaginary and the Great Gay Migration." *GLQ* 2, no. 3: 253–77.

Whitehead, Joshua. 2017. *full-metal indigiqueer*. Vancouver: Talon Books.

Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4: 387–409.

Wong, Rita. 2008. "Decolonizasian: Reading Asian and First Nations Relations in Literature." *Canadian Literature*, no. 199: 158–80.

Downloaded from http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/27/4/577/942335/577jafri.pdf
by CONCORDIA UNIV user